Francis Schaeffer How Should We Then Live

Introduction

When we ask, **“Francis Schaeffer, how should we then live?”**, we’re inviting a dialogue that goes beyond surface-level advice. Schaeffer, a theologian, philosopher, and cultural critic, challenged Christians to confront the modern world with a clear moral compass, grounded in the truth of the Gospel. His thought remains a touchstone for believers seeking relevance in an increasingly secular society. This article explores Schaeffer’s perspective on living faithfully, the philosophical underpinnings of his message, and practical steps for applying his insights today.

Who Was Francis Schaeffer?

Francis Albert Schaeffer (1912-1984) was an American Christian philosopher and Presbyterian pastor. He founded *Cornerstone University* and the *Center for Christian Studies*, both of which continue to influence evangelical thought. Schaeffer’s writings—most notably *“The God Who Is There”* and *“A Christian Manifesto”*—combined rigorous critique of modern secularism with a passionate defense of biblical truth. His approach was always contextual: he sought to translate timeless Christian principles into the language of contemporary culture.

Core Themes in Schaeffer’s Thought

- **Reality and Truth:** Schaeffer argued that reality is objective, and truth is discovered through the lens of Scripture.
- **Culture Critique:** He identified the moral relativism and existential emptiness of modern culture, warning that without a firm ethical foundation, society spirals into chaos.
- **Grace and Responsibility:** While emphasizing God’s grace, Schaeffer insisted that Christians must take responsibility for shaping a just society.
- **Engagement, Not Withdrawal:** He encouraged believers to engage thoughtfully with the arts, politics, and science rather than retreat into isolation.

“How Should We Then Live?” – Schaeffer’s Practical Blueprint

When Schaeffer posed the question, he was not merely asking for personal lifestyle choices; he was outlining a holistic framework for living out the Gospel in everyday life. His answer can be distilled into five interlocking principles:

1. Ground Your Life in Scripture

For Schaeffer, the Bible is the ultimate source of truth. Living according to Scripture means:

1. Studying the text regularly.
2. Applying its teachings to personal decisions.
3. Allowing Scripture to shape your worldview.

2. Cultivate a Culture of Accountability

Christians should form communities where honest critique and mutual encouragement flourish. Accountability fosters:

- Spiritual growth.
- Integrity in decision-making.
- Resilience against cultural pressure.

3. Engage the World with a Gospel Lens

Schaeffer warned against apathy. Engagement involves:

- Participating in civic life.
- Advocating for justice and compassion.
- Using art and media to reflect Christian values.

4. Embrace Grace, Yet Demand Moral Standards

Grace frees us from legalism, but it also calls for ethical conduct. Schaeffer urged believers to:

- Show mercy to others.
- Hold oneself and others to high moral standards.
- Seek reconciliation rather than judgment.

5. Live with Purpose and Vision

According to Schaeffer, life should be oriented toward God’s purpose—serving others, building community, and advancing the Kingdom. Practical steps include:

1. Identifying personal gifts and passions.
2. Aligning those gifts with service opportunities.
3. Setting long-term goals that reflect Christian stewardship.

Applying Schaeffer’s Insights Today

In a world dominated by digital noise, social media echo chambers, and rapid cultural shifts, Schaeffer’s guidance remains profoundly relevant. Here are actionable ways to live out his call:

- **Daily Devotion:** Allocate at least 20 minutes each day for Scripture reading and prayer.
- **Community Involvement:** Join or start a small group focused on biblical study and mutual accountability.
- **Political Awareness:** Educate yourself on policy issues, then vote and advocate in line with biblical principles of justice.
- **Creative Expression:** Use music, art, or writing to communicate the Gospel’s transformative power.
- **Mentorship:** Guide younger believers, sharing the wisdom of living a life anchored in truth.

Conclusion

Francis Schaeffer’s question, “How should we then live?” is an invitation to live deliberately, with Scripture as our compass and the Gospel as our anchor. By grounding ourselves in truth, cultivating accountability, engaging culture, embracing grace, and pursuing purpose, we honor the call to reflect God’s love in every sphere of life. Whether you’re a seasoned believer or newly exploring faith, Schaeffer’s timeless wisdom offers a roadmap for living authentically in a world that is constantly in flux.

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