



Truth For These Times



23. CHRISTIAN STANDARDS

The devil has effectively used two main methods to destroy the Christian church. One of these methods is persecution, which has met with a great deal of success. However, persecution tended to make Christians more devoted, and weeded out only the weaker ones. When this persecution led to execution, because of the Christian's "faithfulness unto death", his life was sealed for eternity, and the devil lost another round.

A much more subtle and effective method of destroying the Christian was for the devil to introduce the 'world' into the Christian's way of life. This method allows the Christian to make a profession of Christianity, yet live a life no differently from a man of the world who makes no profession. Such a person may attend church, and outwardly observe certain principles, yet his love of the world is his cherished idol. Such a person can be just as eternally lost as the greatest sinner.

The Bible outlines certain standards expected in the Christian's way of life. His attaining to high standards do not entitle him to eternal life, but they are the fruit of the genuinely converted sinner. However, so that one may have an educated conscience, and see right from wrong clearly, this study shows the high standards that God wants His children to attain.

2 Timothy 3:1,4,5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: traitors, headstrong, haughty, LOVERS OF PLEASURE rather than lovers of God, HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

When a church lowers its standards to bring the world into the church, it only succeeds in taking the church into the world. Today amusements unfortunately, dominate the minds of many professed Christians. We live in an age where pleasure seeking is paramount. There is nothing basically wrong with pleasure, but when it becomes all absorbing, to the exclusion of God, it leads to spiritual disaster. Many have a form of godliness, but because the world and its pleasures are uppermost in the mind, their spiritual life is without power. It is not always easy to differentiate between good and bad when asked whether certain pleasures are right or wrong, but the Bible gives clear guidelines to show us if contemplated amusements are acceptable in the sight of God.

A. IS IT OF THE WORLD? (i.e. the evil practises of the world).

1 John 2:15,16

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD OR THE THINGS IN THE WORLD. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.



In the world – but not of it.

The Christian must be in this world, but not of this world. He is a pilgrim on the way to the glory land. He is not to allow this world's ways to control him, nor become absorbed in attaining material possessions. If any amusement tends to worldliness and draws him away from genuine living for God, he is to abstain.

B. CAN I DO THIS TO THE GLORY OF GOD?

1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or **WHATEVER YOU DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.**



C. IS IT A STUMBLING BLOCK TO FELLOW BELIEVERS?

Romans 14:13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, **NOT TO PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK OR A CAUSE TO FALL IN OUR BROTHER'S WAY.**

Engaging in some pleasures may cause a weaker brother to start on the downward road. *If in doubt, leave it out.* You may not be affected, but it may be a means of others falling into temptation.

D. DOES IT HAVE THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL?

1 Thessalonians 5:22 **ABSTAIN FROM EVERY FORM OF EVIL.**

If it looks evil, it may lead to evil, or cause another to fall. The Christian's life must always be above reproach and give no occasion for criticism concerning his standards of living.

E. WILL IT STUNT OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT**, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

If the pleasure is feeding the carnal nature, the development is in the wrong direction. Continued practice will eventually cause you to lose interest in spiritual things. It is a weight you must cast off



if you are to develop a beautiful character. If it hinders the chances of eternal life, it is best left alone. It is also good to ask, "Is the atmosphere good?" or "Can God's blessing be on this pleasure?" or "If Jesus was here, would He go with me, and could I feel at ease in His presence while engaging in this pleasure?" If you have consecrated your life to God, you will never be in doubt when applying these tests.

Dancing is a very questionable form of amusement. Some women appreciate the gracefulness of dancing, but are not aware of the temptations and evil thoughts that are in a man's mind as he holds the woman close. Often partners other than husband and wife are sought after in the dance. The temptation of illicit sex is very prevalent in dancing. The body movements in dances where less contact is made

between sexes is just as tempting as ballroom style dancing. Often alcohol is associated with dances, causing one to reduce all restraints, thus confirming practises of illicit sex. The church of God could not condone dancing, when it so obviously would lead many into sin.

The movie theatre and drive-in theatres do not fall in line with Christian standards.

Films that sell the most tickets are based on sex, violence and horror. This is directly opposed to Bible standards. The stars are, in the main, immoral people, and it is wrong to support them and encourage them in their immoral living. Movies make crime attractive, glorify violence, and endorse drinking, smoking, gambling and immorality. Granted, there are some good things in movies, but often the good is so contaminated and mixed with evil, that it becomes deadly poison. Bible films are not all they appear. In many cases they are Satan's subtle weapons to deceive the cautious Christian. Hollywood Bible films often twist the facts and tell a story unknown to the Bible account.



At the push of a button, anyone can access volumes of sex, violence and immorality – all fatal to spiritual growth.

Psalm 101:3 I WILL SET NOTHING WICKED BEFORE MY EYES; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me.

King David determined not to behold wicked things. Surely this is good counsel to us today when we can set moving pictures before our eyes in our own homes. As far as the Bible loving Christian is concerned, the movies are OUT. Occasionally a good picture may be shown, but a weaker Christian, knowing you have gone to the movies, may be encouraged to attend on a regular basis and be spiritually ruined. There are many good programs on radio and television too, but there are also many bad ones. The Christian needs to pray for strength to control the knob, so that he will not set any wicked thing before his eyes.

Exodus 20:17 YOU SHALL NOT COVET your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor's.



Gambling is breaking to 10th commandment.

