

CA 40 TFP4 THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Music theme

FOSTER: You're not happy. Not happy at all. Tonight is the dinner with your boss. Every year he invites his leadership team to his house for what he calls "a relaxed time together." You know it better as the "three drinks and attack Christians" dinner.

Each year the same thing happens. Half way through dinner—after his third drink—your boss will make a comment about how Christians are ruining the world, and how it's OK for them to believe what they want, but they have no right to tell him how he should live. He never addresses you personally, but it's pretty clear who he's talking about.

His attacks are always confusing to you. You've never told your boss how to live. In fact, you're probably the quietest employee in the office. But you're different and your boss and coworkers know it. It's not your words. It's in your lifestyle—your Christian lifestyle. A Christ-honoring way of living that shines brightly in your office.

"Maybe I'll just skip the dinner this year," you think...but should you?

Welcome to Champions Arise. I'm Foster Braun and I'm with Kent Darcie. Christians being attacked for their belief in Christ has occurred since before Jesus was crucified. But how should we respond? Do we hide? Should we shout our belief's louder? We'll look at this issue—that affects all of us who claim Jesus as our Lord—when we return to Champions Arise.

Music Theme in – 5 SECS.

FOSTER: Kent, I've been in situations like that dinner with the boss. It's not fun.

KENT: No it's not. And it can happen at work, at family events, on your sports team—just about anywhere.

FOSTER: And sometimes it will happen when you least expect it. Or from someone you wouldn't think would react to you that way.

KENT: Yes, and that can be painful. But Foster, it shouldn't come as a surprise to any of us. In John 15 verse 20, Jesus said, "*Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.*"

FOSTER: But it's not something we look forward to.

KENT: No. of course not, although there's a wonderful example in Acts chapter 5 of the attitude we should have when we are persecuted.

In this situation, Peter and the apostles had been arrested by the religious leaders. The leaders were upset that the apostles were teaching about Jesus and commanded them to stop preaching about Jesus. Peter and the apostles refused to stop teaching about

Jesus. So the religious leaders beat them, commanded them not to preach about Christ anymore, and let them go. And I find the apostles response amazing. This is Acts 5 verses 41 and 42.

“The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: ‘Jesus is the Messiah.’”

Foster, *“Rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.”* that seems so far from where my Christian lifestyle is today.

FOSTER: I don’t think the apostles looked forward to suffering, they just responded to it differently to it than most of us do—particularly in the western culture.

KENT: And that really is the question. How will we respond to the increasing hostility toward Christianity we see in the world today?

FOSTER: Basically, what does a Christian lifestyle look like?

KENT: Yes. And it’s not just *hostility* toward Christians. A lot of people are indifferent to Christ and His followers. But they live a lifestyle that is contrary to what the Bible teaches.

FOSTER: Sometimes being in the world and not of the world—like the Apostle Paul describes—is like walking on a tightrope. So we’re back to “what does a Christian lifestyle look like?”

KENT: Throughout history, three broad categories of Christian lifestyles have emerged.

The first lifestyle is “The Rejection lifestyle.” Examples of this would be the Amish people in the United States. Or monks that live in monasteries in Europe. Asia, and other areas. The basic theme of this lifestyle is to avoid the world so you won’t be distracted from your walk with Christ by the temptations and sins of the world.

One of their key scriptures is 2 Corinthians 6:17, *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”* Their goal is to be focused on Christ and their hope is that their neighbors and business associates will see their lifestyle and want to be like them.

FOSTER: I don’t think I could live that way.

KENT: Well Foster, it sounds extreme, but it’s a real easy lifestyle to drift into—particularly if you have kids. You want to protect them from things that could lure them away from God. So we tend to avoid the world to try to protect them. But unless God calls you to this type of Christian lifestyle, it can cause problems. Legalism is one.

We saw this with the Pharisees. Their goal was to help the Jews not violate any of the Ten Commandments—to not be like their sinful neighbors. But to do that, they created

hundreds of **other** rules to help them obey the ten. And one problem with legalism, is it tends to create exceptions—ways around the rules—so we can do what we want.

FOSTER: What's the other problem with the rejection lifestyle?

KENT: Isolationism is another problem. Here is an example. There was a couple named Mark and Cindy. And they were NOT Amish! Big cars, big house, and inside the house was the latest...everything. When they first moved into the home their neighbors invited them over for meals so they could get to meet them and feel welcome. But Mark and Cindy always said no.

See, the neighbors would serve beer with their burgers. And Mark and Cindy believed that if they showed up at one of these gatherings, they'd be endorsing this lifestyle. So they only met with Christians and people from their church.

But Jesus said in Matthew 5 verses 14-16, "*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*"

Unless God specifically calls you out of society, we need to follow in the footsteps and command of our Lord, who called us to **go** and make disciples of all men.

