

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Walking in Wisdom Toward Them that Are Without

By words and actions, Christians are making some kind of an impression on people around them. Our neighbors who are outside the kingdom of Christ are being influenced, either for good or for bad, by what we say and do. True enough, some may pay little attention to us, but others take more notice of our way of life than we may suppose.

Paul admonished the saints at Colosse, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." (Col. 4:5). When the apostle wrote concerning "them that are without" versus "them that are within" (1 Cor. 5:12), he was referring to brethren in the Lord, in contrast to people out of Christ. To Christians, "them that are without" means people who have not embraced the truth and, therefore, remain outside the body of our Lord. The following are some of the principles involved in our conducting ourselves wisely toward outsiders:

Practice Honesty

Honesty should be viewed as a basic law of right conduct, not a matter of mere policy. We should show integrity and freedom from deceit in all our business transactions. Our means of livelihood must be honorable. Writing along this line to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have need of nothing." (1 Thess. 4:11,12). A Christian quickly kills his influence for good when he acts deceitfully, becomes involved in shady dealings, or pursues a course that is less than honorable.

Live Consistently

Everything which the Christian does should be consistent with the teaching of Jesus Christ. Some things are so manifestly contrary to right that they should never be named as befitting saints. (Eph. 5:3). In doctrine, in worship, in our individual work, in all that we do — there must be harmony with the will of God. Outsiders may not know much about the Bible, but they soon detect inconsistency between teaching and practice on the part of professed believers in Jesus.

Consistency demands constancy. Some members of the church live one way on Sunday and another way on Monday; one way when in the company of other Christians but differently before the worldly. This is plain hypocrisy and is detected by both the Lord and the world.

Show Understanding and Sympathy

Outsiders need help. Some of them are engulfed in immorality and unbelief. Some have high moral principles but are ignorant of God's positive divine laws. Others are caught up in religious errors —perhaps Catholicism, Protestant denominationalism, or the false concepts of some cult. True Christians must try to understand their plight. We must teach rather than berate, lift rather than crush, pointing to the Lamb of God as the means of salvation and hope eternal. We can show sympathy without compromise. We need not abandon the truth to defend it in love.

Be Distinct

Christians are a called-out people. Through the gospel we are called out of Satan's kingdom to serve in the kingdom of Christ. We must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. (Jas. 1:27). "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened." (Eph. 4:17). Whatever time we spent in sinful living prior to our conversion to Christ ought to suffice. (1 Pet. 4:3).

It is sometimes hard to live among outsiders, to work among them, and be sympathetic toward them without partaking of their deeds that are evil. The Christian's watchword is "vigilance." We must be watchful over our own conduct to prevent our losing those distinct qualities that make us God's people.

Exercise Good Judgment

Wisdom means prudence. James said, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and

upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (Jas. 1:5). Often sincere attempts to do good end in failure for lack of sound judgment. The Christian needs discernment, practical and well-informed wisdom —the good sense to apply the Word of God. Paul walked with wisdom when he was "made all things to all men" that he might by all means save some. (1 Cor. 9:22).

Let us pray that God will help us to conduct ourselves prudently toward outsiders that our influence might be to His honor.

— Irvin Himmel

The Fruit Of The Spirit Is ... Four Wonderful Things

First, it's singular. It's "fruit," not "fruits." It's an important difference. As fruit of the apple tree is at once colorful, shiny, firm, juicy, sweet, nutritious, edible, seed-bearing, and durable; so the fruit of the Spirit is at once love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To be a child of Satan, we need only practice one of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). To be a child of God, however, we must put on and continually grow in all aspects of THE fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Second, it requires more than not doing wrong. Pleasing God requires two things: not doing wrong and doing right. We can do the former without the latter. For example, to please God we must not get drunk. Does this mean we can get tipsy? No! Not getting drunk is only half the battle. To please God we must also exercise

self-control and drinking clearly impairs self-control even if we stop short of drunkenness. Consider Leviticus 10:8-11; Proverbs 31:4-5.

Again, to please God we must not hate. Does this mean we can be indifferent? No! Not hating is only half the battle. To please God we must also love and love precludes indifference as much as hatred. I don't think some people understand this principle. Otherwise, they wouldn't defend the indefensible. Not doing wrong is the silver rule. To be golden, we must also do what's right and that's much more than not doing wrong.

Third, it condenses the complete Spirit led life into nine words we must fully understand. Love, agape in Greek, is the motivation or driving force of the Spirit-led life. "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). "If I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). We love when we want and do what's truly best. Since God is love and knows what's truly best, we agape when we treat Him, others, and ourselves as He commands. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15); "We love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments" (1 John 5:2).

