

The new “buzz word” in our society is “Self-Identifying.” The principle is simple – you decide how you see yourself and instantly the world should see you that way, and rules should be molded to reflect your perspective on you. Wow. Sounds ridiculous, right? Well, not anymore. The most well known issue is public restrooms. It used to be that if you were born a man, you went to the men’s. And if you were born a woman, you go to the women’s. Now, if you are transgender, or simply identify as a woman, a man can go to the women’s restroom. This has become about protecting the way a person sees themselves, even if it means potential issues for the other ... well... bathroom goes – or even changes in long held laws to protect their personal convictions. Discrimination against a person’s personal choice has become the unforgivable sin. So we cater to them.

Far be it from us to tell someone:

- 1) Rules are rules.
- 2) You are what the rules say you are.
- 3) You must do what the rules say you must do.
- 4) How you feel about it only applies when you are following the rules.
- 5) We will not be changing the rules to cater to your subjective personal ideas.

Imagine this in Baseball. A person self-identifies as a home run hitter. This person gives their best three swings at thrown balls, missing two and then hitting a foul into the stands. He drops the bat and rounds the bases. The ump tells him to stop. He turns and say, *“you are not allowed to discriminate against my self-identified belief in being a home run hitter, nor the value of my efforts, I cleared the fence, it’s a homer.”*

No law abiding, people respecting, common sense comprehending person would every see the merit in that behavior. And yes, that goes for restrooms as well.

Question: Why then do people do it with “Christianity” all the time?

Ask 10 people tomorrow, in any Smith county environment, “Are you a Christian?” I our town you are liable to get 10 Yeses. Now ask, “how do you know?” “What do you mean how do I know? I just know. I believe in Jesus. I am a Christian.” “Can you prove it with Scripture?” “Are you questioning my faith?!”

Very few people answer in this way anymore: “Because I have done what the Bible says.” In fact, that answer is shunned, since it suggests works unto salvation. It’s “I believe” I am saved therefore I am.... “I believe I am a woman.... Or homerun hitter.”

Challenging someone’s self-identification as a Christian, or asking them to use Scripture to prove it, is considered highly offensive and judgmental.

So, we live in a new age – where everyone who wants to be a Christian simply has to believe that they are a Christian, feel it fully, and then expect everyone else to support it.

There is just one problem. And it is the same problem the man walking into the women’s restroom and the man circling the bases SHOULD have --- well, 5 problems. See list above!

I know, I know, it sounds like I self-identify as a judgmental meanie who thinks he knows it all.... So let’s just look at what Jesus taught on the issue of Discipleship.

Matthew 7:21-23 – This is at the end of the sermon on the mount. He had taught quite a few unpopular things (see 6 things in **5:21-46**). What if people decided not to do those things but identify themselves as disciples anyway? That will not work. Your practice and My laws matter. (**7:24-27**).

Matthew 28:18-20 – The kingdom was based on hearing ALL the teachings of Jesus and observing them. He will be with us forever, and so will His laws.

Mark 16:15-16 – Believed what? In themselves? In their personal connection to Christ? NO. Believed in the Gospel! The written, revealed will of God.

So, when the church began and grew, what do you think the Apostle's taught? Do you think they said, "we are going to give you some kingdom rules. Take what you want and leave the rest. So long as you feel like you are a Christian, God's grace will bend things to fit you? Um. No.

Let's just look at the Roman letter, so often quoted to say that God's grace covers us, no matter how we live, so long as we believe we are saved in Jesus. Lots of grace verses encourage, but also this:

Romans 6:1-2 – We can't continue acting one way, and believing God's grace will cover us.

Romans 8:12-14 – So how I live matters. How well I am led by the Spirit matters. It's not subjective.

Romans 10:17 – Faith isn't what I make of it or feel about it – it is what is taught to us in the Word!

Romans 11:22 – What if I call myself a Christian but don't continue in the Word of God? Cut off.

Romans 16:25-27 – How are we established? Not self-evaluation. Scripture and trust and obeying it.

None of this nullifies the grace of God to forgive and redeem and save unworthy sinners like us. But it proves that such an amazing relationship isn't afforded you because you want it or say it is or feel it, but it accessing only according to the Words of Christ, the Commandment of the Gospel, His Way, not ours.

Practical Example: New Testament Baptism

You wouldn't have to look far to find a half a dozen beliefs on Baptism:

- *Infant Water Sprinkling*
- *Water Immersion after Salvation*
- *Water Immersion into Salvation*
- *Spiritual Immersion in Christ*
- *Holy Spirit Baptism with Power*
- *No Baptism Important at all.*

If you were in a room with these 6 people and said, "Raise your hand if you are a Christian," what would happen? Yes. All would likely raise their hand. In our religious world, you aren't even allowed to ask this next question, but I will: "What about what the Bible teaches on Baptism?" Instantly people are offended, their self-identification has been challenged and you are likely labeled judgmental.

-- Problem—**Ephesians 4:4-6** – There is only ONE Baptism... according to men and their personal beliefs, there are many. According to God, who makes the rules for our lives – there is ONLY ONE.

So the question will forever be relevant: "What about what the Bible says about Salvation?"

John 3:5,23 – We must be born again of water and the spirit – there was much water there.

Acts 2:36-38 – People who believed and repented were baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 22:16 – Baptism has the purpose of washing away sins.

Romans 6:4-7 – It is the moment we are united with Christ to be raised free from sin.

1 Peter 3:21 – "baptism now saves you."

These passages are Scripture. They eliminate every option except one: Baptism into Salvation.

People will continue to believe in the sinner's prayer, in baptism being non-essential. And they will continue to believe that their belief in that, and their self evaluated rightness will be beyond challenge. And they will face the Lord with their "faith" and He will cast them out – **Matthew 7:23**.

Or maybe we can accept what common sense is showing us with bathrooms and baseball games.

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- 4) How you feel about it only applies when you are following the rules.
- 5) He will not be changing the rules to cater to your subjective personal ideas.

Acts 2:36-38 – That's what made Pentecost so amazing. Thousands of people who had always done it a certain way. They believed in that way and felt connected to God. They learned a new way, the only way, God's way, and they walked away from their ideas and followed His. (2:47 – God liked that very much).