

2026-09-18: Dare to Be Different (HSG Sunday School)

When I look around at my peers at school, it seems like everyone has Instagram and TikTok, everyone has a boyfriend, everyone is going to homecoming and prom, everyone is watching the latest movie or TV Show, everyone dresses a certain way, everyone curses, everyone drinks alcohol even underage, everyone uses AI to do their assignments. And then I hear from my strict parents that we don't do those things. And I hear from my Sunday School servants that we don't do those things. And I hear from Abouna in the sermon (or now in the class) that we don't do these things.

And maybe I obey. I don't keep social media. I don't have a boyfriend. I don't curse. I'm responsible with my use of AI. I don't go to events that aren't fitting for me.

But it's uncomfortable. Why is being different so uncomfortable? Why am I different? Why are my parents different? Why is my Church different?

Are we actually called to be different?

We are not called to "try to be different" but we are called to be "holy" and to be "set apart" for the Lord and that will **necessarily** make us different from a world that doesn't always follow Him.

"Be holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16)

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2)

Different is not the GOAL but it's the natural result of the GOAL, most of the time

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. A lamp on a lampstand will give light.

Being Different is Uncomfortable

1. Maybe I am embarrassed - worried about rejection or ridicule
2. Maybe I am shy - I don't want to reveal too much about myself, and thus be vulnerable

3. Maybe I think it is humility - I don't want to stand out, or else it will be prideful or "showing my righteousness"
4. Maybe I don't want others around me to feel uncomfortable - they may feel the need to act differently around me

It takes courage to be different.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

- Be willing to look weird.
- Be willing to stand up for yourself.
- Be willing to get second place.
- Be willing to stand alone (you're not alone)

How to Be Holy: Discernment

Sometimes I can't tell if something is right or wrong; if something is good or bad; if something is for me or not for me.

The beginning of discernment is to assess right from wrong. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, gives us four principals:

1. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful.
2. All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.
3. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.
4. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

Is it lawful for me? Is it good for me? Does it build me up (or build others up)? Is it controlling? Could it cause someone else to stumble?

Activity: Apply these Questions to the Following

1. Social Media
2. Relationships
3. Homecoming/Prom
 - Pressure around modesty
 - Revealing dresses, body image, comparison, wanting to attract attention
 - Pressure around dating
 - "Who are you going with?"
 - Feeling of deficiency for being single or "going with a group of girls"
 - After-Parties

- What happens after can involve alcohol, vaping, drugs, unsupervised homes, sexual situations
- Lowered Boundaries
 - Music
 - Darkness
 - Dancing
 - Physical Closeness
 - Excitement
 - Being next to someone you're attracted to... boundaries at 3pm in class during daylight are obvious. Boundaries at 11pm in the dark with loud music and no one paying attention... much harder.
- Peer Pressure
 - Will I really be the only one in my group who doesn't go?
 - FOMO
- Normalization
- This is a place that the devil is in. Why should I go to him? I have no communion with demons. Why would I put myself in a place with many temptations? Or where I will face multiple temptations at the same time?
- "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." (Matthew 26:41)
- 4. Latest movie or show that your friends are watching
- 5. Revealing clothing
 - Revealing doesn't only refer to "low-cut" or "transparent"
 - Tight clothes, leggings, etc. "reveal" my body
- 6. Cursing
- 7. Drinking Alcohol
- 8. Using AI to do my Assignments
 - What if it's allowed?
 - What if it's last minute?
- 9. Music
 - With curse words
 - No curse words, sexual content
 - No curse words, no sexual content, secular

Little Foxes

Sometimes I discern a situation and I realize it has good parts and it has bad parts, so I think "I'm not gonna do the bad part."

- I'm gonna have social media, but I'm not gonna follow the bad pages.
- I'm gonna go to homecoming, but I'm just gonna take pics with my friends
- I'm gonna have a relationship, but it's not gonna be physical
- I'm gonna listen to secular music, but not the one with bad words
- I'm gonna watch the movie, but skip all the scenes with explicit content

"Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines *have* tender grapes." (Song of Songs 2:15)

- Imagine you have a garden, and you see some cute foxes and you think "they're so cute" or "they're so small" or "they're not a big deal" so you let them into your garden.
- They will spoil the vines

If I give myself concessions on small things, I am ruining for myself the big things.

- A small concession to start having social media... before I know it, I'm addicted, I'm watching inappropriate things, and having bad conversations with my "friends," I'm obsessed with likes and follows, vanity, looking at others' page in jealousy or judgment or hatred or lust
- A small concession to open myself to a relationship... before I know it, I am attached, I am considering forsaking my purity, I am convinced he is "the one" and I am rebelling against my parents and my servants and Abouna because of him
- A small concession to go to homecoming... before I know it, my dress is immodest, I'm going WITH someone, I'm dancing, I'm invited to a party, I go, a relationship comes out of it, I forsake my purity, I go to more parties, there's alcohol there...
- A small concession to the kind of music I listen to... before I know it, the music gets more extreme, the words are coming out of MY mouth, I'm bored in hymns class and in the liturgy

I Feel Like I'm Deprived of EVERYTHING

Raise your hand if sometimes you feel like I'm deprived of EVERYTHING. My parents don't let me do ANYTHING. My faith keeps many things away from me. Etc.

