



Foreword: Morals and Character

Lewis Willis

On the pages that follow, the men whom I have asked to write this series of articles will set forth the realities of *falling morals* and *declining character traits* in our culture. These declines are neither new nor unknown to those who are observant. Special emphasis will be given to the effect these changes have had in the lives of Christians and on local congregations. This study will be based on the teaching of the New Testament, both in stating the problems, and in citing the solutions to those problems.

But, wait a minute! Will citing book, chapter, and verse be decisive in this study? Let me voice my personal concern. There was a time when we could *assume* that most people believed in God. But not anymore! There was a time when we could *assume* that most people knew the Bible was the word of God. But not anymore! There was a time when the Lord's people were convinced and persuaded of truth *simply by citing the teaching of God's word*. But not anymore! Brethren are often the first to challenge the truth and application of Scripture to their lives. Many brethren do

not believe the inspiration of Scripture as most of you do.

Several factors have contributed to this decline of faith in the integrity of the Bible to regulate man's conduct. For years, denominational preachers have discredited inspiration to justify their unauthorized practices. If the Bible refutes their error, they just deny the truth of the Bible. Among brethren we have seen this same departure. Some years ago Leroy Garrett said, "God is infinite and infallible; the Bible *as a human product* is not" (my emphasis, LW). One can easily see the comfort this belief would bring to Garrett and those who agree with him. Carroll Osburn, an

Abilene Christian University Bible professor said, "The Bible contains *errors* in Science, History, and Geography" (my emphasis, LW). If the Bible is in error on these subjects, how can one have confidence in anything it teaches?

More recently, among conservative brethren, Ed Harrell taught that Romans 14 tolerates "contradictory teachings" *see "Morals and Character" on p. 344*

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Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mike.willis001@cs.com.

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The Increase in Moral Decay and the Loss of Character

Paul R. Blake

It is an old fable often told. The hunter raised his rifle and took careful aim at a large black bear. Just before he pulled the trigger, the bear spoke to him in a soft, soothing rumble, "Is it not better to talk than to shoot? What is it that you want? Let us negotiate the matter." Slowly lowering his rifle, the hunter replied, "I want a fur coat." "Good," said the bear, "that is certainly negotiable. I only want a full stomach, so let us work out a compromise." So, they sat down together to negotiate, and after a time the bear walked away alone. The negotiation was successful; the bear had a full stomach, and the hunter had a fur coat. He was inside the bear.

NEGOTIATING MORALITY

The adversary wants Christians to negotiate moral issues with him. Sadly, many Christians are willing to come to his bargaining table and exchange their character and integrity in this life, and their soul in the life to come, for temporary ownership of Satan's cheap baubles and a quick sampling of his fleeting pleasures. They foolishly choose to forget the warning: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

Why do many who profess Christ attempt to negotiate with the Devil? Because they want what they are not supposed to have. God made clear the boundaries of moral conduct in his word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 John 3:3). Rather than consulting his word and being content with the Lord's code of character, some see how far they can go in compromise with the world without appearing to be engaged in obvious sin.

Two desires are at war within humankind. On one side is the spiritual man who wants to do what is right, and on the other side is the carnal being who wants to indulge in material and worldly excesses (Gal. 5:16-25). The spiritual being is motivated by knowledge of godliness and truth. The carnal being is motivated by interest in base desires and passions. The spiritual being wants to go to heaven; the carnal being wants to fit in with the world so that he isn't embarrassed over moral conduct. It troubles the carnal side of man that worldly minded people think he is strange (1 Pet. 4:1-4). The spiritual being wants to learn more about the word of God, but the carnal side of man wants to sleep late on Sunday morning. The spiritual being wants to give of his means sacrificially, but the flesh wants to obligate his money for material things. They fight back and forth within a man until his

see "Moral Decay" on p. 345

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Immodest Dress

Doug Roush

Ours is a society that seems intimidated to speak or display the truth in the face of what is popular or chic. Generation after generation has been desensitized to truth in the matter of how one should dress. It is far past time for those who love Christ and his standard of truth to speak up so that we can return to our God intended purity.

WHAT IS MODESTY?

1 Timothy 2:9 instructs Christians to wear “modest” apparel. “Modest” is from the Greek, *kosmios* from which we get our English word, “cosmos.” It is defined as, “well arranged, seemly” (Thayer). As used in this passage, the word “appropriate” would render a good understanding of the divine instruction. Of key importance to our understanding of modesty, as it is used in 1 Timothy 2:10, is the phrase, “which is proper for women professing godliness” (NKJ). Any person who professes to be a Christian, i.e., “a follower of Christ,” will consider the fact that their attire reflects on Christ and will adorn themselves in a manner that is appropriate, i.e., it will not dishonor to him and his character.

The specific problem being addressed in the context of 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, is the inappropriateness of emphasizing our physical appearance over our spiritual demeanor. While we are permitted to wear jewelry, fix our hair, or wear costly clothing, it is a sin to wear such things for the purpose of calling attention to them, and thereby ourselves. The contexts of 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 and 1 Peter 3:1-4 deal with the prohibition against the vanity of being more concerned with the outward appearance than we are about displaying Christ (cf. Matt. 23:25, 26).

Likewise, 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 and 1 Peter 3:1-4 guard against flamboyance. One with a modest attitude does not set out to draw undo attention to self. Rather, true modesty is a reflection of divine instruction — displayed in a humble assessment of self and a fervent desire to exalt our Creator and Savior. A modest attitude is framed by the divine instruction of Philippians 2:3, “. . . with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself” (NAS). Christians are to be careful to adorn themselves in such a manner so as not to direct the viewer’s attention away from the characteristics of Christ, in favor of that which is carnal.

In complement to modesty, we are told to dress with “shamefacedness.” This is from the Greek *adikos* which means, “a sense of shame or honor, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect” (Thayer). Although society may deem alluring or flamboyant dress chic or stylish, 1 Timothy

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2:9 instructs Christians that such dress is inappropriate for one who professes godliness. Those who are “sober” (*sophrosune*, i.e. [1] soundness of mind [2] self-control, sobriety — Thayer) will give serious consideration to this instruction.

WHEN ARE WE NAKED?

In the beginning, God did not create man and woman with a wardrobe. In the ideal and pristine setting of matrimony, privacy, and innocence there was no charge or sense of shame (Gen. 2:25; Heb. 13:4; Prov. 5:18-19). However, after partaking of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were ashamed of their conduct before God. The privacy they had enjoyed in the presence of God had been destroyed by their sin. They were both spiritually and physically naked before him and woefully failed in attempting to hide it.

Adam tried to hide their spiritual nakedness by hiding from God. When God confronted him, Adam admitted, and God confirmed, that they were naked, in spite of being clothed with the aprons made of fig leaves (Gen. 3:7-11). It was not until God provided the coats of skins that the divine record considers Adam and Eve as being “clothed” (Gen. 3:21). In so doing, God established a precedent for all mankind for all time.

The incident with Adam and Eve makes it abundantly clear that one may be wearing something and still “be naked,” i.e., “scantily clad” (Thayer). Consider again, Adam made a “loin covering,” but he and God recognized that he was still naked. God replaced Adam’s garment with a “coat” or “tunic” — a garment that covers the body from the shoulders to the knees. Obviously, any clothing that permits the viewing of the flesh from the neckline to the knees results in one being clothed in a manner that God identifies as “naked.” Priests were instructed to wear an undergarment that would cover their thighs, and thus cover their “nakedness” (Exod. 28:42). The figure of shame in Isaiah 47:1-3 includes uncovering the thigh. God requires that nakedness be covered (Exod. 20:26; Ezek. 16:8). Although Peter was fishing without wearing his outer garments in the relative privacy of his boat on the sea while wearing his undergarments, he put on his coat before going ashore to meet the Lord (John 21:7). Two things are obvious here: (1) as stated previously, one may be wearing something and still “be naked,” (2) Our “private parts” are defined by God to include a much larger portion of our body than they are considered to be by our culture.

God has been abundantly clear on the fact that the public viewing of nakedness is shameful. Consider: Micah 1:11, Ezekiel 23:29, Revelation 16:15, Job 24:10, Genesis 9:22, 23, Leviticus 18:7-19, Lamentation 1:8, and Revelation 3:18.

It is obvious that man’s assessment of nakedness and

God’s assessment of nakedness often do not agree. Those who profess godliness must respect God’s assessment of nakedness. It matters not what man’s definition of nakedness may be, or if others “don’t consider you naked.” Nor does it matter if you look in the mirror and declare yourself “clothed,” in spite of the fact that your clothing does not meet the parameters described in the preceding paragraphs. Dressing in a manner that conforms with God’s definition of “nakedness” is sinful, and it is certainly not consistent with one “who professes godliness.” God’s word instructs those who desire to be identified as followers of Christ that nakedness (“naked dress”) is a sin and inconsistent with one who professes godliness.

