

The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text

Jeremiah 16:1-21

Topic

God spells-out the righteous lifestyle He had chosen for His prophet

Title

“Lifestyles of the Righteous & Faithful”

Introduction

Do you know what a ‘nakation’ is? I’m hoping you don’t. It’s a bare-it-all, clothing-optional vacation for nudists and naturalists.

Vacations specifically designed for those involved in alternative lifestyles are growing in popularity.

Cruise passengers who wanted to travel with others who shared their lifestyle once were relegated to small groups among mainstream liners or short voyages on small ships. In recent years, however, cruises for nudists and naturalists, for gays and lesbians, for cougars and cubs, and for heterosexual swingers have attracted so much interest that those groups are able to book entire large vessels.

There are all-Christian cruises. **Would you therefore consider Christianity an alternative lifestyle?**

The loose definition of ‘alternative lifestyle’ is *a way of life considered unconventional or nontraditional according to a social or cultural ‘norm.’*

By that definition, and factoring in that born-again believers are clearly a minority in this country, biblical Christianity **is** very much an alternative lifestyle.

(Of course we would call it a *superlative lifestyle* because it comes to us from God).

A question we might ask is, “How different are we than the surrounding culture?” For example, if you’re in a group of people who are free to practice their alternative lifestyle, *you’re gonna spot the nudist right away!*

Christians are told to “put-on the Lord Jesus Christ,” as if we were clothed with Him. Are we conspicuous for the way we ‘wear’ Jesus?

I want to explore some lifestyle issues that arise from our text. God had a very alternative lifestyle for His young prophet. Adjusting for time and place, **we are called to live differently than the ‘norm.’**

I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 God Has A Lifestyle For You To Choose, and #2 You Have A Lifestyle For God To Use.

#1 God Has A Lifestyle
For You To Choose
(v1-18)

Look at what God said to Jeremiah regarding his lifestyle choices:

Jeremiah 16:2 "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place."

Jeremiah 16:5 ... "Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them..."

Jeremiah 16:8 Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink."

No marriage... No mourning... No merriment for Jeremiah in the last days of Judah.

These extreme alternatives were suggested by the times in which Jeremiah lived. He and the people of Judah were about to be taken captive by the Babylonians. Knowing that, it would have been foolish to go on living his life as usual.

There is nothing wrong, normally, with marriage, mourning, or merriment. Nevertheless, we can see the signs of the times in which we live. And in every era we are called upon to serve the Lord by fulfilling the Great Commission and furthering the kingdom of God.

You ought to choose an alternative Christian lifestyle. Let's think, then, about how it affects marriage and mourning and merriment.

Jeremiah 16:1 The word of the LORD also came to me, saying,
Jeremiah 16:2 "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place."

Jeremiah 16:3 For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land:

Jeremiah 16:4 "They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth."

You see immediately why it was better for Jeremiah not to marry and have children. Sons, daughters, and wives would "die gruesome deaths."

In normal times, you find that there is a great deal of encouragement in the Bible for you to marry.

Are we, however, getting married in an alternative way that reveals our commitment to Jesus? When you do, if you are a Christian, here is what you look like:

- You show that Jesus is your first love by refusing to be in a romantic relationship with a nonbeliever.
- You go against the flow of society by abstaining from sexual behavior until marriage.

- You show the world you agree with God's design by marrying a person of the opposite sex.
- You keep your marriage pure by refusing to commit adultery.
- Except for a few exceptions., e.g., adultery and abandonment, you remain married for life.

Too many Christians have abandoned this marriage lifestyle and look exactly like the norm in our society. We no longer stand out; we're not putting on Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah was told to not marry. **We are told to uphold biblical marriage.**

Jeremiah 16:5 For thus says the LORD: "Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people," says the LORD, "lovingkindness and mercies.

Jeremiah 16:6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them.

Jeremiah 16:7 Nor shall men break bread in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother.

Prior to the final Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah was to quit attending funerals and he was to cease from mourning at all for the dead. By those lifestyle choices he would be a figure to the people of what was coming - a time of great destruction after which there would be no time for funerals or for the proper care of the deceased.

We know that a time of great destruction is coming upon this earth. It's the Great Tribulation described in chapters six through nineteen of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We also believe that the Lord's coming for us, to resurrect and rapture us, precedes the Great Tribulation and is, in fact, imminent.

Am I living in such a way as to communicate that I truly believe I could be gone in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye? This speaks to my values and my investments and as to whether or not, if someone reviewed my choices, they would say that I was seeking first the kingdom of God.

Jeremiah 16:8 Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink."

