

Q: Why do some Christians act ungodly?

The answer to this is multi-faceted. It was Mohandas Gandhi who said “I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.” How revealing. Oh, it makes me cringe whenever I see or hear of a “Christian” or “Christian” organization doing things that are so contrary to Christ’s teachings. Even worse, is when I find myself doing them. Here are some possibilities that could explain why:

Christians ain’t perfect. It has been correctly said that there are 2 kinds of people in this world: saved sinners & unsaved sinners (Rom 3.23-24, Mt 25.31-33, 46). When a person admits their sins to God & trusts that Christ was punished in his place on the cross, he becomes instantly saved from hell & is born again (1st was physical, 2nd is spiritual – Jn 3.3, 2 Cor 5.17). However, as long as we live in our earthly bodies, we have to do battle with our sin nature (Rom 7.18-20). And it doesn’t go away until we die (Rom 7.24-25).

The good news for Christians is that when we do sin, God will pursue us with conviction & then with loving discipline if necessary because He knows our sin is destructive to us (Jn 16.8, Heb 12.5-7, Rom 6.21). Then, we can respond in repentance & ask His guaranteed forgiveness (Heb 7.25, 1 Jn 1.9).

Christians struggle against sin, but can tap into the power of Christ to overcome it (Rom 6.11-14). There are certain sins that are harder to struggle against than others (Heb 12.1) & the temptation will readily be there, but with God’s help, they can be increasingly resisted. Non-Christians don’t struggle against sin (Rom 6.20). If you are struggling, that is a good sign. This is a matter of sanctification, where God continually & faithfully makes us more holy (set apart for Him), though there are times where it may seem like there’s no progress (Heb 10.14). Christians aren’t *sinless*, but they will *sin-less* over time. This brings us to our next possibility...

They’re spiritually immature Christians. Spiritually immature can result from not personally pursuing God (Jas 4.8). The Bible instructs new Christians to “grow up in our salvation” (1 Pet 2.2-3). Some passages speak of those who are still on spiritual milk when they should be eating spiritual meat (1 Cor 3.2, Heb 5.12-13). We are to grow in the knowledge of God of which we can primarily find in Scripture (Col 1.10, 2 Pet 3.18). God wants a relationship with us & it won’t thrive if we don’t know about Him? He expects certain things of us, but how can we please Him if we don’t know what they are? He wants to help us, but how we be helped if we don’t read His letters to us? Lack of familiarity with the Bible is like being lost without a map. Lack of prayer is like not calling for help even though you have a phone. Furthermore, if we sin, it will hinder our prayers (Isa 59.2, 1 Pet 3.7), corrupting our lifeline with the Almighty. However, if there is no growth, there may not be anything to grow...

They’re not a Christian. Not everyone who says they are Christian are actually Christian (Mt 7.21). However, it is certainly possible to know for sure that you are one (Rom 8.16, 1 Jn), but not wanting us to be presumptuous, the Bible encourages self-examination (2 Cor 13.5, 1 Jn 1.6). Nonetheless, the Bible is filled with warnings against false teachers, false prophets, false brothers, etc (Mt 7.15, Mk 13.22, Gal 2.4, Col 2.18, 2 Pet 2.1, 1 Jn 4.1). Christians are not to maintain Christian fellowship (association) with such people as they are destructive, cause some to sin & destroy Christ’s witness (1 Cor 5.11, 2 Thes 3.14, Eph 5.11, 1 Tim 6.3-5, 2 Tim 1-5).

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. – 1 Peter 2.12