“Naked dress” presents a stumblingblock and opportunity for lust. Such is worthy of condemnation (Matt. 18:6, 7; Luke 17:1; Rom. 14:13, 21; 1 Cor. 10:23, 24). However, God’s word does not teach that naked dress is a sin only when it excites someone to lust. *God’s word simply teaches that dress that exposes nakedness is sin!*

Nevertheless, the view of the body of the opposite sex is intended to excite predicted responses. The clothing, or lack of clothing, we wear contributes to that response. It is God’s intention that such viewing be reserved for one’s spouse. Over-exposure outside of this relationship is profanity. The word, “profane” means, “to take that which is holy/special and make it common.” When we take something dedicated to a special purpose and use it in a common way, that is, by definition, profaning it. The sexual attractiveness of our body was given to us to be used by and for only one person — our spouse. To allow the public full or provocative viewing of our body is to profane our body, our spouse, and sex, when, in fact, God has designed each of these to be special. Those who “professes godliness” must acknowledge that their body belongs to God (1 Cor. 6:18-20), and to their spouse (whether realized or prospective). We “steal” from God and our spouse when we use our body in a manner that is unauthorized by God and that is to be reserved for the sole pleasure of our spouse.

CLOSING ADMONITIONS

Much of Western and European culture promotes what God classifies as naked dress as acceptable, if not preferred. Sadly, many who profess godliness have accepted this worldly standard over God’s. Many elders, preachers, Bible class teachers, parents, and children are so desensitized to God’s standard of modesty, they find themselves defending, or at least excusing, immodesty. To wear clothing that is low cut in the neckline, midriff or torso bearing, exposing any portion of the thigh, is to dress in a naked manner. To ignore God’s instruction is to display contempt for his love and the sacrifice of Christ’s blood (Heb. 10:26-31).

If you are one who “professes godliness,” please consider 1 Peter 2:11; James 1:27; 4:4; Romans 12:1-2; 1

Ungodly Entertainment

Vernon Teagarden

“Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals” is what the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 15:33). Of course, contextually, this passage is warning the Corinthians to not keep company with false teachers because of the effect those teachers would eventually have on them. (Specifically, Paul had in mind those among them who were denying the resurrection, v. 12.) Should any of the Corinthians have chosen to have such teachers as companions it would certainly have led to their moral downfall. “How?” one may ask. The answer is simple. Given enough time, the false teacher would corrupt one’s mind from the simplicity of the gospel to the point where one would begin to reason that since there is no resurrection, hence, no afterlife, we might as well “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:33).

However, the false teacher is not the only “bad company” that is able to draw our hearts away from the gospel and lead us into moral decay and ruin. Every day, many Christians associate with “bad company.” What am I talking about? I’m talking about bad company in the form of ungodly entertainment. I’m talking about constant association with hundreds of amoral Hollywood script writers, producers, directors, and actors, by habitually watching their sitcoms and movies, which for the most part, are not appropriate for the Christian to watch.

Even “the children of this world” are beginning to understand the evil effects of ungodly entertainment. Note the following statistics taken from “Maple City Musings” (Vol. IV, Number 1 [September/December 2002], editor, Thomas C. Hickey):

An AP/Media General Poll found that 82 percent of people

found movies too violent, 80 percent found too much profanity, 72 percent complained of too much nudity. By a ratio of 3/1, people thought movies were getting worse, rather than better.

Parents Magazine found that 71 percent rated movies as fair, poor, or terrible. 72 percent favor restrictions against ridiculing religion. 64 percent favored restrictions against belittling traditional values such as marriage and motherhood.



A Gallop poll found that 58 percent of viewers are offended by prime time television frequently or occasionally, only three percent thought that television portrayed positive values.

Time/CNN found that two thirds of people blamed movie violence for the epidemic of teen violence, and 70 percent favored restraints on the showing of violence and sex in feature films.

The *Los Angeles Times* found that 63 percent believe that television encourages crime.

Brethren, if the general public is waking up to the fact that ungodly entertainment adversely affects us, shouldn’t we be waking up as well? It is sad that I even have to ask that question, but it would be naive to pretend that Christians are not exposed to ungodly entertainment in all its forms. It would be equally naive to think that this exposure is not affecting us. As Solomon said, “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?” (Prov. 6:27). To think otherwise would be to deceive oneself.

A Christian is to walk as a child of light (Eph. 5:8). Is he so walking when he goes to a theater, or rents a DVD to watch a dirty movie that promotes nudity, sexual promiscu-

ity, fornication, or adultery? A Christian is to “let no corrupt communication” proceed from his mouth (Eph. 4:29), or foolish talking or jesting (immoral language) (Eph. 5:4), but it is okay to willingly listen to profanity in the theater or to invite foul language and sexual innuendoes into one’s living room via the television, video, or DVD player? A Christian is to walk circumspectly (carefully) and not as a fool (Eph. 5:15). But is he doing so when he logs onto the Internet to download the latest in video porn (cf. Gal. 5:19)? Furthermore, why would a child of God want to keep company with those who constantly and consistently make fun of religion, mock God, demean Christianity, and virtually oppose everything a Christian stands for? Instead of holding hands with such and finding pleasure in their works, the Christian should be exposing their evil deeds (Eph. 5:11). Instead of finding pleasure in describing every detail of this or that dirty movie, we should be “ashamed to even speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (Eph. 5:12).

Sometimes I think that many children of God have completely lost the ability to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and have become like those in Isaiah’s day who called “evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Isa. 5:20). Some Christians have become so conditioned or desensitized by ungodly entertainment that they have become like those Paul describes in Ephesians 4:19 “who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness.” They simply have ceased to care about these matters. Their spiritual perception has become so dulled that they are no longer shocked at the nudity, sex, profanity, violence, or the bizarre that they see or hear in the movie theater or on television. Their understanding is darkened because of the blindness of their hearts (Eph. 4:18), and they need to wake up and quit giving place to the devil (Eph. 4:27; 5:14).

At this point someone may be ready to say, “I grant you that I do need to be careful about what I do publicly. After all, I do need to be cautious about what kind of impression I am making on others. However, what I do in the privacy of my own home is none of your business. If I choose to watch certain sitcoms, rent certain movies that you find questionable, that’s up to me, not you.” However, to make such an argument is to overlook a very important fact. What you do in the privacy of your own home may not be my business, but it certainly is the Lord’s! Paul taught that “whatsoever you do in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17), and this would include what I would do privately as well as publicly. “This is an all-inclusive injunction. It covers every aspect of our lives, both word and deed, and every day and moment of our lives . . .” (Walton Weaver, *Truth Commentaries, Colossians* 546). This would mean that even our private lives are to be governed by the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, what

you do in the privacy of your own home may be hidden from others, but certainly it is not hidden from God (Matt. 6:4; Heb. 4:13). The day is coming when God will bring to judgment even those secret things that you thought you were getting away with (Rom. 2:16).

In Philippians 4:8, the apostle Paul wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” The next time you’re thinking about watching a certain sitcom or movie, or are about to download something questionable from the Internet, ask, “Is what I’m about to view going to make me think about things that are honest? Is what I’m about to watch going to make me think about things that are true, lovely, pure, or virtuous?” If not, I suggest, you leave off viewing it. It will affect you. One cannot continually eat junk food and not have it affect his body physically. One cannot habitually fill his mind with the “junk food” of violence, cruelty, sex, and filth and not have it affect him spiritually and morally. “Wouldn’t it be naive and ridiculous to deny the cause and effect relationship between the media entertainment and the morals and behavior of American young people?” (Thomas C. Hickey, *op cit.*, 8.) Yes, brother Hickey, it would be naive and ridiculous to deny that there is often a correlation between entertainment and our behavior and yet, many do just that. We, like Job, need to make an agreement with our eyes (Job 31:1) because what we see can and does influence us.

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The Foolish and Wicked Practice of Profane Swearing

Jason Hardin

The August 3, 1776 entry of George Washington's *Orderly Book*, contains the following statement: "The General is sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane swearing, a vice hitherto little known in the American Army, is growing in fashion. He hopes the officers will by example as well as influence endeavor to check it and that both they and the men will reflect that we can have little hope of the blessing of heaven on our arms if we insult it by our impiety and profanity." Added to the entry are these interesting words: "Swearing is a vice so mean and low that every man of sense and character detests and despises it." How times have changed! What would George Washington think of those who make up today's military? How shocked would he be to see how prevalent the "foolish and wicked practice of profane swearing" is, not just among men, but also women, and even children, in the twenty-first century? If the vice of swearing was increasingly rearing its ugly head in 1776, what words do we use to describe the dawn of the twenty-first century? One of the clearest manifestations of corrupted character and lost morals is the practice of using vulgar speech.

It is interesting to speculate how men like George Washington would react to the state of today's morals. But even the opinion of a former president, whatever it might be, carries with it very little weight. The opinion of any human being pales in comparison to the way that our Creator views our rapid decline in character and its reflection in the

way that we talk. And, we need not speculate as to how our Heavenly Father views the misuse of our tongues.

