

Christian Behavior



Some 320 years before Jesus's birth, a king named Alexander the Great had conquered a large part of the world of his time, from northern Africa and southeastern Europe all the way to the western part of

India. He made Greek the official language of all of that conquered territory, and that's why all the New Testament books were originally written in Greek.

One story about Alexander the Great has several versions, and maybe isn't even true, but it makes a point. A young soldier was brought before him for some offense — stealing a horse, sleeping on guard duty, cowardice in battle — the offense doesn't matter. Alexander the Great asked him, "What is your name?" The soldier answered, "Alexander, sir." The king leaned forward and asked again, "What is your name?" He again replied, "Alexander, sir." Now obviously angry, Alexander the Great again demanded, "What is your name?" The young man shrank back and whispered, "Alexander, sir." The king brought his face close to the young man's, looked into his eyes, and said, "Soldier, either change your behavior, or change your name!"

How would we feel if we were brought before Jesus for some one of our sins, and He asked, "What is your name?" We would answer, "Christian, sir." Jesus would not tell us to change our name, but He might very properly say, "Change your behavior!" Or, as He said in the first recorded words of His earthly ministry, "Repent!"

Another anecdote: I heard of a Methodist church somewhere that has this sign posted in front of it:

*If you love JESUS —
act like it!*

So I say, along with Alexander the Great and the Methodists, "If we Love our Lord Jesus; if we call ourselves by His name, 'Christian;' then we should act accordingly."

Let me clarify one thing right now: good Christian behavior does not earn salvation for us. Salvation, forgiveness for our sins, is God's free gift, earned for us by the suffering and death of Jesus. *For the*

wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9) We don't deserve salvation, and we cannot earn it — but if we have any sense at all, we'll accept the gift and be thankful for it.

So what is "good Christian Behavior"?

In the Old Testament, God set forth His Law and commanded His people, Israel, to obey every bit of it. Of course they didn't. Nobody ever has, except

Jesus. Nobody can do it perfectly, life-long.



In the New Testament, Jesus said, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I*

have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17) He also said, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.*" (Matthew 22:37-40)

So here it is: Love God. Love Him with your whole heart, with your whole mind, with all of your strength. Don't hold anything back; give it all to Him. Obey His commandments, and do things that are right and good and pleasing to God. And after that, love your neighbor. Do for others everything you would like for others to do for you. That's the way we should try to live our lives.



Now let me get specific. I propose to divide all of human behavior into these four categories or "levels":

1. Appearance
2. Responsibility
3. Service
4. Holiness

Appearance has to do with how we act toward others, either friends or strangers. Are you a nice person — friendly, polite, respectful, caring, helpful, reasonable, and forgiving when necessary? Or are you sometimes a nasty person — sour, judgmental, opinionated, unforgiving, and otherwise operating in selfishness?

Do you remember the popular phrase, "What would Jesus do?" As Christians, we represent Jesus. Let's try hard not to make Him look bad.

Responsibility involves doing what we should do, and not doing what we shouldn't do. Jesus said, *"You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.'"* (Mark 10:19) He might also have said that you shouldn't engender a child whom you can't or won't support, and you should not kill a child in the womb. You should not let emotions, especially anger, cause you to destroy property or injure anyone, physically or financially. In other words, just because a lot of people are doing something, or just because you have been provoked, that does not give you license to behave irresponsibly. It simply does not.

Many people behave irresponsibly simply because better behavior is not expected of them. This is why a parent's love and influence, particularly a father's, is so important for a child. *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6) Whether or not we have received that good training, if we want to behave responsibly, we should ask God for wisdom, to know what to do and what not to do, and for guidance, to help us get it right.

Service is doing things that are helpful. Each Boy Scout used to have an informal goal of doing a "good deed" every day, and the example that was often used was helping an elderly person cross the street safely. The main idea of service is, if you see a need and you can help satisfy it, do so. In practical terms this means giving our time and our physical presence or effort, and often our money if we have some, to help others.

Serving others requires not only a willingness to do things, sometimes far out of our comfort zone. It also means watching for opportunities to be helpful. The person next door to me may have a need that I don't even notice unless I watch for ways to be helpful.

Holiness is simply a one-word term that I'll use for being a committed and faithful follower of Jesus. This goes far beyond part-time, Sundays-only Christianity. Jesus was very blunt about this. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

To behave with holiness means, first of all, to repent of our sins — to recognize sinful behavior as sin, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, stop doing it. It is useless to say, "I'm sorry for doing that," and then keep on doing it. Jesus' first command, "Repent!" means stop doing whatever you're doing that is against God's will.

Holy behavior is not achieved by hard work. It's achieved by following the guides we have been given — God's word, the Bible, and His Holy Spirit, our Helper, Comforter, and heavenly Guide. It's achieved by devoting time to reading and understanding the Scriptures, and to frequent and sincere prayer. Again, if you want to know how to raise your Christian behavior to the level of holiness, look at our Savior, Jesus. Be like Him.

