

# 11 Ways to Be an Unremarkably Average Christian

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## Introduction:

**Proverbs 22:29** says, “Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings, he will not stand before unknown men” (NKJV). That’s all well and good, but excellence is really quite overrated. The fact is, only a minority of people can excel. I mean, if everybody were doing it, then it would no longer be excelling would it? Most people rarely perform above average. After all, it is called average because that is the way most people are. Therefore, I have decided to go with the majority and set my goal to be average, mediocre, unremarkable. To that end, I have come up with a very simple plan for mediocrity. I want to share 11 Ways to Be an Unremarkably Average Christian.

## Discussion:

- I. Equate Christianity with “going to church.”
  - A. Obviously, the most important passage in the whole Bible is **Hebrews 10:25**. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as is the habit of some. When the doors are open (whether we have only one longer assembly on Sunday or two shorter ones) I need to be there. But, having done that, why worry about anything else. As long as I’m “going to church” and especially if it is a church that is dotting all the i’s and crossing all the t’s about the pattern of worship and work, everything else is gravy. Don’t worry about it.
  - B. I know **II Timothy 2:15** says I need to do my best to be a worker that handles the word accurately. Surely a couple of hours a week “at church” is enough work for anyone. Just hearing the preaching and coming to the Bible classes should cut it for me. I know the Bereans were more noble because they studied the Scriptures daily in **Acts 17:11**. But who wants to be more noble when mediocrity is available for the easy taking. I know the Jerusalem Christians spent time together outside the assemblies all on their own without being assigned on an almost daily basis in **Acts 2:46**. But why would we want to do that when we already get to see each other three times a week? We might get tired of each other if we spent more time together.
  - C. Further, why on earth would I ever need to apply the things I hear in these sermons to my family life, work life, school life or relationships? As long as I “go to church” whenever the doors are open and especially if I make all the gospel meetings and special services like VBS and singings, those other things will surely be optional. As long as I apply passages like **Ephesians 4:22-32** when I am in this building, I’m probably going to be ok. Surely, there is no need to be extreme and think I need to be impeccably honest at work. There is no need to be above average and remove bitterness and wrath from my marriage and relationships. There is no need to be remarkable by keeping my speech pure while at school.
  - D. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ will try to put the Bible’s teaching into practice everywhere. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being an unremarkably average Christian, we can get by with just “going to church.”
- II. Only do what the preacher proves I absolutely have to do.
  - A. How many times do I have to make the assemblies? How many of the Gospel Meeting services do I have to attend? How much time do I need to spend praying? Do I really have to teach a Bible class to go to heaven? How short can those shorts be? How revealing can my clothes be? How much alcohol am I allowed to drink? How much money can I gamble at the casino or on lottery tickets? These are all questions folks struggle with trying to draw lines to make sure they are being good enough to go to heaven. After all, I want to be spiritual, but I want to have a little fun on the way. Let’s not get too extreme, I might run off some people.
  - B. I know **James 4:8** says I should be drawing near to God. But drawing near to the lines I have drawn, especially if they are stricter than the lines the denominations draw, that ought to be good enough for me. I know **Philippians 2:12-13** says I should work out my salvation with fear and trembling, but that is so old-school. This isn’t the 1950s for crying out loud. I know Jesus demonstrated the laws revealed in God’s word also prohibit the attitudes and actions leading up to violating the specific statements in passages like **Matthew 5:21-22; 27-28**. But that is only for people who want to take obeying God really seriously. I mean, who in their right mind would

want to be like the sinful woman of **Luke 7:37-38** going to such an extreme when they could be like Simon, the extremely righteous Pharisee, of **Luke 7:36, 44-46**, who had followed the letter of the Law on hospitality? I mean, Jesus couldn't really prove from the Law hospitality meant washing someone's feet or greeting with a kiss.

- C. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ will try to surrender to God's will and go all out in it. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we can get by with just doing what the preacher can absolutely prove we have to do.

