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15 Ways to Behave More Christian

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INTRODUCTION – It is much too easy to become swept into movements and lose sight of the bigger picture. At our weekly small group men’s meeting recently, eight of us guys sat at my dining room table as we do each Tuesday morning. The topic of discussion centered around how to be in the world but not of the world. The question was posed, “How do we stand firmly in love on an issue we really believe in?”

We all realized that it is easy for an issue to become political, religious, or social. When it does then it can quickly lead to mass prejudice, label making, and very unchristian in its demeanor.

Issues like immigration, homosexuality, prayer, marriage all are huge and important issues. Most believers have and should have strong beliefs on such topics. But...how should those beliefs be expressed? What behaviors should be avoided in expressing and standing for what we believe? How do we keep hatred for people separated from hatred of sin?

How to keep from becoming sinfully prejudiced in self-righteousness? As our group discussed this for over an hour, I jotted down a list of summary statements of what we covered. Following is a list of those statements. I think that are worthy of consideration if you want to stand on an issue in love. They answer the question of “How to we live Christian in an Unchristian world?”

1. Recognize Your Own Sinfulness.

-There may be sin you have not personally experienced but that does not mean you don’t have the capacity to commit that sin. It is our sinful nature that leads us to acts of sin. Apart from the grace of God, we are all equally lost and separated from God. It is “only by His Grace” that we can live above the strong downward pull of sin’s gravity.

2. Deal with People as Individual Persons, Not as Groups.

-It is both unfair and ungodly to view each individual as if they were personally responsible for all the rhetoric, behavior, and choices of an entire group. When we dismiss someone because they are “white” or “African

American” or “Hispanic” we are refusing to see them as having personal value. This is prejudice in its very ugly form. Attitudes like, “They can’t be saved because they are ‘pentecostal” or “Methodist” or “Episcopalian” is very bigoted thinking. Each of us as individuals will stand before God.

3. Be Aware of Self-Righteousness.

-Thinking you are above being self-righteous may be evidence you are. Jesus dealt more severely with this attitude than any in Scripture. Our righteousness is God’s gift through Christ, to claim it as a result of our own efforts or abilities is to bring the greatest reproach upon Christ.

4. Be Sensitive to How the Holy Spirit Wants to Bear His Fruit Through You in Regard to Those Trapped in Sin.

-The Lord knows how to open the hearts of people and will give you the grace to demonstrate Christ’s love and grace to them.

5. Be Committed to Love (Gal. 5:6).

-If it violates love, it violates God. God is love. Faith is to be expressed and operated through love.

6. Be Ready to Give An Answer of the Hope Within You.

-Instead of preparing an argument, prepare to present hope. Pride can pull you into a verbal barrage. Allow the Holy Spirit to use the powerful weapons of wisdom, faith, hope, and love to lead others to God’s throne of grace. A battle won by intellect may sound good to the natural ear, but a battle diffused by love and leaving an opponent with that nagging feeling that he has been somehow loved into silence will do more good.

7. Stand Righteously Against Tactics That Betray the Heart of Christ in Dealing with Others.

-The weapons of warfare are not carnal. Too often, especially in the fray of battle, we resort to tactics that are rooted in manipulation, mud-slinging, and corrupt communication. This means we attempt to win a cause for Christ in a spirit opposite Christ.

8. Intercede for Those Who Stand Against You.

-Praying for others has multiple benefits that are powerful. It softens your heart to pray for them. It softens their hearts when you pray for them. It brings Heaven to bear upon their lives. It creates an atmosphere that causes the Devil problems in doing what he wants to do.

9. Seek Wisdom and Understanding from the Scripture to Learn the Ways of God. (Is. 55)

-Our ways and God's are different. Don't assume. Seek God's way in every situation (Prov. 3:5-6)

10. Handle People with Grace.

-This is how God has chosen to deal with us. Pass it on!

11. Speak with Grace.

-This means the seed you sow through your words will have the opportunity to bring forth the fruits of grace. This is much better than the seed sown when we speak from the flesh. One is life and the other is death.

12. Learn to Discern Hatred in Your Own Heart.

-Does the Holy Spirit work through hatred? No! His fruit is spelled out clearly in Gal. 5:22. Don't confuse your hatred from someone with righteous anger. Righteous anger rejoices in the prospect of someone drawing near to God. Hatred rejoices in seeing judgment fall upon someone. Remember what Jesus told his disciples when they wanted to call fire down from Heaven upon the Samaritans? "You know not what spirit you are of."

13. Remember that Religion Has An Ugly Deathly Side to It.

-More ungodly acts against people have been done in the name of religion than any other factor. History bears this out. It is easy to tag something about "God" onto whatever crusade is firing up.

14. Rely on the Holy Spirit to Guide You.

-Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing. He promised the Holy Spirit would give you what you needed when you needed it. When in doubt, pray it out!

15. Avoid Being Labeled and Being a Label Maker.

-Be a love maker not a label maker. Don't allow people to identify you with a certain tag. This makes it easier for them to pass a quick judgment on you. Avoid the temptation to label others. This will blind you to what you need to know about them and see in them. Ask God to help you see people the way He does. It will always be redemptive in its view.

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