

Students Standing Strong

Introduction. One of our favorite songs is, "The World's Bible" (#460). 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" on 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 glorious 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 have on others, and what kind of influence they have on us (cp. John 17:14; Matthew 5:13-16). There are four items in which you need to stand strong now that you are going back to school.

I. Stand Strong With Your Language

- A. Cursing means "to make light of something serious, to bring a serious matter into contempt, to show no respect; evil, wicked, or obscene talk" (Romans 3:14; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; Colossians 3:8). The Israelites were not to profane ("to wound, defile, or pollute") the name of the Lord (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; cp. 1 Timothy 1:9). Cursing and profanity are products of a dirty mind, but dirty jokes and coarse jesting are also ("corrupt communication" and "foolish talking").
- B. Virtually every Christian realizes that vulgar speech, curse words, using the Lord's name in vain, etc., are condemned in the Bible; yet how many saints have been guilty of using "softened" or euphemistic words?
 1. The definition of euphemism is, "The act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive."
 2. Maybe you use words like "golly," "gosh," "gee," "thank goodness," "darn," heck," "good heavens," etc. People who use these words either think nothing about it, or they think they are avoiding foul language.
- C. Along with profanity and euphemisms, one must refrain from other tongue sins.

1. Slander (Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 10:18).
 2. Talebearing or gossip (Proverbs 11:13; 1 Timothy 5:13).
 3. Whispering and backbiting (Proverbs 16:28; 2 Corinthians 12:20).
- D. There is no excuse for anyone using inappropriate language. We ought to give deep thought to our speech (Matthew 12:36). We have to bridle the tongue (James 1:26), but it is difficult (James 3:3-6). In Judges 12:6, the Ephraimites proved their ethnicity by mispronouncing "Shibboleth," which led to their death. Will your speech show you are a child of God?

II. Stand Strong With 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. Ruth refused to leave Naomi and was determined to return to her mother-in-law's homeland (Ruth 1:16-17).
 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 to rape Tamar.
 2. Job's friends accused him wrongfully and were no help to him in his terrible affliction (Job 6:14-21).
 3. Though he was sorry, Herod "sent and beheaded John" due to the influence of Herodias and her dancing daughter (Matthew 14:6-10).
- D. Do not let your friends influence you into drinking, cursing, smoking, cheating, lying, fornication, etc. (Proverbs 13:20).

III. Stand Strong With Your Clothing

- A. Three words in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 dictate how a woman is to dress. Although Paul is giving instruction as to how women should dress in the public assemblies, the principles will apply in other situations and to men as well. If modest apparel is appropriate in worship, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is prohibited in dress is wrong in worship services, how could you show that it is right elsewhere?
1. Proper or modest clothing.
 - a) The word denotes orderliness or neatly arranged. It does not mean "modest" as opposed to immodest, or what excites improper desires, but what is appropriate, suitable, or becoming.
 - b) This means that the appearance of a woman will not be offensive to anyone (cp. 1 Timothy 3:2, "good behavior").

2. Modestly or shamefacedness.
 - a) The word means a demeanor of respect and reverence toward others (cp. Hebrews 12:28). It is best reflected in a discussion of godly character.
 - (1) Our defenses are lowered because of the abundance of "acceptable" exposure. Therefore, we feel no sense of shame (Jeremiah 8:10-12)!
 - (2) This attitude refrains from going over the limits of modesty, as well as from the dishonor which immodesty would cause.
 - b) 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 "sanity, soundness of mind," and in this context it stands basically for perfect self-mastery in the physical appetites. It definitely had a sexual nuance when applied to women.
 - b) Inappropriate attire exposes the body to the view of others. A godly woman will think this exposure is disgraceful and disrespectful. When you think of a godly woman, how is she dressed?
- B. According to Peter, when we get the heart right, everything else will fall in place (1 Peter 3:3-4). The Christian should dress as to reflect their minds are occupied with nobler thoughts. If the inner person is as God desires, the outward person in dress will reflect it.
- C. Now I know it is hot, and I know that people generally want to be fashionable, but you cannot let this cause you to commit sin and wear something you should not.

IV. Stand Strong With Your Faithfulness

- A. After becoming a Christian, God wants you to be faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 17; Revelation 17:14). Faithful means "trustworthy, dependable, or reliable." In other words, it is someone who does not quit, even in the face of problems and trials.
- B. There are several people who were faithful in service to the Lord mentioned in the New Testament.
 1. Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17).
 2. Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21).
 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, 4-H, 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.