

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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How Do People View You?

I have an interesting question to ask you. How do people view you? And, is it important to know that? Ultimately, does it matter? There actually is a Bible answer to the second question, which we will discuss. You will have to answer the first by examining yourself, and trying to look at your words and actions as others do.

First, does it matter? Well, in one way yes, and another way no. Consider Paul's words, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:3-4). God will judge us. Because of this, we must ultimately please Him alone. If we are pleasing Him, then it doesn't matter if others condemn us. All that matters is God is pleased.

However, that doesn't give us carte blanche to go around acting obnoxiously, with no concern what others might think. Consider that God requires us to concern ourselves with how others might view us. In other words, to please God we need to please men, within certain parameters.

We are to be good examples. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Our lives must be lived so that God is seen through our actions.

We are to do whatever possible to save souls. Paul wrote, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul considered who he was teaching – Jew, Gentile, man, woman, weak, strong, and tailored his approach (though the gospel was always the same) to avoid any offense that might make his teaching less effective.

We are to be loving toward one another. "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Ultimately, our call is for careful self-examination, with a view to helping your brethren in Christ and your fellow man. So now, let's try to answer the first question.

Do you consider yourself to be a tolerant person? How do others view you? Do they think of you as tolerant of sin? Of being unwilling to admonish another, when such admonition is needed? Here is the important question. If they view you in that way, is there a real reason for it? Might your view of yourself be a rationalization for some real fault that exists?

Do you consider yourself to be a defender of truth? How do others view you? Do they think of you as intolerant, judgmental and closed minded? Do they think you to be unkind, undiplomatic, quick to criticize? Is there a real reason for their perceptions? Are you rationalizing a sinful tendency?

Do you think of yourself as easygoing and flexible? Do others perceive you to be undependable, uninterested, lacking in diligence in your duties and the promises you have made? Is there some legitimacy to their less than flattering view of you? Are you excusing yourself when you fail to follow through with an obligation or promise?

Do you think of yourself as plain spoken? Do others view you as cantankerous, unkind, meddling, unpleasant, critical? Do they have a real reason for looking at you in such a light? Do you dismiss others being offended because you were "telling it like it is?"

What about your view of yourself as being sociable and an extrovert? Do others look at you as a gossip? Are they disappointed that you have revealed a private trust they have shared with you? Is there a valid reason why they may hesitate to talk with you of weighty or serious matters?

We could go on and on with the questions. Yes, there is certainly the point to be made that we should all think the best of others, and strive not to ascribe bad intent when such intent is not there. Having said that, we should also be careful to examine our words and actions that we might encourage, rather than discourage others.

I have long observed that many people are lacking in self-awareness. For some it is a natural flaw, one that needs to be worked on. On others it is simply a lack of care, which is unfortunate and wrong. If you have ever said to yourself, "I don't care what others think"... you need to think again.

You may try and try to be acceptable to men, and never be successful. That's OK, as Jesus was crucified, Paul was persecuted, and in the end, all that matters is whether or

not you please God. But, you need to do the best you can to be a positive influence, perceived as righteous by your brethren. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

- Stan Cox

Words and Example

"Words" are symbols of ideas and the vehicles by which God delivered His message and will to man. He created man with a mind that can receive, reason, understand, and speak words. Man himself can thus utter words and declare unto others what he has learned from God.

This, Christians are responsible to do. They have by reason and discernment learned the gospel of Christ and are to declare this message to the whole world (see Mark 16:15; Matt 28:19-20). They are likewise called to teach, reprove, and warn one another by words of truth. To reason and understand is an important ability they have, but there goes with it an important responsibility.

Christians must follow the example of the apostle Paul and not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God (see Acts 20:27). They must not be afraid, intimidated, or dissuaded from accepting and fulfilling this significant role. They must boldly yet kindly tell sinners that they cannot be saved by "faith only," that baptism is necessary to salvation from sins, and that they after becoming Christians can fall from God's grace.

Christians must likewise speak openly to one another as brethren and in reproof tell fellow saints who need it to put God's kingdom first and assemble with the saints, to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against and defile their spirits, and to show sincerity and genuineness in serving their Master.

Yet "words," as important as they are, in the absence of godliness, reverence, and holiness are not only insufficient but harmful. A Christian's example and way of life when they are not true to God's words speak volumes to those who know him and observe his conduct.

The Pharisees, whom Jesus consistently rebuked, were especially good with words. Although they were often controlled by and devoted to traditions of men, they knew much about God's will and were vocal in declaring it to fellow Jews. Their lives, however, did not always back up and fulfill the truth they spoke to others. And this is a serious problem

and hindrance to those who see this hypocrisy and are in search of excuses for their own disobedience.

If there is anything in this world that people despise, it is a hypocrite—a person who says and teaches one thing and does something different. Society, to this day, remembers with repulsion the Jim Bakkers, the Jimmy Swaggerts, and other TV evangelists who spoke openly of spiritual values and moral conduct—yet secretly sought out prostitutes in violation of the fundamentals of holiness, and openly displayed their greed and love of money in search for treasures on earth (see 1 Pet 1:14-16 and Matt 6:19-21).

Jesus warned His own nation to beware of hypocrites and called out one example after another to highlight the insincerity of their evil hearts (see Matt 23). What they bid you do, this do, Jesus said. Follow their “words,” not their “example”—for they say and do not. They like to speak the truth and bind heavy burdens, but won’t lift one finger to do the things they say. To emphasize their vile and unseemly behavior and the reward that hypocrites receive, Jesus concluded: “Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?” (Matt 23:1-4, 33).

May these vile hypocrites be a reminder, brethren, to not only speak the words of truth and soberness, but to live consistently with and by these words. Nothing can frustrate and hinder the work of the Lord more severely than hypocritical brethren who love to speak the truth but fail to exemplify it in their lives. Words matter, but they must be accompanied by example.

- L. A. Stauffer

Things to Remember When In Worship

Remember the purpose of worship is not to entertain or amuse one another, but it is to pay homage, love and honor to God.

Remember the people in worship; they are not perfect, neither are you. Those with imperfections are worshipping Him who is perfect. He who realizes his own imperfections most is better qualified to worship Him than he who imagines himself ‘perfect’.

Come to the worship period thinking how great God is and how insignificant you are.

Give due attention to the thoughts contained in the spiritual songs as well as in the harmony and melody of the singing of them.

Remember that a sermon depends as much on the hearing of it as the presenting of it.

Keep in mind that a critical, intolerant attitude is foreign to the spirit of Him whom you purpose to praise and to them that are gathered with you. You should be seeking to encourage those who are worshipping with you.

- Jim Sasser

* "A cloudy day is no match for a sunny disposition!"

* "A good exercise for the heart is to bend down and help someone up!"

* "A man is rich according to what he is, not what he has!"

* "A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing!"

* "A hypocrite is a person who's not himself on Sunday!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The sermon for Sunday morning is: *The Privilege and Peril of the Priesthood!* (Text: Exodus 28-30).

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)