### III. Fit spirituality in around everything else going on in my life.

- A. We are busy people these days. We have to get the kids to school. We have jobs. We have PTA. We have sports. We have camps. We have our favorite tv shows. We have vacations to take. Not to mention we have major commutes to all these things. Then there are the Titans, the Predators and the Sounds (okay, maybe nobody keeps up much with the Sounds). We have to eat, brush our teeth and try to get some sleep in the middle of all this. The fact is, the Bible's demands weren't written for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians. Times change. If the average Christian can just fit in a little Bible reading every couple of weeks, a few laser prayers when things are particularly bad and most of the assemblies and classes we offer, they ought to be pretty good.
- B. I mean, the Lord can surely understand Jr. has a commitment to his baseball or football team. Surely God knows I need the extra work to pay for the house we bought in which we hope one day to start being hospitable. Surely Jesus realizes studying for my English final is more important than studying my Bible just for today.
- C. I know Jesus said I should seek first His kingdom and righteousness in **Matthew 6:33**. But let's keep that within reason. I can seek first His kingdom and righteousness right after I have made sure my kids have passed their ACTs with flying colors, my children's college tuition is fully funded, my retirement is set straight, my cars are paid for and my work and recreation commitments are fulfilled.
- D. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ will put seeking God's kingdom and righteousness ahead of absolutely everything. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we can get by with seeking it first after some of these earthly priorities.

### IV. Overextend myself financially.

- A. Finances are tough these days. With the rising cost of gas and health care, it is tough to make ends meet. That is especially true if I have bought a house using the highest possible mortgage for which I could qualify and then have it leveraged to the hilt. Obviously, I need two reliable cars. Public schools are awful; so if I can possibly get our kids into private that would help. And why settle for the TV I bought 7 years ago when Best Buy has the latest Plasma flat screen that would fit so nicely in my living room. That computer I have sitting on my desk is out of date. Not to mention the iPhone I purchased back in February is now obsolete. And my furniture is hideously outdated and broken down. Here is the great thing, I have run the numbers and figured out I can actually afford the payments on all those things. (By the way, I'm saying all this for me more than for anyone else). Of course, there are some who don't live extravagantly, but after they put money away for their kid's education, for retirement, their rainy day fund, paying down their house so they can live the Dave Ramsey debt free dream, there just isn't much extra for the Lord's work.
- B. I know the Bible says the borrower is the lender's slave in **Proverbs 22:7**. But really, how bad can slavery really be. I know Jesus acted like that poor widow woman who gave all she had to support the work in the temple was such a great example in **Luke 21:1-4**. But honestly, who wants to take financial advice from a broke widow. I know **II Corinthians 8:1-5** made it seem like the Macedonian Christians had done such a great thing when they gave sacrificially to help their brethren in Judea. But let's be real, who in their right mind would sacrifice from their own income especially when they are in poverty to give that much for people they don't even know. I know **Hebrews 13:16** says God is pleased when we sacrifice by sharing what we have with others. But I'm sure He understands after I pay my monthly bills, I don't have anything to share. In fact, I'm stretched so thin I wish others would share with me.

- C. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ will put Jesus' work first financially. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we'll get to supporting the Lord's work once we get some of these other really important things taken care of.
- V. When someone strikes me, I'll hit him back.
- A. Vengeance is natural. Besides, some people just need to be punished for the way they treat me. If I don't look out for me, who will? I mean, listen, I'm not a violent person. I'm not going to go around hitting people. But buddy, if my wife yells at me, you better believe I'm going to yell back. If the checkout clerk at Wal-Mart was snotty with me, I can give as good as it gets. If one of my co-workers slanders me behind my back, they had better watch theirs. I can put up with a lot, but there comes a line and if you cross it, you had better watch out. I don't get revenge, I get even and I'm not even until I'm one up.
- B. I know Jesus said if someone slaps me on my right cheek I should turn the other one to him in **Matthew 5:39**. I know He said I should love my enemies and pray for them in **Matthew 5:44**. I know Paul said vengeance was God's and I needed to overcome evil with good in **Romans 12:18-21**. I know Peter said I was called to bless those who revile me in **1 Peter 3:9**. But Jesus, Paul and Peter clearly hadn't seen my circumstances. They didn't realize how bad it would be for me. Had they been able to look forward and know what I was going through, they would know I'm an exception to the rule.
- C. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ will strive to submit to others even when they wrong us. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, when someone hits us, we're going to hit them back.
- VI. Never confess to my brothers and sisters.
- A. It is really bothersome to hear all these people today talk about how we need to start sharing with each other our deepest struggles and even confess our sins to one another. I mean really, what makes those people think it is any of their business. Obviously, if I have done anything really bad and it has brought shame and reproach on the church, I should go forward and let them know I realize it was wrong, apologize and promise to never sin again (as if that's possible). But who do they think they are saying I should bear my soul with my struggles and sins to someone else. As far as I'm concerned, that sounds too much like the Boston Church.
- B. I know **James 5:16** says I should confess to my brothers and sisters. I know that is not talking about "going forward," but about finding supportive brethren who will help me overcome sin and pray with me. I know James said that would heal my sin sickness, which really means it is not a question about whether anyone else has the right to know but about whether or not I really want help to overcome my sin. But, I'm sorry, I'd really rather just keep struggling on the inside with all the shame, guilt, bitterness, resentment and more sin that causes instead of letting the light shine on my problems and getting the support I need from brethren because, I know if I confess, sooner or later someone is going to betray me. I'd rather just sit here in the pain by myself and hope it eventually goes away than take the chance of getting help from someone else.
- C. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ and overcoming sin will shed the light on their inner selves by confessing to their brethren. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we will hold all our struggles and pain on the inside.
- VII. Forgive only when others have earned it and never say I'm sorry.
- A. So many people have hurt me. I don't just mean kind of hurt. I mean really hurt. Frankly, that's just not right. How dare those people think they can just turn around and ask for forgiveness and I just give it to them? And don't expect me to say I'm sorry. The fact is, it just wasn't my fault. If they hadn't done what they did, I wouldn't have done what I did. Don't expect me to grant forgiveness until they've earned it and don't expect me to apologize.
- B. I know Jesus said if I forgive others, God will forgive me and if I don't forgive others He won't in **Matthew 6:14-15**. But I think that just meant in the small things that don't really matter very much. He can't possibly have meant the big things that have hurt me so badly. I mean, some of these folks might as well have just killed me. I know when Jesus hung on the cross, He prayed God would forgive the folks who were killing Him in **Luke 23:34**. But, He was God. Surely He