When parents or Church give you 100 things and then say no to one thing, what do I focus on? **The One Thing**

Does this remind you of anyone?

Adam and Eve had EVERYTHING. They had access to EVERY tree in the garden. They had access to all the animals. They had God's grace on them. They couldn't get sick or die or anything. See what the Lord said: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat." - FREELY EAT!

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat..."

Which tree do you think they focused on?

Satan wants you to stare at that tree. The forbidden tree. He's waiting for you to come close so he can deceive you and say "has God indeed said 'you shall not eat of every tree in the garden'?" 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Do you hear Satan's words??? He didn't just convince Eve to eat... he convinced her that God was holding something good back from her. He convinced her that God's commandment was different than what it really is. He convinced her to forget "freely eat" of every other tree. And he convinced her to eat.

Has God indeed said 'you shall not have social media'? Has God indeed said 'homecoming is not a good environment'? God just didn't want you to know that homecoming can be a very positive experience of fellowship with your friends! Your parents just don't want you to have fun or to be happy. Your parents just want to exercise their control over you. When will you be free?

Do you hear Satan's words?? What is he convincing me of??

- One time a youth told me "when I turn 21, I'm gonna try every flavor of alcohol" and I asked him very simply... right now you're 16 or 17... did you ever think to yourself "I'm gonna try all the flavors of juice" or "all the flavors of milk?"

Look at all the other trees...

- Everyone here has a phone? The newest new model iPhone...
- Everyone here has their own bedroom, and the privacy of their bedroom...
- Many of you here have a driver's license
- Everyone here is trusted by their parents to stay home alone
- You participate in extracurricular activities... volleyball, soccer, basketball, etc. music classes, etc.

More than that...

- Parents who care where you are
- A Church that cares about your salvation
- Friends and sisters
- Remission of sins and salvation
- Saints to follow after
- Purity
- A body given to you for your preservation
- Talents - that you have discovered and some you haven't
- A future
 - A husband who will love and cherish you and value you and be thankful for your purity
 - Children who will learn from you and grow and be like you
 - A home
 - A service
- You are smart
- You are beautiful
- You are courageous
- You are loved
- You are saved

All of these trees, and Satan will look at you and say "Yeah but look at that one..."

Why do I WANT the Forbidden Tree?

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another.” (Galatians 5:17)

There is a battle happening over your appetite. You can train yourself to want something.

Nobody is born wanting Instagram, needing likes, thinking "I can't wait for homecoming." Nobody is born knowing all the fashion trends or beauty standards or celebrities, or shows, etc.

Those are things I was **taught**

- By my friends
- By the media I consume
- By society (advertisements, politics, school, etc.)

Christianity is when I am connected to Christ and He changes me to want the good part.

Just Do the Good Part

Remember when we talked about "social media is not all bad" and "homecoming is not all bad"

Did I ever think to "just do the good part?"

- Instead of social media, let me call my friends and family and have a real relationship with them...
- Instead of AI, let me read a book
- Instead of "homecoming," me and my friends can dress up in nice [modest] dresses and go get dinner together, take pictures together, etc.
- Instead of secular music, movies, TV, let me fill myself with holy media
 - And nowadays things like "The Chosen" and "Daniel" and the Abraham movie and the King David TV Series are actually SO good

Conclusion

You're driving past a building that's still under construction. The concrete was just poured, a couple of the walls have been put up. There's scaffolding everywhere. There are temporary fences around the property.

You look at the fence and say "Why are they so strict? Why won't they let anybody into the building??"

No!

They are protecting something that's still being built.

You are still being built.

14, 15, 16, 17 years old... you're still developing an understanding of:

- Who am I?
- What makes me beautiful?
- What is love?
- What should I expect from a man?
- What is my body for?
- What does marriage look like?
- What kind of woman do I want to become?
- What do I believe?
- What makes me unique?

Those are not small questions... but the foundation is being poured. So your parents put up a fence. Your servants say you're not ready for that. Abouna tells you stay away from this. Not because "you could never handle this" but because why expose you to a storm when you're still being built?

You are trying to become holy.

Sometimes belonging to God will mean you're the only girl who says no. Sometimes you'll be the only one who doesn't go. The only one without the app. The only one who isn't in a relationship. The only one who won't laugh at the joke. The only one who does her assignment faithfully. The only one who didn't cheat.

Dare to be Different.

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