In the Scriptures we are taken straight to the source of the problem. In Proverbs 4:23, the wise man exhorted, "watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." In Matthew 12:34, Jesus made the statement, "for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." The disciple of Christ is called upon by the Master Teacher to "deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). The call for self-discipline rings clear throughout God's word. In laying down an admirable example, the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). He summed up his vision for these disciples by pleading, "be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Such a commandment most certainly encompasses our speech.

In focusing on the ultimate example of Christ, the apostle Peter wrote, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23). A clear cut choice must be made: the choice between seeking to discipline self and

follow the Christ, or a lifestyle of profanity.

We often describe the use of vulgar language as “profanity.” But the way that we use our mouths is only a symptom of a larger problem. The Hebrew writer proves this principle in Hebrews 12:15-16, when he says that we are to be “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” The New American Standard Bible translates this phrase a “godless person like Esau.” He was a profane person. But was the problem only with the use of his tongue in irreverence? Obviously the Hebrew writer is pointing to the source of the problem. To be “profane” is to choose the ease and the gratification of the “here-and-now” over the higher, spiritual ideal to which Christ is beckoning us. It is respect for the wrong thing. It is a problem of short-sighted perspective. Esau is a classic example. Who, with the proper perspective, would choose one morsel of food over his honored birthright? However, when men lose their perspective, they make foolish decisions. They choose inferior, yet instant gratification, over the “distant,” intangible that is to come. This was one decision that Esau regretted for the rest of his life.

In sharp contrast, the Hebrew writer also tells us of Moses. Notice the difference. “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26). Two words sum up this example: proper perspective. His attitude towards the “here-and-now” versus the eventual blessings of righteous living steered Moses away from the “profane.”

What does the language that you use everyday say about your perspective? How do you vent frustration in the work place? How do you express disappointment in your home? How do you convey your thoughts and feelings to your friends? Would there be any difference in your answers were Jesus to accompany you in bodily form wherever you went? We cannot afford to dismiss the inspired warning of James as archaic and prudish advice.

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how a great forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is

a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way (Jas. 3:2-10).

Do you speak one way around your brothers and sisters in Christ, and in an entirely different way around your co-workers? Do you speak in a flattering way about someone to their face, and then stab a figurative knife in his back with the next person that comes along? Do you spread rumors and gossip without even thinking of going to the person that is the subject? Is your mouth a fount of both blessing and cursing? If so, then you are following in the spiritual lineage of Esau. The misuse of your God-given tongue is symptomatic of a far greater problem of the heart. Our speech reveals our character. And the Great Physician is seeking to perform major “character surgery” on each one of his disciples. “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24-25). How wonderful it would be if the modern generation that comprises the Lord’s church would truly adopt the attitude of General Washington: “Swearing is a vice so mean and low that every man of sense and character detests and despises it.”

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Conduct on the Job

David Flatt



God's word is a detailed book which informs us how we are to live and conduct our lives as Christians. There is not a single life situation that the Bible does not speak of concerning how we should or should not conduct ourselves before God and man. A Christian's conduct

on the job is no exception to this rule. God's word is very plain and explicit in defining how a Christian is to behave in the workplace.

First, we must understand that we are commanded in the Scriptures to work. Some of the Thessalonians failed to do this due to a misunderstanding about the second coming of Christ. They thought that since Christ was going to return to earth soon, they could stop working and simply enjoy life. Paul told them, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). This was not the first time that Paul had instructed the Thessalonians to work. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, "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 lack of nothing." Although working may become difficult or frustrating at times, we must remember that working is not an option, but rather, a command of God.

Very few people in the world, Christian or not, have the pleasure and privilege of having a job that they enjoy. Even those who do find their jobs fulfilling sometimes grow weary in them. However, no matter what our position in life may be, we must always possess a positive attitude toward

our jobs. Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, *do it with thy might*; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). Regardless of how important we feel that our jobs may or may not be, we must do the very best work we are capable of doing. Also, we must want or desire to work. The only way a task can be completed properly is if it is done with the right attitude. The Israelites completed the wall around Jerusalem in the midst of opposition because they had a sincere desire to work: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: *for the people had a mind to work*" (Neh. 4:6). Whatever our jobs may be, we must always do them wholeheartedly.

How, then, are Christians to conduct themselves around those with whom they work? Almost everywhere one looks, some form of sin is present. Yet, we are to separate ourselves from the sins of the world everywhere we go; even at work (Rom. 12:2). Can we completely avoid all sin and evil that may take place at work? Sadly, we cannot. However, we must do our very best to stay away from all sinful situations. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). If this verse was not simple enough for them to understand, he commanded one chapter later, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). Christians cannot and must not make exceptions to sin just so they "fit in" at work. Will co-workers persecute us and try to get us to falter? Absolutely! As



Christians we are not only to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” but we are not to even put ourselves in a situation that may cause us to sin. Christians are to be different and set the standard. How can we ever achieve this goal if we do not even behave as Christians are commanded to?

Also, there is to be a certain responsibility taken on by the Christian in the workplace. We are to complete our jobs and not shirk our responsibilities. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:5). Paul did not say that just *some* should bear their own burdens, he said *all* should. There is no reason why a Christian should place his or her work responsibilities on others. To do so would be a direct violation of this verse. In other words, not bearing our own burden is a sin. How would a Christian shirking their jobs appear to someone who is not a member of the Lord’s church? Remember, a Christian is to be an example of how one is to conduct his life. Jesus taught this in his Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). How is acting irresponsibly toward our jobs being an example that will draw others to Christ?

Next, Christians are to possess a level of honesty when they work. With Christians, one would not think that this would be a problem. However, one cannot assume anything anymore. When our employers, whoever they may be, instruct us to do something, the task should be done completely and on time. Attending to other things while we are to be working is acting in a dishonest fashion. Too often the attitude seems to be that our employer owes us something, and that is justification for not doing our jobs. Recall the story of the Parable of the Workers in Matthew 20. Each worker received the same pay regardless of the amount of time he worked. When the workers that had labored longer complained for receiving the same wage as the workers who worked less received, Jesus replied, “Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*” (Matt. 20:14-15). Some will add time to their time cards, sleep on the job, and some have even stolen money from

their places of business. How do any of these actions glorify God (Col. 3:17)?

What about our conduct in regards to proper relationships in the workplace? How should we conduct ourselves toward our employers? The Bible instructs all Christians to obey their masters. “Servants, *obey in all things your masters* according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God” (Col. 3:22). When someone in authority over us asks us to do something, we are to obey them. Sometimes we may not like our employers. They may not treat us fairly. Even if this is the case, we have no right to disobey them or refuse to adhere to the things they tell us to do. We are to obey those who have authority over us. The only time we can refuse to obey our masters is if they demand us to do something that violates the teachings of God. Just because we may not get along with our employers does not change that fact that we must obey them. Remember, “no servant is greater than his lord” (John 15:20).

We noted at the beginning of this study how plain and simple the word of God has been about the subject of the Christian’s conduct in the workplace. After a careful analysis, one must come to the conclusion that the Christian is to act differently at work than the rest of his co-workers. We must stand up for God when others revile him and make a mockery of his teachings. Nowhere in the Scriptures can we find any time or situation in which we are permitted to conform to the ways of the world. When Paul said, “Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27), he meant exactly that. Do not ever, under any circumstances, give the devil a chance to cause us to stumble! If we would only do as Paul instructed the brethren at Colossae to do, we would never have the problem of an unruly behavior in the workplace. Paul encouraged, “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). Does your conduct measure up to the expectations of Christ?

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Companionship — Selection of a Marriage Partner

Ron Turnbow

founded decisions on who and why they will marry. People often select their companion based on the wrong criteria and for the wrong reasons. We understand that choosing to obey and serve the Lord is the single most important decision that one will make during life. The second most important decision is with whom to share that walk — the selection of a companion and marriage partner. By heeding the wise counsel of God’s word, we have a framework of selection criteria that will help us build marriages that will truly last a lifetime.

how our society views the sacredness of the marriage relationship.

In real life, we see people base their choice on whom to marry on equally shallow criteria. Some people base the decision on *the outward appearance* or solely upon their physical attraction to the other person. Physical attraction between marriage partners is indeed important (Prov. 5:15-23). However, we should not elevate that to our top selection criteria. Others base their choice on the presence or potential of *material wealth*. We should not make wealth a part of the decision process either. An examination of the criteria people use to select a marriage partner would yield a seemingly endless list — a list that does not really matter anyway. What does matter is what God says about the selection of a companion. God has provided us a treasure of information that, if applied properly, provides the basis for rock-solid marriages and families that will endure. When contemplating the decision of whom to marry, one would be well served by opening the word of God and examining his wise counsel. Let us consider some of the criteria that God sets forth in his word.