Joy is the way the Spirit-led life effects emotions. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Admittedly, sorrow has its place, but joy is:

"the distinguishing atmosphere of the Christian life. We may put it this way — whatever are the ingredients of the Christian life, and in whatever proportions they are mixed together, joy is one of them."

“In the Christian life joy always remains a constant ... It has been said that 'Rejoice!' is the standing-order of the Christian ... Every virtue and all knowledge is to be irradiated with joy; even the patience and the endurance which might well be bleak and grim are to be lit with joy ...” “There is no virtue in the Christian life which is not made radiant with joy; there is no circumstance and no occasion which is not illumined with joy. A joyless life is not a Christian life, for joy is the one constant in the recipe for Christian living.” (Barclay).

Peace is the way the Spirit-led life effects relationships. Peace describes the state of a relationship between two or more parties. In the Spirit led life, there is peace with God (Romans 5:1); as much as depends on it, peace with other people (Proverbs 16:7); and peace within (Philippians 4:6-7). Biblical peace is much more than an absence of conflict. It describes healthy, secure, intimate, satisfying, growing relationships. Peace following love and joy isn't accidental. Love nurtures relationships and relationships are the source of real joy in life.

Longsuffering is the way the Spirit-led life reacts when it suffers. It doesn't blow up, complain, get even, or give up. Rather, it stays calm, looks for the good in the bad, lets things go, and stays optimistic.

Kindness is the way the Spirit-led life reacts to the suffering of other people. It sees it, is touched by it, wants to ease it, and does so whenever possible.

Goodness is what the Spirit-led life does because it's driven by love, seeking joy and peace, and reacting to suffering. To paraphrase Hamilton, “Goodness is love in action, love with its

hand to the plow, love with the burden on its back, love following the footsteps of Him who went about continually doing good.”

Faithfulness is one reason why the Spirit-led life does what love demands. It believes God knows best, submits to His direction, and realizes that outcomes depend directly on us.

Gentleness is how the Spirit-led life goes about doing what love demands. It understands that how we say or do is just as important as what we say or do.

Self-control is another reason why the Spirit-led life does what love demands. It makes no excuses. It understands that God is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20), that we can do all things through Him who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Fourth, it's limitless. “Increase and abound in love” (1 Thessalonians 3:12); “Joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8); “Peace be multiplied” (2 Peter 1:2); etc. One blessing of the Spirit-led life is that it just keeps on getting “richer, fuller, deeper ... sweeter as the years go by.”

If we'll bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, the Spirit will bless us immeasurably. The fruit of the Spirit is ... wonderful. Isn't it?

- Tim Norman

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT PUBLIC PRAYER

We commend our men who are willing to help during the assemblies by leading the congregation in prayer. You are doing a good work!

Please allow us to make a few suggestions that can improve our efforts in public prayers:

1) Speak UP! If you cannot be heard, you are not really doing your job. How can you 'lead' others if they can't hear you? You must project your voice in a louder and more forceful tone than you commonly do in normal conversation. A good way to measure how loudly you should speak is to imagine someone standing in the farthest corner of the building - then speak so they could easily hear you.

2) Remember that this is a public prayer. This will dictate what sort of things you should pray about. Private matters should be dealt with in private prayers.

3) Don't pray to be seen or heard by men (Matthew 6:5-8). You are not trying to impress men. You are speaking to the eternal Father in Heaven.

4) Give some thought to the length of your prayer. Public prayers do not need to be extremely long. The model prayer that Jesus prayed (Matthew 6:9-13) can be recited in less than 20 seconds. But, having said that, we should also advise you not to get in a big rush, either. Nervousness can make you speak so rapidly that it is hard for others to understand.

5) Don't sermonize. Again, you are speaking to God, not men. Don't use your prayer as an opportunity to 'make a point' with others who are in the assembly.

6) Do everything (volume, speed, content, motive, etc.) in such way that others will be able to add their "amen" at the end of the prayer (1 Corinthians 14:16).

- Greg Gwin

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Why I Am A Christian!"* (text: 2 Tim. 1:12); Sunday evening: *"Lessons From A Jewish Newborn!"* (text: Luke 2:21-24).

OUR GOSPEL MEETING: July 27 – Aug. 1, Sunday through Friday, with Jeremy Paschall preaching. Sunday at our regularly scheduled times, and Monday through Friday at 7:00 p.m.