

Inside and Out

Jim Fowler

A Christian (*Christ-one*) should be a person that others might observe and refer to as “beautiful inside and out” or “kind inside and out” or “gentle inside and out.” The idiom “inside and out” first became common in English in the nineteenth century. The idiom “inside and out” is particularly pertinent to describing a *Christ-one* who has the internal reality of the Triune God living in their spirit and allows the divine character to permeate into the mind, emotions and decision-making of their soul, thus manifesting in their bodily behavior the character of Christ.

Everyone lives from the inside out, from a spirit-source that manifests character in one’s thought, emotions and determinations. But it should be particularly obvious that a *Christ-one* has a distinctively different character and behavior than those of the world around them and stands out like a light in the world of darkness.

We do not want a Christian faith that only affirms the inner spiritual reality of our spiritual identity and fails to allow the character of the Christ-life to be lived out in everyday behavior. Christian religion has become renowned for the kind of hypocrisy that wears a pasted-on “evangelical smile” and knows how to “put on the charm.”

We want to have the character of Christ, the “fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and the Godly control of ourselves” (Galatians 5:22-23), exhibited in our behavior and actions. Like an unending artesian well that just keeps flowing from within the earth, we can “keep being filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18) and thereby manifest the character of the living Lord Jesus from the “inside out.”

Living in the NOW

Many *Christ-ones* struggle with living their Christian lives in the present. A popular perspective is “the past is forgiven, the future is assured, but the present is the pits!” Many get bogged down in their past mistakes and share repetitive testimonies of how God saved them when their lives were a terrible mess.

Meanwhile, they become obsessed with prophecies about the future and fantasize how the future will be superior to the present. The past is water under the bridge. The future is but speculation, and only God knows what will happen.

So how do *Christ-ones* live in the present? To begin with we must reject the Gordian knot of legalism that ties and binds so many in religious expectations of what they must do or not do to live the Christian life.

The Christ-life is not lived by what we DO or DON’T DO, but it is only lived out in our behavior as we receive faithful receptivity moment-by-moment. **The only ONE who can live the Christ-life is Jesus Christ!** You can’t! I can’t! And all of our attempts to “pull off the Christ-life” by our own effort simply thwart what God is seeking to do in the expression of His character in Jesus Christ through us.

Stop worrying about what religion says you should be DOING, but simply rest in the acceptance and sufficiency of your spiritual BEING in Christ. Living the Christ-life is not a matter of “trying to be like Jesus” or attempting to be “Christlike”—it is the opportunity of allowing Jesus to be who he is “inside and out” of our lives. □

Adapted from It’s All About Jesus by author and theologian Jim Fowler.