First, it is vital for men and women contemplating marriage to understand and accept God’s bidding for

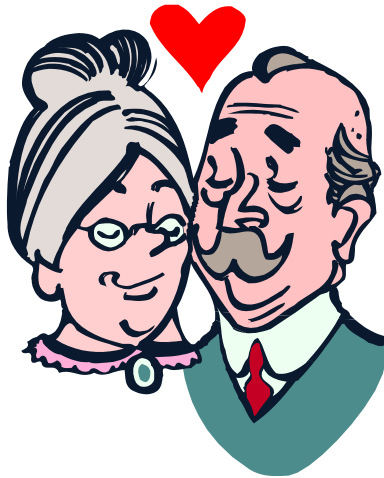
According to U.S. Census Bureau 2002 data, families are breaking apart at an alarming rate. The divorce rate in the United States is approaching 50%. In other words, nearly one out of two marriages will end in divorce. Malachi recorded God’s unambiguous view on this situation. He wrote, “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce” (Mal 2:16). The Hebrew writer proclaimed, “Marriage is honorable among all” (Heb 13:4), and Jesus taught, “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). There are numerous reasons and excuses given for the disintegration of the marriage relationship. A primary reason is that people simply do not make well-

Sadly, our society has diminished the importance of choosing a marriage partner to the stuff of poor television programming. Fox Television Network recently introduced a program entitled *Married by America*. The goal of this program is to have the Fox TV viewing audience “vote” a couple together. This program reduces the selection of a marriage partner to something worse than chance — a beauty contest in which marriage partners are selected by total strangers. Surely no one really believes that a marriage founded this way will last any time at all. Granted, this television program, as well as similar programming on other networks, is all about ratings and attempts to entertain people. Yet, it does provide sad commentary on

marriage. It is a sacred institution between a man and a woman that is bound by sacred vows. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Contrary to contemporary opinion, God established a system of authority to order the marriage relationship. Marriage involves submission and love. Wives are taught to “submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Husbands are taught to “love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself” (Eph. 5:28). It would prove unwise to view this as outdated and irrelevant today. Thus, when selecting a marriage partner, one would do well to choose someone who shares the same understanding and appreciation for the marriage relationship. That understanding should align to God’s stated view.

Second, it is important to understand God’s will regarding the duration of the marriage relationship. God designed the covenant of marriage as a “life commitment” (Rom. 7:2). When making the decision to marry someone, ask the question, “Will I want to spend the rest of my life with this person?” If the answer is not “absolutely,” then additional thought and consideration are needed. Furthermore, trust and respect should form the foundation of the marriage relationship. If trust and respect are not present before taking the marriage vows, there is a good chance that such will not happen afterwards. When entering the marriage relationship, both parties should agree that divorce is simply not an option. They should agree to work all other options and not consider divorce as “a way out” (1 Cor. 7:39-40). As noted earlier, God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). So should we. One should understand how their prospective marriage partner handles issues and differences. If a person demonstrates an unwillingness to work to a common resolution of differences and problems prior to taking the marriage vows, such could be a

sign of trouble later on in the marriage. Some of the threats to the marriage, if unresolved, include differences on matters of religion, child discipline, and financial goals for life. Such differences could prove disastrous if not resolvable. Jesus taught that the only two things that release one party from the other are death and unfaithfulness. “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who



is divorced commits adultery” (Matt 19:9). The marriage relationship was designed by God to endure trials and troubles. There are so many these days who opt to disintegrate their marriage based on an unwillingness to make it endure. Doing so violates God’s will regarding the duration of the marriage relationship.

Third, the character of the prospective marriage partner is vital to the duration and success of the marriage. “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones” (Prov. 12:4). To see a marriage destroyed by unfaithfulness is ugly; truly it is one of life’s great tragedies. Unfaithfulness in the marriage relationship is an extension of the poor character of someone. One should “aim high” when it comes to judging the character of the one being considered as a marriage partner. Men would be well served in using the definition of a vir-

tuous woman as recorded in Proverbs 31:10-31. Women should set high standards using the example of godly men such as Joseph and Job. Judge the character of the person who you will join in marriage against the standards set forth in the Scriptures.

Fourth, we should seek a marriage partner who shares similar priorities as our own. Again, using the Scripture as a guide, we learn that the top priority in life should be nothing less than serving and honoring God (Matt. 6:24-34). If the marriage partners share in the devotion and service to the Lord, the marriage will grow strong. As each partner draws closer to God, they will draw closer to each other (1 Pet. 3:7). Furthermore, Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.” We establish priorities to help us focus on what is truly important. When considering a marriage partner, one should determine if these things represent their top priorities in their life — being true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. One who orders his life after these priorities has done well! In studying the saga of Job, it is sad to see the lack of spiritual commonality and encouragement between Job and his wife. When times got rough for Job, her response was to encourage him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). We can only imagine how much help she could have been to the anguished Job if she shared his disposition toward God. People contemplating marriage should discuss the priorities that they will adhere to as they walk through life together. Lack of common priorities could result in differences wherein Satan could gain a stronghold and ultimately destroy the marriage.

With these four elements in mind, let us examine the impact of both wise

The Man's Role

Scott Willis

It has been said, “As the home goes, so goes the nation.” This sentiment is especially true when applied to morals

and character. The home is where acceptable conduct for a society is *developed*, or as the case may be, *corrupted*. In just the last few years, we have seen the morals of our nation deteriorate at an alarming rate. For an example of this, consider what is now acceptable on television and radio. Language and conduct that was once restricted to movie theaters with ratings of “R” or stronger is now commonplace on prime time television and radio. The argument made by producers of contemporary programming is that their products reflect society as a whole. You know, “Reality TV.” In far too many cases, they are right. We have allowed our personal conduct to deteriorate so much that what we hear on the radio on our way to work, or watch on TV at night, reflects the way many of us act during the day at work and in the home. Why has this happened? What can

be done to reverse this trend? *The answer is very simple — turn back to God! Fix the problem in the home.*

Moses told the nation of Israel that they needed to keep God and his ways ever present in their lives. “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deut. 6:6-9). *This responsibility was placed primarily on the man as the head of the household.* Paul said, “And, ye fathers,

and unwise choices regarding marriage partners. For those who have chosen the right marriage partner, life will be filled with blessing and truly represent a “taste of heaven.” On the other hand, if the wrong person is chosen, life could be filled with turmoil and discomfort. The wisely chosen marriage partner will bring joy, security, and happiness. The Proverb writer knew this as he wrote, “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth” (Prov. 5:18). However, as so many have learned, the impact of an unwise selection is equally far reaching. Look around at the families that have disintegrated or have become filled with spite and disdain. These situations are often caused by poor marriage partner selection. More importantly, one should consider the spiritual benefits and threats that are associated with the selection of a companion. When thinking about marrying that special someone, ask yourself, “Will this person enable me to behave in such a way as to be pleasing before God?” Likewise, one should carefully examine if the potential marriage partner would serve to drag him down from spiritual heights.

In conclusion, selection of a marriage companion is of vital importance to those contemplating this sacred relationship. Marriage should be entered into with much prayer and thought. It must be formed and sustained on a foundation of love. It has monumental impacts and implications on how the rest of one's life, as well as future generations, will be lived. Making the right choice results in immeasurable blessings during our life. Making the wrong choice can rob us of the blessings of life. If you have made wise choices in this matter, thank the Lord every day for your spouse. For those contemplating marriage, consult God's word for the criteria that should be used in selecting your companion. Seek to understand the wise council of God in this vitally important matter.

3300 Hartford Dr., Flower Mound, Texas 75028

provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). If the problems mentioned above are to be corrected, they must be corrected in the home. *That corrective process is the responsibility of the man.*

As fathers and husbands, all men need to recognize the great influence they have on their families. Men who provide poor leadership and poor examples to their children and spouses will produce families that lack morals and character. The man who actively participates in the sinful conduct of the world is failing in his responsibilities to God and his family. Furthermore, the man who passively sits back and observes sinful conduct, and fails to identify it as sin to his family, is also failing in his responsibility. These men are providing a bad example. Conversely, the man who follows God’s instruction in passages such as Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Ephesians 6:4; 5:25, 28, 33; and 1 Peter 3:7 will provide a good example to his family. This example, in turn, will lead them away from the sin of the world and to a relationship with God.

The father is very much like the preacher addressed in 2 Timothy 4. Here the preacher is told to be ready to preach at all times, and to do so when conditions are not only favorable, but also when they are unfavorable. No excuses are to be made for not being ready and following through with this responsibility to preach. This same principle applies to the father and his influence. He is to be consistently ready to lead his family in the ways of God (Deut. 6) and to provide that direction whether it is popular or not. To be effective, the influence and example must be consistent. The man cannot say one thing and do another. Children see through this hypocrisy immediately.