can't expect someone who is just a human like me to be that forgiving. I know Jesus said I should go to my brother when I know he is upset at me about something and make amends in **Matthew 5:23-26**. I know that passage doesn't grant any exceptions for if that brother had also done something to me. But I just don't think God will hold it against me if I wait for the other guy to apologize first. It really isn't my fault and I shouldn't be expected to make the first move.

- C. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ will offer forgiveness and say they are sorry. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we will hold grudges until folks prove they deserve forgiveness and we will never admit our wrongs and humbly apologize for them at least not until others apologize first.

#### VIII. Never change my opinion about anything.

- A. I've got all the answers figured out to all the questions that matter. So don't expect me to ever change my opinion on anything. In fact, I'm so sure I'm already right, there is no need for you to even try to tell me your opinions, thoughts and beliefs. Why listen to you when I'm already right?
- B. Okay, okay, I know **James 1:19** says I should be quick to hear and slow to speak. And yes, I know **II Peter 1:5-8** demonstrates I really do still have to grow in knowledge. I understand **Acts 15** shows sometimes people who are really convinced they are right can be wrong and need to change their opinions. But, honestly, that's not me. I've already changed my opinions once when I became a Christian. I learned the truth and now for me to remotely listen to anyone who disagrees with me means to compromise the truth I found back then. I know Apollos stands out as a stellar example of someone who was really close, really smart and very eloquent but was still wrong about some things in **Acts 18:24-28**. But that was about baptism and I know I'm not wrong on that one. Besides if I ever actually listen to anyone who disagrees they may prove me wrong from the Bible and I would have to change my opinion. I'm not going to do that.
- C. Only those who want to excel at serving Christ know the truth has nothing to fear and therefore can listen intently and with understanding to those who disagree and then change their opinions when proven wrong. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we don't ever want to listen to anyone with whom we disagree and we certainly don't want to change our opinions on anything, ever (accept maybe little bitty tiny things that don't matter).

