

A Christian's Conduct in the World

The Importance of Godly Influence

There would be general agreement, I believe, by Christians in the 21st century church that we've rarely been at our best when it comes to reaching out to the non-Christian culture around us. So often we've lacked *biblical balance*. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

There's a story that's told of a Christian man who applied and was hired at a local business. At this business establishment, there had been a history of dishonest business practices. After the man was hired, he went about trying to fit in. He laughed at all the dirty jokes and turned a blind eye when evidence of corrupt business practices crossed his desk. After he had been on the job about a month, his wife asked him one day how the job was going. With a certain level of excitement he exclaimed, "Things couldn't be better. I've just received my first raise and I'm getting along well with all the other employees. They've never even guessed that I'm a Christian." Now this story, although apocryphal, points to a very real truth. Often Christians have, for all the wrong reasons, felt as if they should leave their Christianity on the steps of the Church as they walk out on Sunday morning, only to pick it up again as they enter next week. In their day to day lives, they simply seek to *blend* in with the world around them.

Let me give you a contrasting example; this time, a *true* story told by a Christian school teacher. On one particular day, this teacher had the responsibility of overseeing the children during their break time on the playground. After a while, he heard a group of the children shouting over the schoolyard wall. He went to investigate, and when he got close enough to understand what was going on, he discovered that they were yelling abusive and judgmental words at two women who had come outside the office building to smoke a cigarette during their lunch break. Now these were *Christian children*. It seems that they had learned to sit in judgment and be condemning of anyone *they* suspected was guilty of sin.

Francis Schaeffer used to say that in our relationships with others it's relatively easy to be either *coldly uncompromising against sin or warmly tolerant of it*. But what is difficult- in fact impossible without the work of the Holy Spirit--is to show both God's holiness and love at the same time. When the two are rightly connected we're neither overly harsh nor tolerant.

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