The development of godly morals and character will occur *when the man recognizes his responsibility as the head of the household.* The woman must also recognize this fact. However, this is a concept that is often scoffed at by our society. Maybe this occurs because men do not want the responsibility, or because women refuse to submit to their leadership. Either way, it is sinful when the man does not lead his household as God has instructed. For the will of God to be done, both the man and the woman need to fulfill their respective roles as God defined them. God’s plan for marriage includes active participation from both parties. However, he placed leadership of the household on the man. It is our responsibility as men to ensure godly morals are demonstrated and developed in the home. We cannot put this responsibility off on the media, the school

system, the wife, or even the church.

Man’s role as head of the wife in marriage is likened to Christ’s relationship as head of the church (Eph. 5:23, 25, 28). To be like Christ, men must love their wives as he loved the church. He sacrificed his life to provide the church all that was needed. Paul says that this included giving up the comforts of heaven, humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death on the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). In like manner, the man of God will give up his own self-interest to ensure that the needs of the wife and his family are met. He must be willing to lay down his life for them.



This way of life demands that the man provide for the physical and spiritual needs of the wife, setting forth godly examples of morality and character. The passage in Ephesians provides the definition for headship: *God gave man the authority as head of his house.* If a man is not willing to respect and honor his role as he leads his household, why would he expect his wife to respect and honor her role? The godly wife who is provided for, as Ephesians 5 demands, will gladly submit herself to the man. The man who neglects his responsibilities toward the wife will discourage her in her service to God. However, if he treats her as commanded by Paul and Peter (Eph. 5; 1 Pet. 3), his influence will have a positive impact on her spiritual well-being. Seeing that she is loved, appreciated, and not alone in raising the children, the godly wife will join her husband in providing the proper example in their home.

It is easy to look at the world around us and see sin and its effects, but how about in the church? Are we guilty of this same sin? God’s men are not immune to the sin of ignoring the responsibilities of headship and the problems that come from it. If Christian men are neglecting their responsibilities to lead their households after the wisdom of God, the problems seen in the world will be present in the church as well. We see single parent homes, adultery, immodest apparel, foul language, and other forms of immorality which have affected Christians. These problems are not restricted to just those families who are taught the will of God later in life, but from families who have participated in worship services for many years. Showing up for worship services, while good, is not enough. Even if we don’t practice immorality, these problems can affect our families if we don’t also “*reprove (expose) them*” (Eph. 5:11). The man is going to be held accountable to God for what kind of leader he is in his home. So, we had better be busy developing godly morals and character in our families and ourselves.

The Woman's Role

Ed Holcomb

Much of the world's chaotic turmoil can be traced back to a basic disrespect for the word of God. Especially is this true in regard to the role of women. An immoral world order is eroding the fundamental unit of society, which is the family as ordained by God. Marriage is under vicious attack among religionists with their false teaching, promoting multiple marriages and divorces, as well as condoning homosexual relationships.

Even in the Lord's church there seems to be an attitude of apathy towards God's divine arrangements. More and more, heaven's chain of command is being rejected. That chain of authority is "The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). The current crisis among the people of God, manifested in the agitation for "a liberation of women and their utilization in leadership positions," clearly declares it.

Since the fall, woman has been placed in subjection to man. God told Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). The evil clamor that these restrictions make her some kind of a slave, second class citizen, worthless in the kingdom, etc. is sheer nonsense. This is sinful indictment against the Creator! Women are not inferior subjects spiritually. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Though ordered to be subordinate to man, she is of equal value and shares the same heirship. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we

may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17).

It may shock some to learn that man, too, has restrictions. "Likewise you younger people submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another (women included), and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). While the Scripture does say, "Wives, submit to your

own husbands, as to the Lord," in the previous verse it also says, "submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord," which is often overlooked (Eph. 5:21-22). So there is submission obligated on the part of man as well. Even the Son of God had restrictions. In addition to "the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3), Jesus declared, "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge: and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30). Of Christ, Paul said, "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those

who reproached You fell on Me'" (Rom. 15:3). So Christ is in submission to God, man to Christ, and woman to man, and this pleases the Father!

The Spirit imposed some restrictions on women in their service unto the Lord. She is prohibited from exercising roles of leadership in which she would usurp authority over man. "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). The Greek word for silence is *hesuchias* which indicates tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others" (Vine, 242). Here it shows the woman is to be in



relative quietness in respect to authority. This in no way prohibits her from singing, asking or answering questions, or verbally confessing faith in Christ, in the presence of men (Acts 5:8; Col. 3:16; Matt. 10:32). It does forbid her from leading the singing or teaching in a mixed audience. In assemblies (when the church was gathered together and edification was derived by exercising spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. 14:23, 34-35), she was ordered to keep silence (*sigao*, to keep silence, hold one's piece, be kept in silence, Thayer, 574). It was a shame for her to speak in that assembling situation. Her speaking in such a gathering would violate the scriptural principles and restrictions placed upon her by God. Women may teach in subjection, that is, not exercising all authority such as an evangelist could do. Titus was instructed, "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Tit. 2:15). This, women cannot do! God did not allow women to be apostles, elders, deacons, or preachers (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). She may teach and participate in conveying thoughts to a class (both men and women present) as a member of the class, but must not seek to take over the class from the teacher, or forget her role of quietness and demeanor of subjection. She cannot conduct a class of both sexes without violating God's word.

Why did God place these restrictions upon women? Some reasons are plainly given. (1) The Law had clearly placed her in a subordinate and submissive condition. "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but they are to be submissive, as the Law also says" (1 Cor. 14:34; Gen. 3:16). (2) Paul referred to this Law when he gave priority in the creation as a reason for her subordination. "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13). (3) She led in the transgression. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). Her wrongful, aggressive influence on the man led him into sin. Therefore, the basic principle is that God's order puts woman under obedience and in subjection in relation to man, avoiding the exercise of authority over him. (4) God created and designed her to be the bearer of children, and better suited to taking care of the home. "Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (1 Tim. 2:15). "Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1

Tim. 5:14). Older women were told "Admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, home-makers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Tit. 2:4-5).

Woman's awesome responsibility affords her incredible opportunities to mold and fashion lives that are productive to society, but more importantly, that will faithfully serve the God and Creator of all. Surely the famous proverb, "the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world" is true to principles of Scripture! God's scheme for the improvement of humanity is deeply dependent upon this basic entity, the home, for instruction in morals and decent behavior. It is in the home where he intended that "all things that pertain to life and godliness" should first be learned. The role model of faith was praised by Jehovah thusly, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19).

God has decreed that mothers and grandmothers play a very important part in these functions. The Spirit commended the spiritual investment Timothy's mother and grandmother made in him. "But you (Timothy) must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-15). "When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you" (2 Tim. 1:5). Inspiration presents us with a marvelous example of these indispensable womanly functions in the worthy or virtuous wife of Proverbs. She is worth far more than rubies (Prov. 31:10). Her husband safely trusts her and will never lack gain (v. 11). She is efficient and industrious, taking care of her business (vv. 13-14). She manages the household well (vv. 15-16). She is compassionate and resourceful to relieve the needy (v. 20). Her husband is popular due to her resourcefulness (v. 23). She teaches with great wisdom (v. 26). She's in charge of her household (v. 27). Her husband and children rise up and praise her (v. 28). Eminently worthy of praise is she, because she fears the Lord (v. 30).

O, how the world desperately needs women to fill the roles of wives, mothers, and grandmothers, who accept Christ, obey his principles in these functions, and who leave a legacy to their offspring that demonstrates truly that "which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Tim. 2:10).

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Live each day so you will
neither be afraid of tomorrow

Morals and Character

Influencing Your Children to Moral Goodness

T. Sean Sullivan

So often parents attempt to excuse, explain, or rationalize their children's poor behavior by saying, "You know, there is no instruction manual for raising kids."

It would be so much easier if we just had a book that covered matters of life, choices, morals, ethics, and character . . . but wait . . . we do! Of course! We have a book — not just "a" book, "the" book — the Bible (2 Pet. 1:3 The Bible contains ". . .all things that pertain to life and godliness").

The offering of the Bible as a standard for living is not very welcomed today. To argue the Bible as valid for our lives in the twenty-first century is a struggle for most, and a mockery for some. With this devalued opinion of God's word, it is no wonder so many people are suffering hardships with their own life, their spouse, and their children. Families are deteriorating and moral character is sliding. We must do something. We must help our families, in particular our children, be the moral individuals that God desires.

BEFORE A PROBLEM COMES

A primary step is for each of us to understand there is more to a solution than simply recognizing the problem. We must seek to solve this problem, both reactively and pro-actively. Let's first consider some proactive measures: what you can do now, before any problems exist.

Perhaps your children are young, or you are still in the planning stages of your family. This is the time to be actively establishing some good habits. For you to be the proper influence on anyone else's life, you must first consider your own life (Matt. 7:3-5).

The old idea of, "Do as I say, not as I do," does not and

will not work. We must be able to say something more like, "Do as I say, if you don't understand, then just watch me." What types of things must you demonstrate to your children if you want them to be influenced toward moral goodness?