Here are a couple of admonitions from Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians: *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ... speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (Ephesians 4:1-3,15)* In fact, the entire book of Ephesians (only 6 chapters) is worth reading as a summary of good Christian behavior.

May you and I never dishonor the name of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ.

PEACE — GOD LOVES YOU!

Brother Roland

Write to me with your Bible questions or address updates — new subscribers are always welcome.

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From Billy Graham Evangelistic Association:

Why We Don't Pray—and Why We Should

By Giselle Seidel February 2, 2026

Author and speaker Wendy Bello emphasized the value of prayer during a conference for Hispanic church leaders hosted by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

1. We don't pray because we don't understand the importance of prayer.

Many times, we believe we can navigate life on our own.

"We ignore our need for God," said Bello. "We tend to run to prayer only in extreme situations—when we find ourselves at a dead end, when we don't know what decision to make, or when something scares us or worries us greatly."

God did not design prayer as an emergency call but rather as a constant conversation. Scripture encourages us to bring every need before Him in prayer. As Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (ESV).

"It is unfortunate that we see prayer as a lifeboat we turn to only when we are drowning," said Bello. "Prayer should not be plan B for the follower of Christ but rather an essential part of our lives. Prayer is supposed to permeate everything we do and every circumstance we face."

2. We don't pray because we don't understand the magnitude of the spiritual battle we're facing.

The Bible is clear that followers of Christ are in a continuous spiritual war. And in that fight, prayer plays a crucial role.

In Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul spells out "the whole armor of God" (v. 11) that Christians need to stand against the devil's schemes. And at the end of this list, he reminds believers of the importance of prayer: "... Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18, ESV).

Bello explained that prayer is critical for us to stand firm through spiritual conflict. "If we truly understood how great the battle is that takes place every day in the spiritual realm, we would not have enough time [in the day] to pray!" she said.

3. We don't pray because we don't prioritize time for it.

Believers have been cultivating Biblically rooted habits called spiritual disciplines since the beginning of Christ's church.

"Spiritual disciplines are practices that help us in our pursuit of holiness and lead us to grow in Christlikeness," said Bello. "But as we know, all disciplines require perseverance and intentionality."

In our fast-paced world, we make room on our calendars for all sorts of activities, but when it comes to

prayer, we may find it difficult to actually set a time to pray and commit to it. "It seems that we are too distracted or that we lack desire or interest," Bello said.

"Although we can pray while doing something else, such as when we are driving, it is ideal to find a place where we can pray and our attention is not divided—away from distractions."

Bello mentioned the example Jesus set for us: "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35, ESV).

Just like our Lord, we should also find a solitary place where we can spend time alone with Him and give Him our undivided attention.

Five Strategies to Strengthen Your Prayer Life

- Pray the Word of God. If your prayers have become repetitive, start praying with an open Bible. Scripture contains many written prayers, but we can also read a passage of Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to help us see how we can apply that passage to our lives and turn it into a prayer.
- Remember that the Holy Spirit is always interceding for us. If you're not sure how to pray over a specific situation, remember that we have help—the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26–27 says, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."
- Ask the Lord to change the desires of your heart. The Holy Spirit is continually working in us, sanctifying us and making us more like Jesus every day. Pray that He will transform your heart, so that prayer will become your delight.
- Set aside a specific time to pray. Pick a time when you can be by yourself with God and when you won't be easily distracted. Determine how much time you want to spend in prayer, but make sure that time is a joy and not a duty.
- Find a prayer partner. Keeping up with any discipline is easier if we have someone who can encourage us and keep us accountable. Find a faithful partner who would be willing to pray with you and for you.

Understanding how vital this is to our spiritual health will transform our walk with the Lord, said Bello. "The Christian life cannot be lived in a godly manner and in the power of God without prayer. Our mission needs to be accompanied by prayer."

Attributes of Good Christian Behavior

The Bible says a lot about how we, as followers of Jesus, should behave. It's important to set a good example for others — somebody might actually follow our example, so it is better if we live by following Jesus' example.

Puzzle:

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Words:

AGREEABLE
BLAMELESS
CARING
CHEERFUL
CHRISTIAN
CHRISTLIKE
CLEAN
CLEAN MINDED
COMFORTING
COURTEOUS

DEPENDABLE
EXCELLENT
FAIR
FORGIVING
FRIENDLY
GENEROUS
GENUINE
GOOD
HELPFUL
HONEST

HONORABLE
JUST
KIND
KINDHEARTED
LOVING
MORAL
PEACE-MAKING
PRAYERFUL
PRINCIPLED
RESPONSIBLE

RIGHT THINKING
SCRUPULOUS
SINCERE
STRAIGHT
TRUSTWORTHY
UNDERSTANDING
VIRTUOUS
WELL BEHAVED