FOSTER: I can see where it would be easy to drift into that lifestyle and not even realize it.

KENT: It's easier than you think. Particularly as the world gets more and more sinful.

FOSTER: If you joined us late, this is Champions Arise, I'm Foster Braun and I'm with Kent Darcie. We're discussing the strengths and weaknesses of different types of Christian lifestyles.

Kent, what is the second Christian lifestyle?

KENT: On the opposite side of the rejection lifestyle is the accommodation lifestyle. This lifestyle wants to avoid conflict by accepting other people's views.

FOSTER: Can you give us an example of that?

KENT: Sure. There was a young couple who met at college, became Christians at college, and married. Shortly after, they moved to a large city and as best they could tell, they were the only Christians in the whole apartment building. At first they read their Bible and prayed regularly, but because the nearest church for them was five miles away and they had to take a bus to get to it, they went less and less, and eventually stopped.

But they still wanted regular fellowship. Unfortunately, the only people they knew drank a lot and had very loose morals. So over time this couple compromised their values and eventually adopted their friend's secular views.

Now, if you asked them if they are Christians, they'd say yes. But they'd also tell you that Christians should be open to other views and Jesus isn't the only way to God.

FOSTER: That's very sad.

KENT: It is. The main problem with the accommodation lifestyle is rather than changing the culture, too often, the culture changes us.

FOSTER: We read that all through the Old Testament

KENT: Yes. For example, the children of Israel were specifically told by God not to marry people who worshiped other gods. They did anyway. And they drifted from God—just like He said they would.

FOSTER: So Kent, we've seen a couple of extreme Christian lifestyles. Is there something in the middle?

KENT: Yes. The third Christian lifestyle is called the **creative tension** lifestyle. With this lifestyle, rather than avoiding contact with our culture, we engage it directly. We love our neighbors as ourselves. (Mk 12:31) And this love includes sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with our mouths and with our godly lifestyles.

FOSTER: But that goes back to walking the tightrope we mentioned earlier. Balancing between being in the world, but not acting like the world.

KENT: Yes, but we have Jesus as our example. I love the scene in Matthew 9 where Jesus joins Matthew the tax collector for dinner. In verses 5-12 it reads.

"As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other notorious sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?" When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." [NLT]

Here Jesus is mingling with sinners, but He never compromises who He is. And God also calls us to minister to those who are lost in the darkness of sin.

FOSTER: Now I want to be clear here. You are not saying for our listeners to, for example, run down to the local bar and start witnessing.

KENT: Absolutely not. Unless God calls you to that type of ministry. And regarding your calling I'd encourage our listeners to listen to the program we recorded titled "The

Christian Calling.”

But, what I’m saying is we need to be in God’s word, in regular communication with God in prayer, and meeting with a godly group of people so we can **be sensitive** to where **God** wants to lead us—and to who. It might be to our neighbor or a family member. Could be someone at our workplace.

But in order for our light to shine brightly, it must be free from sin, so confessing and avoiding sinful ways is also important.

FOSTER: The creative tension lifestyle sounds like the best. But we’re almost through our time today. Kent please give us a review of what we’ve discussed.

KENT: Sure. Today we discussed three possible Christian lifestyles. The first was the rejection lifestyle. Christians who choose this lifestyle isolate themselves from non-Christians and things of the world—to avoid being stained or influenced by it. The problem with this lifestyle is Jesus calls us to go into the world and make disciples.

The second Christian lifestyle we discussed was the accommodation lifestyle. With this style, Christians spend a lot of time with unsaved friends and coworkers, but don’t share their belief in Christ with them because they don’t want to offend them. Unfortunately, too often with this lifestyle, the Believers in Christ don’t win their friends to Jesus. The opposite happens. Their friends win them over to the ways of the world that denies Christ. And this usually doesn’t happen suddenly. Over time they just stop going to church and meeting with their Christian friends and just drift away from God.

The last Christian lifestyle we discussed was the creative tension lifestyle. With this lifestyle there will be times when you pull back from activities in the world, and there will be times when you join your unsaved friends in fun activities.

But the key to successfully living the creative tension lifestyle is having a strong connection with God through His word, prayer, and other Christians.

FOSTER: Thanks Kent. My friend, which Christian lifestyle are you living today? I hope you’ve been challenged to live a lifestyle that reflects the love of our Savior Jesus Christ.

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Program Close

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed what a healthy Christian lifestyle looks like. This material was based on material from chapter 25 of the book “The Four Priorities” by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider. “The Four Priorities” is published by “The Gathering USA” in 2007 and used by permission. You can learn more about this book and listen to any of these programs at our website championsarise.org and click on ‘The Four Priorities.’ I’m Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

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Closing ID

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