Begin by showing them proper priorities. It is both amazing and saddening how many Christian parents have told their children that attending worship services is not as important as school, or ball games, or vacation. Now, I know that they didn't sit them down and tell them those things word for word. But their willingness to forego worship for school related activities, ball games or practices, and times away from home, has spoken louder than words on the subject of important things in life.

To help us put our life in the right order, God has given a list of priorities. This list is found in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." It is just that simple. *God is number one*, first, prioritized to the top of the list. God has filled in the first spot and the rest is really up to us. When we implement this list of priorities in our everyday life, we will show our children that God is number one and that serving him faithfully is more important than ball games, school functions, or an extra few hours while you are gone on vacation. Use wisdom to properly place your activities in second, third, fourth, and so on.

We must prioritize in order to demonstrate to our children the importance of God. Show your children that God is number one by always putting God first. If your children play ball, pull them out of the game in time to attend worship. If they are involved in extra-curricular school activities, the same standard can be used: they can

go but they must leave in time to attend worship. When vacation time comes around, you must plan ahead before you leave so you can be near brethren in order to worship with them. All of these events must take a second seat to your need to worship and serve God. If you are going to show your children God's true importance, then even mid-week or Sunday evening worship will take priority. Implementing this type of consistent example will teach your children how important God is, without one word of further explanation.

Another pro-active step is to purify your life. There may be some things that you need to get rid of, knowing full well that they are not appropriate.

How much of the world has been allowed to influence your choices? Perhaps you are watching inappropriate entertainment. How can we raise our children to have good moral character, but then allow all matters of immorality to be shown on the television, the Internet, or the books in our home? Perhaps your language needs some polishing. How can we speak of a desire for righteousness, then with the same mouth speak curses and vulgarities (Jas. 3:10)?

If you have not encountered problems yet, be thankful and take the time to prepare now so you will not need to use reactive measures in your life. In case it is too late, let's consider some reactive measures.

AFTER THERE IS A PROBLEM

Picture this: You are walking down the pathway of life, everything is fine, and then one of your children commits some immoral action and points to you as their teacher saying, "I heard Dad say such and such a million times," or "It is no different than the things you watch on TV."

Suddenly, your life is flipped upside-down. What can you do now? Do not do what so many others do; throw up your hands and concede failure. When you have not set a proper example for your children, and it is coming back to bite you, you must react.

First, clear up the improper things in your life; seek God's forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Second, swallow your pride, this is going to hurt: Seek your children's forgiveness. Yes, humble yourself enough to sit down with your children. Honestly, look into their eyes and explain that you have been wrong. Tell them that you have gone to God to seek his forgiveness and that now you also need their forgiveness.

Make a fresh start. Prioritize your life anew. Put God first; purify your life. Bring your best to God in order that your children might see the changes you make and desire to serve God the same way in their own lives.

We can raise children who will be untainted by the world; children who will be repelled by sin instead of being quickly drawn into its trap. Our children can be raised in the direction of God's will, his training, and his admonition (Eph. 6:3).

The choice is yours today; whether you are parents, parents to be, or grandparents. The influence of your example will far outweigh any words you might say. Don't wait until it is too late. Start today to show your children openly how you love God and live for God. Serve him faithfully and continually all the days of your life. Be the type of influence your children need, so that one day they will be able to share the glories of heaven with you (Rev. 21:10-27).

Good Books on the Home

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Morality in Youth

Brian Price

In this article, it is our purpose to discuss the importance of morality among the young. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul encourages Timothy to “let no man despise thy youth.” The *New English Translation* renders the passage, “Let no one slight you because you are young.” Paul’s encouragement helps us appreciate that it is absolutely possible that the young could be slighted, based solely on their age. When people of an advanced age treat the young with disrespect, it should not be surprising when the same is returned. It certainly is discouraging to see disrespect being shown on the part of anyone. Paul’s answer to that problem addresses our topic. His command to young Timothy, and by example his command to all youth, would be to be an “example of the believers.” The moral standard of God is not simply intended for the chronologically advanced (old), but should be the interest of young and old alike.

Paul’s desire is that the young will not rebel against moral purity, but embrace God’s standard to the point that they become examples of his moral code. He first states that one’s speech should be such that would evidence one’s belief and faith. Young people should be aware of the danger of talking like the world. Paul encourages the young to appreciate that moral speech is just as important as moral conduct. Rather than completely abandoning all connection with the sinful conduct of the world, we often become accepting of suggestive language and filthy speech, so long as we don’t become actual partakers in the actions being talked about. For some, it has become acceptable to talk of sinful sexual relations, so long as we don’t engage in such sins. Paul states in Ephesians 5:3-4 that it is not only unbecoming Christians to engage in uncleanness, but it is just as wrong to use the speech of the unclean. When Peter denied our Lord, his “speech” or accent gave evidence that he was a follower of Christ. However, it was his “speech” in terms of what he said, the oaths, the cursings, etc. that demonstrated his denial of Jesus (Matt. 26:69-75). It will be beneficial for Christians to learn from a young age that our speech will provide evidence of our morality.

On the positive side, our purity of speech is often the first indication to others of our godly character. Several individuals have expressed to me that the language they

did and did not use spurred conversations concerning their other godly characteristics. Friends at school may not agree or comply with your efforts of purity in speech. However, your influence for good over them will certainly be affected. Consistent purity of speech may be the first step in leading others to full acceptance of all that Christ would desire of us. Yet inconsistency in this area will damage one’s influence for good.

Paul further states that the young should desire to be an example of good behavior or “manner of life.” While we certainly should avoid using immoral speech, we progress into more perilous problems when we begin to engage in immoral conduct. I am cautious not to imply that the pressures of any particular age group are more or less difficult, but certainly the pressures of youth offer great challenges. Yes, we live in a world that would like nothing more than for us to cave into their immoral pursuits. Yet, we must strive to avoid becoming part “of the world” (1 John 4:4-6). The young have often taken license to engage in a variety of sinful practices based solely on the fact that they are young. Rest assured that no right was ever extended by our Creator. In fact, to the contrary, he has illustrated his desire for appropriate behavior from the time of youth throughout our lives (Eccl. 12). Paul further stated in 1 Timothy 4:12 that this conduct should be marked by purity. The idea of maintaining one’s purity may be a joke to the masses, but it is God’s will. The world takes pleasure in corrupting the good; don’t let your purity of speech and conduct be its next victim.

If God’s moral standard is to be upheld in the lives of the young, then it is important for us to warn the young of things that will discourage them, leading them from God’s standard. If some of these things sound repetitive, it is because the same basic problems continue to affect the moral condition of God’s people. For example, the influence of our friends and associates has always been a potential challenge to our moral decisions (1 Cor. 15:33). To illustrate the historic problem of evil influences, simply look at King Solomon and the influences of the women he

loved (1 Kings 11:1-6). Look at Rehoboam and his trust in the wrong advisors (1 Kings 12:6-15). These are but two examples of men who lived a thousand years ago, who faced the same “peer pressures” that confuse young and old today. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that much of our moral weakness stems from influences that we have willfully allowed to affect us.

Paul warns us of the deception of worldly influences. We need to be impressed with the fact that our worldly friends are generally not interested in helping us in our moral character. In fact, they often provide temptation after temptation, luring us away from God’s will and toward their worldly lifestyle. With this warning stated, I also appreciate the benefits of our good character. Many Christians became such because of the good influence from godly associates. We should learn from Jesus who was able to take opportunities to use his good influence to draw men back to his Father (Matt. 9:10-13), without engaging in their sinful practices (1 Pet. 2:22). We must balance the need to “seek and save that which was lost” with an understanding that the world will also want to influence us away from God. I heard one young lady state that her atheist boyfriend helped her appreciate her God. It was only about a month before her God became unappreciated. Young Christian, heed the words of the apostle Paul, “Be not deceived.”

Another area in which the young seem to become deceived is in the thoughts and philosophies of the world that they allow to influence their thinking. Paul gave us a list of things that we should allow to influence our thinking (Phil. 4:8). Most of the entertainment offered by the world falls far from God’s standard. This is yet another area where we may demonstrate a level of inconsistency. Young people are often overwhelmed by their friends to listen to music and view movies and TV that promote the immorality that godly people are to avoid. Our influence for good can be adversely affected by our entertainment choices. Parents may be deceived into thinking there is no harm because they do not take the time to understand the messages being conveyed. Young people, however, are not as naive at times. They are fully aware of the content of the lyrics and films, and without question are being influenced by it. Young Christian, do not condemn yourself by what you put into your mind. To delight in evil is as condemning as participating in evil (Rom. 14:22). Do not be fooled by the devil’s efforts to convince you that what you think about will not affect how you act (Prov. 23:7).

