

## Immerse Day 72 :: May 11

If you had to describe the typical American, how would you describe them? Or if you feel there are too many cultures that make up an “American”, let’s get more specific. How would you describe the typical MidWestermer? Or the typical Libertyville resident? How would you epitomize the specific culture in which you live?

There is a constant theme that runs through the bible, both Old Testament and New. It is simply that as Christians, we should be different than those around us. In fact, we should work hard to be different. Our behaviors, habits, language, choices, and allegiances should be different from those around us. This is called “being holy”, literally “set apart FOR God FROM the things around you.”

Today’s text brings this topic to mind again without using the word “holy”. As you enter this new land, God tells His people, you must not adopt their ways, their gods, their eating habits, or their lifestyles. You must follow God, not the surrounding culture. Even, the bible goes on to say, if that is your own family.

I hear a lot of people say, “but I can’t get a hearing to share my witness if I’m an oddball. I need to be like the people around me in order for them to accept me so I can share the gospel with them.” Yet again and again, those saying this never get around to sharing the gospel. No shame – evangelism is hard. But in my experience, it is those who live differently who get asked why, which leads into a discussion of faith.

We, too, need to be holy, different, set apart from the culture around us for God. And when we follow God’s path of love, grace, peace, joy, and patience, people notice. When we refuse to take part in gossip, either in person or on line, people notice. When we bring hope and peace to political discussions, people notice. When we accept the outcasts, care for the disenfranchised, fight for justice, people notice. This is the message of our readings. This is the message of the prophets. This is the message of Jesus.

How would you describe the typical member of the culture around us? Would you fit that description? Or do you stand out for Jesus? I pray we have the courage to be holy in a culture of conformity.