

Milk & Honey

Vol. XXIX January, 2015 No. 1

Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Principles of Christian Conduct

William MacDonald

The question is, "What is appropriate behavior for a believer? What may he do, and what should he not do? Is this activity right or wrong?"

The Bible gives us a general outline as to how a believer can walk worthy of his heavenly calling. It answers many questions so directly that there is no need to look further. For instance, it teaches that it is never right to become involved in an unequal yoke (2 Cor. 6:14). A believer must not marry an unbeliever, enter a business partnership with an unbeliever, or engage in Christian service with an unbeliever. There is no need to pray about it, or seek counsel. The answer is already there in God's Word.

But there are hundreds of situations that arise in the Christian life that are not dealt with directly in Scriptures. If the Bible took up every problem area, it would be so massive that we wouldn't be able to carry it around!

So what God has done is this. He has given us a set of principles. When the question arises, "Is it all right for me to do this?" we apply the principles one by one. I cannot think of any problem that couldn't be solved by using this method. It's like feeding a problem into a computer, pushing the appropriate controls, and finding the answer staring at us. Here are the principles, in the form of questions.

Is There Any Glory for God in It? We always ask, "Is there any harm in it?" But we should also ask, "Is there any glory for God in it?" The apostle Paul lays down the principle that whatever we do, we should do it to the glory of God, and this applies to such common activities as eating and drinking (1 Cor. 10:31). A famous evangelist preaches the gospel of the glory of God, and his wife washes dishes with same motive. Over her kitchen sink is a printed reminder: "Divine services conducted here three times daily."

Any honourable work can be done to the glory of God. Even Christian slaves working in the field can serve "as to Christ," "as servants of Christ," "as to the Lord, and not to men" (Eph. 6:5-7).

But there are many things in which there is no glory for God, that is, things that are dishonest, impure, unrighteous, or

even questionable. Before engaging in these things, it would be ridiculous to bow the head and say, Lord Jesus, be gloried in what I am about to do."

Is It "of the World"? The world of unregenerate people has its own lifestyle, fashions, music, art, religion, and philosophy. It appeals to the body rather than the spirit, to man's depraved nature rather than to what Christ has ordained for him.

Believers are not of the world any more than Christ is of the world (John 17:16). Because the world is still hostile to God, anyone who loves the world is His enemy (James 4:4; 1 John 2:25).

When a person is born again, he receives a Spirit-given intuition as to what is worldly. And as he grows in grace, that intuition may become keener. A believer ordered a state-of-the-art television. When the delivery truck arrived, he looked out of his window and saw this advertisement on the truck: "Brings the world into your living room." That was enough! He told the driver to take the TV back.

Would Jesus Have Done it? The Saviour left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21) So it is valid to apply this test to any area of behavior" What would Jesus do?

Years ago, Charles Sheldon wrote a book called *In His Steps*, in which a Christian congregation decided to apply this test in daily life. The result was that the community was revolutionized.

Someone may remind us that Jesus ate with publicans and sinners (Mk. 2:15, 16). This is true, but it is also true that He was always faithful to God His Father when He did so. He never condoned their sins, or compromised His own testimony. We too may eat with the ungodly sinners if we reprove their sins (Eph. 5:11b), and share the Gospel with them (Rom. 1:14). "The example of Christ in His walk on earth should ever be before us as the only standard of holiness" (R.C. Chapman).

Would You Like to Be Found Doing It When Christ Returns? No one knows the time of the Saviour's return. It could happen at any moment. The apostle John reminds us of the possibility of shame at His coming (1 John 2:28). We would be ashamed if He found me in evil or even questionable activities, watching suggestive movies, reading smutty literature, indulging our fleshly appetites. We would be ashamed if He had to say to us, "What are you doing here?" Or if He

Continued from page 1 — *Principles of ...*

had to ask us, as He asked backslidden Peter, “Do you love Me more than these?”

The hope of Christ’s imminent return exerts a purifying influence on a believer’s life (1 John 3:3). But it is not enough to hold the truth intellectually; the truth must hold us practically. Those who love His appearing (2 Tim. 5:8) are those whose lives are moulded by the blessed hope.

Which Nature Does It Feed? ...Every believer has two natures—an old one and a new one. The old nature is incurably evil; the new nature is indescribably good. These natures are constantly warring against each other. (Ed: Gal. 5:17) The nature we feed is the nature that wins.

We feed the natures by what we see, hear, and do; by where we go; by the company we keep; by the thought-life we encourage. If we feed the wolf within, we can expect the lamb to win.

Can You Feel Free to Do It When You Remember that Your Body Is the Temple of the Holy Spirit? The moment a person is saved, the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in his body (1 Cor. 6:19). The Third Person of the Trinity looks on the body as a temple—a holy place in which to dwell. We are to live in the consciousness that our body *is* holy and that it is indwelling by a *Holy* Person.