Young Christian, you are the future of the Lord’s church. The responsibilities of leadership will one day rest with your generation. The obligation of sound doctrine will some day be your cause to uphold. Any level of tolerance toward immorality today will become tomorrow’s practice. The choices you make today will set the stage for your

ability or inability to accept these roles. While the Lord certainly delights in any sinner who turns back to him, the greater good comes from those who serve the Lord consistently throughout their lives. Many immoral choices leave hardened hearts that make no attempt to serve God again. We are warned by the conduct of God’s people of old, of the consequence of the heart that will not hear God (Heb. 3:15). Immorality in youth can leave physical and emotional scars that may never be fully overcome. The patriarch David is a perfect example (Ps. 51:3), where he states, “my sin is ever before me.” Young ladies and men, your moral life may not be attractive to all the boys and girls in school, but it will be attractive to the godly young men and women who want to honor God. Morality may not be the road to popularity among your peers. It will, however, make you popular among God’s people, and to God himself. Imagine the honor placed upon Job when it was said of him, “Hast thou considered my servant Job . . . a perfect and an upright man” (Job 1:8). How would the verse read if it were your name inserted into the passage?

The church needs young people who are willing to make their decisions based on their convictions in Jesus Christ. Morality will seem old fashioned to each generation. We must not fall prey to Satan’s attempts to get each generation to look at the standard of God with a progressively more tolerant eye. Any actions that lead people further away from God should be stopped. The cry for more leniency and tolerance is having its effect on each generation among the Lord’s people. Brethren and friends, young and old, it is time for this progression to stop. That is why the emphasis of this article has focused on the young. If the progression is to be stopped, it must be stopped among the youngest generation possible. Young Christian, it is my hope that you never feel insignificant in the cause of Christ. The lessons you learn, and the actions you take, while you’re young, will have a tremendous impact on the future of God’s people. While the world around you may “wax worse and worse” (2 Tim. 3:13), you have an opportunity to let your light shine, and serve your God in a way that is “blameless and harmless . . . in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Phil. 2:15).

2803 4th St., Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

Renew Promptly!

Morals and Character

The Need for Character in Local Churches

Jeremy Joy

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

God has two purposes for every individual: salvation and transformation. Salvation is the beginning of a process of spiritual change. Transformation is from the inside out. The key is mind-renewal. A mind molded and shaped by the *world* changes with popular culture, whereas a mind molded and shaped by the *word* stands the test of time. Becoming Christ-like in our attitudes and actions is the challenge of transformation.

Previous articles have discussed problem-areas including character and morality. How is a lack of character and morality affecting the church today? The church is not immune from the influence of popular culture. To deny its influence upon us is naïve. Local churches are paying the price and we have no one to blame, but ourselves.

MARRIAGE

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

Is adultery and fornication a problem today? Unfortunately, yes. From empty chairs around the dinner table to empty pews in the church building, few families and churches have not been affected by the problem in some way. Spouses have not been true to the marriage covenant or one another (Mal. 2:14). There is a need to build some fences to protect and preserve our marriages. We may have to undergo spiritual surgery to remove some unnecessary temptations from our lives (Matt. 5:29-30). It may involve canceling an Internet subscription, or ending a questionable

relationship with someone.

The root cause of adultery and fornication is selfishness. It is a character issue. Husbands must imitate the example of Christ, and wives must imitate the example of the church (Eph. 5:22-33). Self-sacrificial love is a key ingredient to a successful marriage. It is not natural; it is learned. There is nothing optional about developing positive, Christ-like character traits (Eph. 4:17-19). The home is where love is modeled and the church benefits as children learn what it means to “work” at a relationship. We would have fewer cases of divorce, if we would simply become more Christ-like.

THE ELDERSHIP

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be . . . (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

What local church does not need more qualified men to serve as elders? Some churches have no elders. Some have two elders. And others have unqualified elders. Circumstances vary from congregation to congregation, but the problem may be caused by a lack of character and morality (Tit. 1:5-9).

We are surprised when men become spiritually mature and serve as elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers. Unfortunately, in too many local churches, this has become the exception, not the rule. It is natural for a child to grow and develop physically. We are not surprised when children become adults, and if a child fails to grow and develop physically, mentally, socially, etc., we want to know why. Likewise, it is natural for a Christian to grow and develop spiritually (1 Pet. 2:1-3). If not, in spite of time and opportunity, there is a serious problem that needs to be corrected (Heb. 5:12-14). We need to change our thinking.

The solution to the problem is simple, but true. We need more men and women to be committed disciples of Jesus (Matt. 16:24). The result will be stronger individuals, families, and churches. And there will not be a shortage of qualified men to serve as elders.

UNITY

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

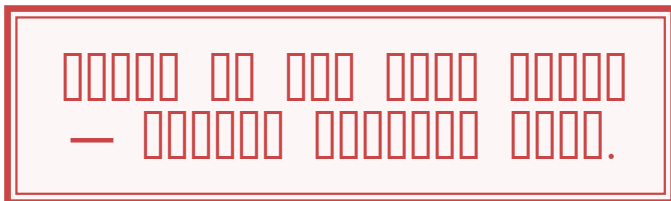
How many local churches have tension, factions, and even division? To say that we sometimes struggle to maintain unity is an understatement. Our track record is poor, and there seems to be no improvement in spite of plain teaching on the subject. We seem to lack the skills necessary to resolve conflict. Instead, we resort to false accusations, gossip, and innuendo.

Many of the problems in local churches are “people” problems. Once again, it is a character issue (Jas. 3:16). We have difficulty maintaining Christ-like attitudes in the midst of controversy. We have not been transformed to the extent that problems can be quickly resolved. Elders and preachers should be examples of proper conduct, but sometimes elders and preachers are to blame for the mudslinging. The church is traumatized and may not recover, even if repentance occurs. Surely we can do better!

A lack of character and morality is hurting local churches in many other ways, both inwardly and outwardly. The bottom-line is that Satan is destroying us from within. Sometimes he uses persecution and false doctrine, but if he can use a lack of character and morality, he can accomplish the same objective.

We must study the Bible, encourage one another, pray, and worship, which contribute to the process of transformation. Then we will be able to meet the various challenges facing local churches.

111 Fair Ave., Middlebourne, West Virginia 26149



“Morals and Character” continued from front page and practices on important moral and doctrinal subjects.” If Romans 14 permits such, 2 John 9 is not true. John wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” To accept Harrell’s teaching means maintaining the fellowship of God and his people whether or not he teaches and obeys God’s word; in that case the word means no more to us than it does to the denominationalist, Garrett, or Osburn. Sadly, it has been said that *most* in the modern church will subscribe to and embrace the doctrine brother Harrell has taught. We can only pray that is not true.

Nonetheless, because we live in this world where the Bible is said to be a human product containing error, and which tolerates teaching and practicing error, we can no longer *assume* that *brethren* accept the inspiration and government of the Scriptures. The very inspiration and authority of the Scripture is now a matter of dispute, even among us. Thus, since this series of articles finds its foundation in truth, it seems appropriate to remind us of the implications and effects of citing book, chapter, and verse in this study of *Morals and Character*.

The word translated *inspiration* means “God breathed.” Scripture is God given, God issued, or God manifested and revealed. The word is not the mere speculations of the human minds chosen to convey it. The Word still says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul did not say *some, much, or most* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, *but all of it!* Do you still believe that? If so, the Bible message will answer the questions relating to *moral and character* issues.

The apostle Peter wrote: “According as *his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). This message was issued by *divine power*, not human power or will. Furthermore, it provides us all we need in living lives of godliness. Do you still believe that?

Many of the issues to be discussed in this series are becoming more and more controversial among us. We are told that the word is just not clear enough to settle the differences and disputes associated with these subjects. Look again at what the Scriptures say about the divine message: “How that *by revelation he made known* unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, *when ye read, ye may understand* my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph. 3:3-4). Still, brethren say “that’s just your interpretation; the Bible is not clear on these subjects.” Do

you still believe the Bible, or do you believe the brethren who wish to loosen the standards of *morals and character* among us?

Many other passages could be referred to: 1 Corinthians 2:1-13, Galatians 1:11-12, Jude 3, Matthew 4:4. They all teach us that God carefully controlled the revelation of Scripture, and that it says what it means and means what it says. Furthermore, there are numerous passages telling us not to depart from, or go beyond, what is written in the Word: 2 John 9-11, 1 Timothy 4:1, Galatians 1:6-9, Revelation 22:18-19. There was a time when brethren respected those warnings and heeded them. Can we *assume* they still do? Hardly! And this is the danger confronting God's people, not only respecting *morals and character*, but every subject that is raised among us. Brethren accommodate error on divorce and remarriage, the question of who is a false teacher, the "days" of creation, and even the subject of Hell, without that affecting fellowship.

Now we come to consider questions regarding morals, and brethren do not wish those practices to affect fellowship either. If we accommodate error in one instance, why not in the other? Those who advocate this fellowship of heresy will not embrace the full application of it to the areas of thought. But, their followers and devotees will! The questions discussed in this special issue of *Truth Magazine* will bring damnation upon us, just as surely as errors on baptism or instrumental music will. Do not let that happen to you, or to the brethren where you worship. Study and learn the truth on *morals and character*.

