

How a Christian Can Become Worldly

John 17:14 says, *"... they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."*

As Americans, one of our core values is that of giving people the benefit of the doubt. We tend to err on the side of trusting people rather than being suspicious of them. We are an authentic culture that is open about what we think, feel and believe, whether it is always appropriate to share or not, we want people to know where we stand.

As Americans, we are so accustomed to this, that we assume everyone that comes to this country will be that way. The challenge is, most other cultures are not nearly as loud as we are, nor are they are open about their thoughts and feelings as we are. One of the gifts of democracy is the freedom of speech. We speak and we speak it loud at times. But because we are Americans living in America and this is our *modus operandi*, we assume anyone who claims to be an American will live with the same core values. However, the truth is, culture and values come more from family than they do a country.

I lived in Malaysia for nine years as a missionary. While living there, I did what I could to understand the culture and operate according to their rules and regulations, rather than my own. But one thing I did not do in nine years of living there, was become Malaysian or take on the Malaysian value system, the reason was because I am American. I love authenticity, I love sharing my opinion and I love freedom of speech. But Malaysia on the other hand, values saving face, not sharing what they are really thinking and not wanting to rock the boat.

For an American, living in Asia was like living with people I

never really knew. But now that I am home, in America, and I hear the political rhetoric about the challenges that face our nation as it pertains to borders, visas and refugees, I realized I carried one piece of the puzzle, which might be helpful. They are in our country, but they are not of our country.

My son was born in Malaysia, but on his Malaysian birth certificate it says, non-citizen, because his mother is not a Malaysian. Malaysia understands that the values a child carries with them throughout life comes more from family than it does from the country they live in. Our home in Malaysia was very American, we ate American food, we spoke English and we lived culturally as Americans in our home, even though we lived in Malaysia. I think what we are seeing is people who have come to America for the financial benefits and other freedoms of our country, but they have not necessarily taken on the American value system.

One thing we need to understand is that values do not come from the country you live in. They come from the family in which you are raised. I know a lot of people who go to church, but they have never taken on the value system of the kingdom of God. So, we see the "in but not of" idea in many aspects of our world.

As Americans who have American values, I think it is important for us to educate ourselves about other cultures rather than let others tell us what they think we need to know or what we should believe about other people. Being American means celebrating diversity, but it also means our value systems.

Ignorance is not an option in a Google/Wikipedia world. We must realize that other cultures are not like our own. Most other nations do not allow freedom of speech, they do not like democracy and they are operating out of a religious and political belief system that is intricately tied together, where we have one that has been constitutionally separated and

is becoming more obviously opposed to one another.

Living in another country for nine years helped me to realize that we can live *in* and yet not be *of* a place. And for Christians, is this not what Jesus told us to do: to live in the world but not to be of the world? If you have wondered how to do this, now you know to keep your values that you learned at home in your life no matter what that the country you live in says or does. Remember, this is just one piece of the puzzle.

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