As long as we are gripped by this truth, we will resist sexual impurity, gluttony, drunkenness. We will not allow ourselves to become addicted to cancer-producing agents, such as tobacco, or mind-altering drugs. Rather we will follow reasonable rules of health and safety to maintain our body in good health for the Lord’s sake.

Is It Fitting Behavior for a Child of God? As children of the King, we are expected to walk worthy of our high calling (Eph. 5:8b; Col. 1:10).

A story is told (it may only be a story) about the son of King Louis XVI of France. When an evil woman tried to corrupt him into speaking vile language, the little prince would clench his fists, stamp his feet and say, “I will not say it, I will not say those filthy words, I was born to be a king, and I won’t talk that way!”

When we find a person from the slums wallowing in the gutter, we may be grieved but not surprised. But when we see the ruler’s son living as a derelict on skid row, we are shocked.. We don’t expect that from a son of a president.

People of the world expect better conduct of believers than they do of themselves. When a believer slips, they pounce on him, “Oh, I thought you were a Christian!” No mention of the fact that they commit the sin habitually!

But this is the way it should be. The world should expect more from us, and they should get it.

If It Involves the Expenditure of Money, Could the Money Be Better Spent? Some things in life are good; some

are better; some are best of all. We constantly have to make value judgments in order to maximise our effectiveness.

The good is often the enemy of the best. We may spend money on things that may not be sinful, yet they may be trivial, transient, and non-essential. On the other hand, we may use our money in the spread of the Gospel, thus ensuring ourselves a welcoming committee at the gates of glory (Luke 16:9)

This principle is not intended to put a guilt-trip on people over every dollar they spend. But it should open to them thrilling possibility of using funds in such a way that a work will be done for God that will last for all eternity.

Could the Time Be Better Spent? Once again, the use of our time should not be a matter of legal bondage but of glorious liberty. We are all entrusted with twenty-four hours per day, and we decide how it is to be spent. It is endless possibilities for good, for evil – and for waste.

As good stewards, we are to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16), that is, make the most of every opportunity. This will inevitably mean dropping many activities for those with higher priority, It may mean refusing invitations. It may mean cutting down on hours of employment in order to give oneself to prayer and the ministry of the Word. It should mean giving precedence to meetings of the assembly over family gatherings and other social engagements.

Faithfulness in making these decisions leads to wider spheres of service.

What Effect Will Your Conduct Have on Others? There are certain activities in life that are morally neutral. They are called matters of moral indifference. A Christian has the right to do them. They are not wrong in themselves.

But these actions become wrong if they stumble or offend another brother. Notice how Paul deals with the subject in Romans 14. (NKJV)

...resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way (v.13b)

...if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. (v. 15)

...Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. (v. 20a)

And again in 1 Cor. 8:9-13 the apostle says;

But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

When Paul says “all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify” (1 Cor. 10:23b), the primary thought is not so much a matter of self-edification as of edifying others.

“The guiding principle for us all towards others is that we may be a means of edifying them, that is, of building them up spiritually. A freedom which is enjoyed at the expense of detriment to others cannot be really beneficial to oneself (W.E. Vine).

So although a Christian may have the right to eat pork or shellfish or drink wine in moderation, he has the greater right to renounce that liberty rather than grieve a brother in the Lord.

It is well known that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a smoker. He defended the habit, even though he was one of God’s greatest gift to the Church. There is a story that one day he saw on a billboard, “Smoke the tobacco that Spurgeon smokes.” That was all he needed to drop the habit.

Is It Doubtful? “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23 (NKJV)). This is still speaking about matters of moral indifference, things that are not intrinsically wrong. If I think a certain thing is wrong, and I go ahead and do it anyway, then I have sinned. It may not be wrong for another Christian; he may have perfect liberty to do it. But if my conscience is not clear, if I cannot do it with faith or with the confidence that it is legitimate, then I sin when I do it.

Does It Have the Appearance of Evil? 1 Thess. 5:22 reads in the original Authorised Version, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” Though the modern versions uniformly direct us to abstain from *every form* of evil, the older reading is not unbiblical and carries a needed warning. An unmarried couple may drive across the country together and be perfectly innocent of immorality, but it leaves them open to suspicion. A Sunday School teacher may go into a bar for a Coke, but it may be hard to convince one of her students who happens to walk by just as he emerges.

Is It a Weight? There is a difference between a sin and a weight. A sin is always wrong; a weight may not be wrong but it is a hindrance. We should “lay aside every weight and ... run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). In the Olympic races there are rules that must be observed; if they are not followed, the runner is disqualified. Now there is nothing in the rules to prevent a runner from wearing two-pound ankle weights. He can wear them but he won’t win the race.