491 E. Woodsdale Ave., Akron, Ohio 44301 LWillis100@aol.com

The Eternal Kingdom

by F.W. Mattox

A history of the church. Good survey written by a former president of Lubbock Christian College in 1955.

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"Moral Decay" continued from page 2

will chooses a solution.

It is a given that this world is immersed in sin. Our nation's leaders engage in it without shame or repentance. The previous president used drugs, committed fornication, lied, cheated, and conspired against his own people. Our culture is entertained by sin. How does watching PG-13 and R rated movies differ from the voyeuristic activities of a peeping tom? One views others engaged in sexual intercourse on a silver screen and the other watches it through window blinds. Our economy is driven by materialism. Success in this world is measured only in terms of dollars. The symptoms of a sin-sick world are in evidence everywhere. Elementary teachers curse in the classroom, twelve-year old girls dress like prostitutes, 4,400 babies are murdered daily by their mothers and doctors, over half of all married persons commit adultery, over half of all marriages end in divorce, four of every five college students will cheat on a major exam, and two of every three persons will lie on a job application.

In addition, the world is proud of its broad minded tolerance of sin. It considers abstaining from sin as aberrant behavior (Isa. 5:20). The world does not hesitate to make this opinion known to Christians, who are in turn either ashamed of being different from the world, or are enticed to be more like the world. So, they sit down at Satan's bargaining table to see what compromises can be made, and they trade away bits and pieces of their faith and conviction.

COMPROMISING CONVICTIONS

The compromising Christian wants a more contemporary look when he comes to worship. He wants to be more comfortable and to dress casually. The coat and tie give way to jeans and pullover shirts. His wife wants to be more comfortable too, and she trades her modest dress for short skirts and slacks. Their daughters do not want to stand out from the world either, so they trade "Sunday clothes" for low riding pants and belly shirts. Their sons show up for worship looking as if they just walked off a music video set. The immodesty displayed at worship is just the tip of the iceberg of compromise in attire that is shown at home and elsewhere. What else will they trade with the Devil at his bargaining table (1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:3-4)?

The compromising Christian wants a more affluent life than he presently enjoys, but it requires that he sacrifice other things in order to work more hours. He takes on more work and attends fewer services to pay for the good life. The contemporary Christian reasons that as long as one is working, he is excused from the services of the church. Soon his wife is working more hours and missing services too in order to help pay for "stuff." Eventually, the children begin missing services for school activities, and they reason that those activities will help prepare them for their own financial future. How long before attending services will

become entirely secondary to financial concerns (Heb. 10:25; 1 Tim. 6:6-11; Matt. 6:19-21, 33)?

The compromising Christian is quickly bored with clean entertainment. In the privacy of his home, he subscribes to movie channels that provide round the clock PG 13 and R rated movies filled with sex, violence, and cursing, or he just watches network television sitcoms that overflow with sexual innuendo and dirty talk. His wife watches soaps and his children watch E! and MTV. As life often imitates art, it should come as no surprise that their lives soon imitate their entertainment. (Eph. 5:3-5; Phil. 4:8).

The compromising Christian is more open to the idea of divorce. Divorce is on the rise among professed members of the church. Paralleling the rise in divorce is the increasing number of evangelists who are willing to compromise sound doctrine to accommodate the divorcing members (Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:2-3).

The compromising Christian is more willing to allow other men to work hard to develop into elders, deacons and preachers. He is too busy with material concerns to ever become "apt to teach." He has neglected his family's spiritual needs to the point that he is unlikely to ever have "believing children." His occasional dirty joke or expletive at work means that he will not be described as having a "good report from them that are without" (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-11).

CORRUPTING CHARACTER

The compromising Christian has moral issues that will cause him to lose his soul. He is cultivating a character problem that will prevent him from influencing his children for good. He sets a poor example for the young and weak

in faith in the local congregation of which he is a member. As the number of compromising Christians increase in the local church, the church loses influence and effectiveness not only with its own members but also among the lost in the community (1 Cor. 5:1-13).

When one has strong morals and convictions, he is strong; when his morals and convictions are negotiable, he is vulnerable to sin. When he carries this lame character into the assembly of the saints, he subjects all of the disciples to the dangerous weakening effects of his bad influence. Churches diminish in strength and effectiveness in this manner.

All congregations consist of Christians in different stages of development: the newborn babes in Christ who are eager to grow, the young in the faith who are making steady progress toward maturity, the strong and faithful members, and the old soldiers of the cross to whom all look for wisdom. Each of them has a place in the local church. But there is no healthy role in a congregation for a compromising Christian. He needs to be sternly rebuked and encouraged to fully repent lest he drift completely into apostasy and take others with him in the process (Tit. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13; Rev. 2:5, 3:19).

There is a causal relationship between the compromise of one's morals and the decay of his character. He will lose his soul. And there is a direct correlation between the decay of one's character and deterioration in the local church. When local churches begin tolerating immorality and negotiating doctrine, they will lose their candlestick.

329 Tomlinson Run Church Rd., Georgetown, Pennsylvania 15043

Needed: Good Used Song Books

Is the congregation where you are worshipping thinking about replacing their old song books? If so, there are a number of our brethren in the Philippines who could use your old ones. Your old books can be sent to the Philippines for a small amount of money and do a great amount of good for many years to come. If you have some good used books that you would like to send, please contact Andy Alexander at 502-957-6845 or send an e-mail to andyalex@core.com. I will be glad to provide you with names and addresses of brethren who could profit from these books.

Andy Alexander

Correction to Article by Raymond Fudge in

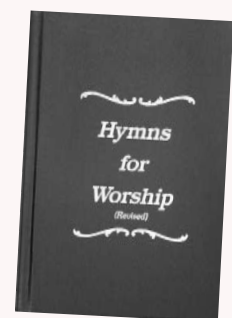
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gram

Following is a letter from a student who was in the 2002 Preacher Training Program of the Ellettsville, Indiana church of Christ, taught by Johnie, Johnie Paul, and John Isaac Edwards. They still have room for a limited number to attend this year (July 21-August 1). Let them know if you would like to attend by writing to 303 Temperance St., Ellettsville, IN 47429, or calling 812-336-4630.

August 19, 2002

Johnie Edwards
4121 Woodyard Road
Bloomington, IN 47404

Dear Johnie,

I now have had several weeks to better absorb and more fully appreciate the PTS. Just one more time I wanted to express my deepest appreciation to you, Johnie Paul, John Isaac and all who made the PTS possible. Everyone did such a fine job! It was not only the best educational experience of my life, but it was one of the best experiences of my life . . . period.

As you know, I have an extensive educational background. But the duality of teaching and the topics covered at the PTS were absolutely superb and second to none. I learned a great deal that has already helped my preaching. I am also confident that as I apply the principles I learned at the PTS my preaching will improve even more in the future.

There were so many “high points” in the PTS that it is not possible to even begin to mention them all. Perhaps the most important thing I got out of the training was the overall attitude towards gospel preaching. This attitude was typified by the sessions taught by Johnie Paul on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. Coming into the

PTS I was already impressed with the seriousness of gospel preaching. However, Johnie Paul’s class made a tremendous impression on me in regards to the fact that faithful gospel preachers are indeed “guardians of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:2). In light of Paul’s message in these epistles, the job of gospel preaching carries with it the gravest responsibility of anything a man could do with his life and causes all other human endeavors to pale in comparison. To fail in our vital obligation to “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” is to commit the most grievous failure of all (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

As a token of my appreciation for the PTS, I would like to donate a book next year. Please advise me concerning some possibilities in this regard, then we can make the appropriate arrangements. Thanks again to all for their hard work and dedicated service.

May God richly bless you and all as you continue your important work!

In His Service,

Craig V. Thomas
350 Pineridge Lane
Sandusky, MI 48471

Truth Magazine (April 3, 2003, 212)

“After submitting the article I wrote that you have printed in the April 3, 2003 issue, I had occasion to consult an attorney about divorce in Alabama. I need to correct a statement that Alabama does not allow ‘For the cause of Fornication’ on divorce papers. The law does allow it, but some judges are reluctant to put it on the papers. I have been told for years that Alabama did not allow this.”

Pope States Importance of Sin-free Communion

“Pope John Paul II on Thursday emphasized the importance of the Eucharist to the Roman Catholic Church and reaffirmed that those who have committed serious sins must go to confession before taking Communion.

“By implication, it was a stern reminder that divorced Roman Catholics who remarry cannot receive Communion. Vatican teaching forbids divorce and considers Catholics who remarry after divorce to be living in sin.

“He also warned Roman Catholics against taking Communion in non-Roman Catholic churches.

Ellettsville, Indiana Preacher Training Pro-
“The letter asserts an orthodox view of the Eucharist, the wafer and wine that Catholics believe are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ during the Mass. ‘This in no metaphorical food,’ the pope wrote, saying he hoped to rekindle the ‘amazement’ of Catholics at the ‘real presence’ of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine” (The Indianapolis Star [April 18, 2003], A5).