Jeremiah 16:9 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will cause to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

Jeremiah was restricted from partying.

How do **you** 'party?' I want to keep this in the realm of your heart and its desires because it's too easy to get all legalistic about certain behaviors. But, regarding your heart, would you say you'd rather be with Jesus, with His people, 'partying' in fellowship; or are your merriments things that are more characteristic of the world?

Jesus, when He was on the earth, hung with sinners and was accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. *Of course He was neither!* And when He partied with sinners, He led them to faith. They wanted to be more like Him rather than vice-versa.

Jeremiah 16:10 "And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the LORD pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?'

Jeremiah 16:11 then you shall say to them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me,' says the LORD; 'they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law.

Jeremiah 16:12 And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me.

They were openly worshipping idols, doing so right in the Temple. They were committing all manner of sexual sin. They were even practicing human sacrifice. Yet they acted surprised at the pronouncement of judgment.

This reminds me how easy it is for me to become desensitized to sin and thereby think I'm doing great spiritually.

God told them to take a look back and gauge their current lifestyle by His "law." We can, and should, look back. Am I making spiritual progress - growing in personal holiness? Or am I backsliding? Faced with a decision,

do I follow the dictates of my own heart or do I submit to God's Word no matter the personal sacrifice involved?

Jeremiah 16:13 Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.¹

Jeremiah 16:14 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,'

Jeremiah 16:15 but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.

Jeremiah 16:16 "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the LORD, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Jeremiah 16:17 For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes.

Jeremiah 16:18 And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols."

Tucked away in these verses is the promise God will not abandon His people. He speaks of a second 'exodus,' a time when He will bring the Jews back to their land and fulfill His promises to them.

I think we'd agree that God has an alternative lifestyle for His children to live. It's really a superlative lifestyle. We might disagree on some of the particulars at different times and in different places, but we'd say that it should set us apart from the world in which we are a minority.

God invites us to choose the lifestyle He describes in His Word. He leaves it to us. He doesn't force us because He loves us.

If you can believe pollster George Barna, the trend among Christians in America is to reject the alternative lifestyle.¹ He found, among other things, that only 9% of America's Christians have a biblical worldview; only 3% of Christian parents include the salvation of their children in the list of critical parental emphasis; 45% of America's Christian parents teach their children

¹ Data reported in 2005

that there are NO moral absolutes; and 43% teach their children that there are SOME moral absolutes.

Choose the superlative lifestyle. In more biblical terms, be hot rather than lukewarm. Whatever times we live in, it's never a good idea to be just barely living the Christian life.

#2 You Have A Lifestyle
For God To Use
(v19-21)

The chapter ends with a brief exchange between Jeremiah (v19-20) and God (v21).

Jeremiah 16:19 O LORD, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things."
Jeremiah 16:20 Will a man make gods for himself, Which are not gods?

No matter how bad things would get, Jeremiah saw the Lord as his "strength," "fortress," and "refuge." That's because everything we need is to be found in relationship with Him despite circumstances.

Jeremiah also indicated that the people of God were to be so attractive to the Gentiles, to nonbelievers, that they recognized how empty and meaningless all of their pursuits on the earth were and turned to God from idols.

I remember feeling that way when I met Jesus Christ as my Savior. Everything else was empty, was vanity, was hollow and shallow. The superlative life of Jesus Christ stood out against the darkness of this world.

Being different from others **makes a difference** in that it allows them to see something beautiful about life, about living. You and I are the 'Jesus' people see.

Jeremiah 16:21 "Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the LORD.

Albert Barnes wrote,

Whether we consider the greatness of the national disgrace and suffering caused by it, or its effect upon the mind of the Jews, the burning of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, followed by the captivity of the people at Babylon, stands out as the greatest manifestation of God's "hand" in all His dealings with them.

For our purposes, look at the last phrase. "... They shall know that My name is the Lord."

God has chosen to use believers to reveal Himself to lost, perishing sinners. **It is by your life and lifestyle that "they shall know that [He is] the Lord."**

In 1979 I was a lost, perishing sinner. I was following the desires of my own heart. I wouldn't admit it but everything in my life was shallow, hollow and failing. A colleague at the title company I worked for got saved, both he and his wife. Their lives changed dramatically.

It affected me - but not like you might think. I made fun of them. I openly ridiculed them. I treated them with scorn.

That is, until the Lord began to reveal Himself to me. Then, in a panic, I knew exactly where to go - to the person whose life evidenced something different and supernatural.

You and I are that person to someone; maybe to many 'someone's.'

While we sometimes try to be more like the world, the world needs us to be more like Jesus.