

Back To School

Introduction. One of the songs in our song book is entitled, "The World's Bible." The second stanza of this song states, "We are the only Bible the careless world will read. We are the sinner's gospel. We are the scoffer's creed. We are the Lord's last message given in deed and word. What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?"

Each Christian must strive to make the best "imprint" upon the world that he possibly can. If our type, however, has become covered with the dirt and grime of sin, we will not be able to make a good mark on the paper of life -- and, sadly, the far-surpassing news of the gospel will not be read by others in our lives.

Going back to school can be a wonderful time. There is excitement and optimism for the coming school year, but there are also some responsibilities of which those who wish to be godly need to be aware. Human beings are influenced by other human beings. Therefore, it is not a matter of whether we have influence or not, but rather our concern should be with what kind of influence we are having on others, and what kind of influence are others having on us (cf. John 17:14; Matthew 5:13-16). Let's notice a few items that you need to watch now that you are going back to school.

I. ***You Need To Watch Your Language***

- A. Cursing means "to make light of something serious, to bring a serious matter into contempt, to show no respect, evil or wicked talk" (Romans 3:14; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; Colossians 3:8). The Israelites were not to profane the name of the Lord (Leviticus 19:12). Profane means "to wound, defile or pollute" (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9). In a moment of weakness, Peter cursed to "prove" he was not a follower of Christ (Matthew 26:73-74). We must furthermore not engage in obscene speech, dirty jokes or coarse jesting.
- B. Virtually every Christian realizes that vulgar speech, curse words, swear words, using the Lord's name in vain, etc., are condemned in the Bible; yet how many saints have unknowingly been guilty of such by using words of a more "softened" nature? Such is the case when using many of today's euphemisms.
 1. The definition of the word euphemism is, "The act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive." What would be some examples of euphemisms that are wrong for a Christian to use?
 2. Maybe you use words like "golly," "gosh," "gee," "thank goodness," "darn," heck," "good heavens," etc. People who use these words think they are avoiding foul language or even think nothing about it whatsoever.

- C. Along with profanity and euphemisms, one must also be careful of other sins of the tongue.
 - 1. Slander (Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 10:18).
 - 2. Talebearing (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 20:19).
 - 3. Whispering and backbiting (Proverbs 16:28; Romans 1:29-30; 2 Corinthians 12:20).
 - 4. Tattling (1 Timothy 5:13).
- D. I have had to practice sound vocabulary, and strive to overcome my upbringing. There is no excuse for anyone using foul language. Profanity is a sin against God. It is disrespectful, sacrilegious and irreverent! We ought to give more thought to our speech, for we will render account for it in the judgment (Matthew 12:36). We must bridle the tongue (James 1:26), but it is difficult (James 3:3-6).

II. ***You Need To Watch Your Friends***

- A. Good friends are worth their weight in gold (Proverbs 27:9). However, friends are human and they can influence us for evil.
- B. There are examples of good friends.
 - 1. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-41) and Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus (John 1:45).
 - 2. An imprisoned apostle and his friend converted a jailer and his household by their conduct and their teaching (Acts 16:23-34).
 - 3. Naaman's servants got him to see his irrational behavior; after their questions he went and dipped in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:13).
- C. There are examples of bad friends.
 - 1. In 2 Samuel 13:3, Amnon had a friend Jonadab who helped him hatch a plan whereby he was able to rape Tamar.
 - 2. Though he was sorry, Herod "sent and beheaded John" due to the influence of Herodias and her dancing daughter (Matthew 14:6-10).
 - 3. Many of the chief rulers believed on Jesus but refused to confess Him, "because of the Pharisees" (John 12:42).
- D. As the old saying goes, if you have friends like these, you do not need any enemies. When you are at school, make sure you choose friends who will help you get to heaven.

III. ***You Need To Watch Your Dress***

- A. Three words in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 dictate how a woman is to be dressed. It must be kept in mind that although Paul is giving instruction as to how women should dress in the public assemblies, the principles will apply in other situations. If modest apparel is appropriate in worship, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is prohibited in dress is wrong in worship services, it would be difficult to show that it is right elsewhere.

1. Proper or modest clothing.
 - a) The word here used in the original denotes orderliness, to be neatly arranged.
 - b) It does not mean "modest" in the sense of being opposed to that which is immodest, or which tends to excite improper desires, but that which is appropriate.
 - c) This means that the appearance of a woman will not be offensive to anybody.
 2. Modestly or shamefacedness.
 - a) The word means a demeanor of respect and reverence toward others. It is best reflected in a discussion of godly character (Jeremiah 8:10-12). The reason that these questions are today so serious is that we have forgotten how to blush. We feel no sense of shame. We do not feel what Adam felt when he sinned.
 - b) Our defenses are brought down due to the abundance of the exposure accepted in the society in which we live. Christians even get bogged down in discussions of what is and what is not proper. If you have to ask, it probably is not.
 3. Discreetly or sobriety.
 - a) The word means sober-mindedness or moderation of the desires of the flesh. Immodest apparel is clothing that is designed to expose the body to the view of others.
 - b) Such an exposure would have been disgraceful and disrespectful. One sign of worldliness is the devotion of excessive time and money to the outward adornment of the body. When you think of a godly woman, how is she dressed?
- B. According to Peter's instruction, as in every other area of godly submission, when we get the heart right, everything else will fall into place (1 Peter 3:1-6).
1. The Christian should dress as to reflect their minds are occupied with nobler affairs. Their apparel should be models of neatness and appropriateness.
 2. If the inner person is as God desires, the outward person in dress will reflect it. What is foremost in the passage is the appropriate ornamentation of the heart.
- C. Now I know that it is hot, and I know that people generally want to be fashionable, but you cannot let these facts cause you to commit sin and wear something you should not.

IV. ***You Need To Watch Your Faithfulness***

- A. After becoming a child of God, you must remain faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2).
- B. There are several men who were faithful in service to the Lord men-

tioned in the New Testament.

1. Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17).
 2. Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7).
 3. Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).
 4. Onesimus (Colossians 4:9).
 5. Silvanus (1 Peter 5:12).
 6. Antipas (Revelation 2:13).
- C. It will be easy and tempting to let matters like work or extracurricular activities (sports, FFA, band, chorus, homework, etc.) become a stumblingblock.
1. Remember that when you violate your conscience by failing to do what you know is right, such as miss services, you sin (James 4:17).
 2. Balak cast a stumblingblock before the Israelites and caused them to sin (Revelation 2:14). Activities, which are not wrong in and of themselves, can do the same!

Conclusion. You should consider your influence among your peers, and you should consider their influence on you. The strong can influence the weak for good or the weak can influence the strong for evil. Your life should lend credence and respectability to the truths you believe, for you represent God!

What about those closest to you, who know the most about you and stand to be influenced as much or more by you than any other person? Have they become more spiritually minded, less spiritually minded or no apparent change either way? You must strive to emulate your Lord in whatever you do.