Paul was thinking of weights when he wrote, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful (1 Cor. 6:12a; 10:33a). They are not conducive to making progress for Christ. They are not necessarily wrong, but they might not be profitable.

What is a weight in the Christian race? An unspiritual friendship, a time-consuming job, an overly-absorbing hobby, a monopolizing sport, indiscriminate and inordinate TV viewing ... all these could hinder a believer in winning the prize. In fact, excessive time spent in any subordinate activity could become a weight.

Is It Enslaving? There is another area where something may be quite legitimate but it must be avoided if it is addictive. The apostle said, “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12b) He is speaking of areas that are not distinctly wrong in themselves, but they become wrong if they hold us in their power. Paul would not allow himself to become addicted to foods or beverages. We might add to the list of drugs, sports and TV.

How Does It Appear in the Eyes of Christ? Someone suggested that the greatest test for Christian behavior is how it appears in the eyes of Christ. Does He approve? Would we be embarrassed to have Him sitting beside us?

The truth is that He is present with us at all times. As the old spiritual says, “Oh, He sees all we do, He hears all we say, my Lord is a-writin’ all the time.

Constant remembrance that the Holy Savor is our Companion at all times is bound to have a sanctifying influence on our lives.

There then are principles that God has given to guide us in our moral decision-making. As we know them, remember them, and apply them, we are assured of making the choices that will please His heart and keep us on the highway to holiness.

Unfortunately most of us experience wild swings in our lives. We alternate between victory and defeat. What we want is deliverance from the power of indwelling sin. We want continuous revival. There is a way to find it. *

— — — — —

From “*The forgotten command: BE HOLY*”. Published by John Ritchie, available though Gospel Folio Press (www.GospelFolio.com).

York Bible Study Program

January – March 2015

Date	Topic	Teacher
Jan 10	Sanctification	Dan Weaver
Feb 14	Book of Nehemiah	Bob Spender
March 14	Revelation 1-3	Mike Attwood

Milk & Honey

Spread The Word, Inc., 2400 Admire Springs Dr.
Dover, PA 17315



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 333
York, PA

*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy
in all manner of conversation; 1 Pet. 1:15*

January 2015

Learning To Love

A.T. Shearman, U.K.

There is no more beautiful character in the whole of Scripture than Mary of Bethany. Her simplicity has great charm, her sincerity is beyond question, her silence is most eloquent. Luke's portrait shows her sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to His word. John reveals her to us pouring out her box of costly ointment at the Saviour's feet. In both cases a commendation from Jesus is given. He made sure that we should know that both attitude and action were worthy of Him. Others may criticize, but the Master commends.

Mary *listened* to His word. What she heard profoundly affected her life. In *listening* she *learned* to *love*. Let us consider more closely these two virtues, listening and loving.

"Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word," Luke 10:39. While Martha was bustling around, "cumbered about much serving," Mary has chosen a better part, that one thing needful that stirred her heart and enriched her life. Let us not be hard on Martha. Such motivations to serve are too rare today for us to criticize her. In both instances she was active for Him, wanting to share her home. But Mary's priorities were different. Her open ear unlocked for her treasures of His love, which inspired her devotion to respond. In *listening* we *learn*. It is a slow process, but vitally necessary. It is a humbling process, for by it we tap the resources of His fullness. And above all, in His desire for our well-being, it is that good part that shall not be taken away, v.42.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment... very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus," John 12:3.

This is most significant. Let us consider the setting of it. They made Him a supper; Martha served; Lazarus sat at

the table; but quietly and unobtrusively, Mary performed her act of *love*. Just a few words sum up the positions of Martha and Lazarus, although he had been raised from the grave. But Mary's action brings the whole scene alive. "Then took Mary...." The ointment was very costly. The container was broken, the contents poured out at His feet. The Savior was anointed and the whole house filled with the fragrance of the deed. Can we not say that only one who had *learned* the worth of Jesus, could show such *love* and devotion? It was symbolic of the ourpouring of her very heart. "Waste," some said; our Lord's reaction proved that this was *worship* to Him, under the very shadow of the cross. The lessons are not hard to learn. We must spend time *listening*, *learning*, before our response of *love* will flow out spontaneously and acceptably to our Lord. * from *Precious Seed Magazine*

STW Spring Conference

April 11, 2015

David Dunlap, Tom Irwin

Held at the North York Gospel Chapel

Mark your calendar

10AM - 3PM, Lunch served

Milk & Honey Information

There is no charge for Milk & Honey. It, like all ministries of Spread The Word, is supported entirely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. All gifts are tax deductible.

Publisher: **Spread The Word, Inc.**

2400 Admire Springs Dr.
Dover, PA 17315

Editor: Stephen Hulshizer

Fax/Phone (717) 467-5729 phone/fax

Web/Contact www.STW1982.com

Circulation: 6,000/month