#### IX. Never talk to others about spiritual things.

- A. I "go to church" every week, usually multiple times. As far as I'm concerned that is enough talk about spiritual things for a week's time. I mean, after two Bible classes and two sermons what else is there to talk about. I don't get together very often with other Christians, but when I do, I don't want to waste time talking about what we already discussed in Bible class. I don't really want to know what they studied this week. If it's that important, they can bring it up in our next class. I want to talk about things that are really important and really impact my everyday life. I want to talk about work, the Titans, the stock market, the baseball draft. I certainly don't want spiritual things to creep into my conversation when I'm talking to non-Christians. They will think I'm some kind of Jesus freak extremist. I obviously don't want to go out on a limb and invite them to anything we are doing within the congregation or try get together with them and read the Bible or study it. If they are interested in that, they will visit on their own or let me know.
- B. I know Jesus said if I want Him to confess me to His Father, I need to confess Him to others in **Matthew 10:32-33**. But when He said that, He didn't know the religious and social climate we would be facing today. I know He wants me to acknowledge Him to others, but surely He only wants me to do it when I am absolutely sure folks won't think I'm crazy or some kind of religious nutball. That kind of publicity for Him would be bad. I know the Philippian jailer and his entire household were converted in **Acts 16:25-34** because Paul and Silas were willing to demonstrate their spirituality openly to others. But, come on, they were already in jail. It's not like it could get any worse for them, was it? I know Paul said he persuaded others because he knew the fear of the Lord in **II Corinthians 5:11**. But I think the fear of the Lord is over blown these days. We need to remember that God loves us. It's not like He is going to punish us if we don't do what He has asked, is it? I know **James 5:19-20** says if we see someone not walking in the truth and we bring them back, we save their soul from death. And if I were certain they would listen, I would talk. But I would probably just push them further away, so I will keep my mouth shut.

- C. Those who want to excel at serving Christ and bringing others to forgiveness will talk to others about spiritual things. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we will keep our mouths shut.
- X. Don't get out of the boat.
- A. One of the oddest stories in the Bible to me is when Peter saw Jesus walking on the water and then, as if this was possible, asked Jesus to let him come out on the water too in **Matthew 14:25-32**. I mean, that was really just crazy. He could have drowned. I guess for a moment he was able to experience the thrill of walking on the water. But consider the humiliation when he failed and started sinking. I know those guys who stayed in the boat didn't get to walk on the water, but they didn't almost drown either. Peter sure was lucky Jesus reached him in time.
- B. I don't like taking chances. I don't like stepping out in faith too much. I'd rather only do the things I'm certain will work. If some folks think it is a little too off the wall or just not going to work, then I'm willing just to sit back and not do anything. Look, I know that one talent man was rebuked for doing nothing with his talent in **Matthew 25:24-28**, but I really wouldn't accomplish anything. I would be like Peter, getting out of the boat and sinking. So, I'll just play it safe and stay inside the boat, thank you very much. I know Paul said we walk by faith and not by sight in **II Corinthians 5:7**. But I think that can be carried too far. If things look like they are going to go badly, they probably will. I don't want to step out and just do what God says if I can't see the reward within my grasp. I'll just play it safe, stay in the boat, not take any risks. If I don't ever accomplish much for the kingdom. That's okay. I'll just remind God that if He wanted more out of me, He should have made me at least the two-talent man.
- C. Those who want to excel at serving Christ will get out of the boat. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we'll just stay in the boat where it is safe.
- XI. Never worry about being average, no one will ever question me about it.
- A. I know when I follow this very simple plan, I will never be anything more than an unremarkably average Christian. I will never accomplish great things in God's kingdom. I will never serve Him excellently as He deserves. For all I know, it might even cost me my soul. But I'm relying on His grace to save me anyway. But I'm not worried about this. If you're following this plan, you don't need to worry either.
- B. Here is the great thing, when I follow this plan, no one else will ever care. No one will ever feel threatened by what I do or say. No one will ever feel challenged by what I do or say. No one will ever be made to feel uncomfortable by what I do or say. No one will ever be upset by what I do or say. No one will ever call the elders and complain about what I do or say. No one will ever even be influenced by what I do or say. I will be able to just float along without attracting much attention. I won't rock anybody's boat so no one will rock mine. No one will complain about me or be upset by how I'm living. Well, except for those Christians who are trying to excel. But they are such a minority, who really cares what they think?
- C. If I am just an unremarkably average Christian, no one will ever attack me, castigate me, deride me, persecute me or oppress me. No one will ever try to put me down. No one will ever take issue with what I say. No one will ever rain on my parade. Life will just be easier if I strive for average. I think that's what I'll do.
- D. Those who want to excel at serving Christ can...well...excel, accomplishing great things for God's glory. For the rest of us, willing to settle for being unremarkably average Christians, we'll just stay average and be left alone by everyone.

### Conclusion:

But, now that I've learned how to be an unremarkably average Christian, I still come back to **Proverbs 22:29**. That passage says that those who excel will stand before kings. I can't help but think that means if I ever want to stand before The King, I need to excel at the King's things. Maybe we should shoot for excellence after all. I'll leave that call up to you.