Covetousness is a burning desire to have more, usually that which belongs to someone else. This is one of the gravest sins, along with idolatry. See Colossians 3:5. To practise covetousness will eventually exclude one from the kingdom of heaven. See 1 Corinthians 6:10. Gambling is pandering to the weakness of covetousness. A person backs race horses, plays poker machines, buys lottery and raffle tickets and plays cards hoping to win. His desire is to get more money, even at the loss of his fellow man. A Christian will not engage in such practises to gain a livelihood or to gain extra. He will work for a living, as God said Adam would, "In

the sweat of your face you shall eat bread". Genesis 3:19. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, we are told, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat". Gambling is of this world, and it is against Christian standards.

F. THE DRESS OF A CHRISTIAN

Romans 12:2 And **DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Christian is to be distinctive – different from the world.

1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, **HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.



Seeking after fashion is conforming to the world.

The Christian has something the world hasn't. His life and appearance are to witness to this.

1 Timothy 2:9,10 In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in **MODEST APPAREL**, with propriety and moderation, **NOT WITH BRAIDED HAIR OR GOLD OR PEARLS OR COSTLY CLOTHING**, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

Christian women are admonished to dress modestly without extravagance and display. Shamefacedness suggests respectful dress without suggestiveness. Sobriety means soundness of mind and self control. The Christian woman desires to reflect the selflessness of Christ. She determines to fulfil her womanly tasks with grace and resourcefulness. Her hairstyle, and everything about her dress is not to attract attention to herself. Extravagance and display in dress reflect personal vanity and self-centredness. The Christian woman should dress neatly and well, but not to extremes in either untidiness or costliness.

1 Peter 3:3,4 **DO NOT LET YOUR ADORNMENT BE MERELY OUTWARD**—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— rather **LET IT BE THE HIDDEN PERSON OF THE HEART**, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.



The Christian woman is not to make an idol of dress. God asks her to deny herself of the time consuming hairstyles which were in fashion in the Roman world of Peter's time. The hair was often studded with jewels. The motive was for personal attention, which is not in harmony with Christian principles. God also asks the woman to deny herself the wearing of gold. Glittering rings, bracelets and anklets were popular at the time. The wearing of jewellery is contrary to the principle of Christian modesty. (The woman's wedding ring is an exception). The putting on of apparel refers to the changing of dresses and ornaments several times a day, commonly practised in Peter's time, to meet their varying social requirements. Love for an expensive wardrobe has been a deceptive snare to men and women all through the ages. The real beauty in man and woman is in the heart. A meek and a Christlike character – this is what God is looking for. This beautiful Christlike character will

shine out of the life, but is distracted with heavy make-up, jewellery etc. Outward adorning is the world's way – physical attraction alone. Inner adorning is for the followers of Christ.

Hosea 2:13 “I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. SHE DECKED HERSELF WITH HER EARRINGS AND JEWELRY, And went after her lovers; but Me she forgot,” says the LORD.



The wearing of jewellery is a sign of apostasy, as we can see in this verse, and has a heathen origin. See also Isaiah 3:16-24. When Israel came out of Egypt they had a great deal of jewellery. Before God would speak to them on one occasion, He commanded them to remove their jewellery. Exodus 13:5,6. God is seeking a natural, not artificial appearance in His followers. God wants us to display the beauty of character, not an artificial, worldly appearance.

Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN, with the MOON under her feet, and on her head a garland of TWELVE STARS.

The woman here is symbolic of the true church, yet it is interesting to note how she is clothed with natural things – sun, moon and twelve stars.

Revelation 17:4 The woman was ARRAYED IN PURPLE AND SCARLET, AND ADORNED WITH GOLD AND PRECIOUS STONES AND PEARLS, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.



The woman here is symbolic of the apostate or false church. Notice the clothing, purple and scarlet, gold, precious stones and pearls – all artificial. God is not impressed with display – rather He is seeking the genuine – not a cover up. Not only women may dress for display, but men can also succumb to this temptation.

God is not concerned with what we wear, but He is concerned with the condition of our hearts. Even so, what we wear does indicate the condition of our hearts. God wants us to have a normal, healthy appearance. He wants our face to radiate the experience of Christ in the life. These standards may appear to be high, and they are. We serve a perfect God, therefore we expect the highest standards, not watered down, or lower standards. By the grace of God let us show our love to Him by inviting Him to take all of our lives. By so doing, we will find true satisfaction in reflecting His character. The display of the world is shallow without foundation, but God's way, built on the solid Rock, leads to joy forevermore.

Review Sheet – Christian Standards

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. What is one description of people living in the last days? 2 Timothy 3:1,4,5
Lovers of _____, _____, _____, _____, _____,
 2. What should be the Christian's attitude concerning this world? 1 John 2:15,16
Love not the _____.
 3. If a certain practise tends to stunt our Christian development, what should we do? Hebrews 12:1
Let us lay _____,
 4. What are some forms of amusement unsuitable for Christians? (your own words)

 5. What was the Psalmist's attitude toward evil? Psalms 101:3
I will set _____;
 6. Which command forbids gambling? Exodus 20:17
Thou _____.
 7. How is the Christian distinctive? Romans 12:2
And do not be _____,
 8. How does the Bible say Christian women should dress? 1 Timothy 2:9,10
That the women adorn themselves in _____,
 9. How does the Christian shun extravagance and display in dress? 1 Peter 3:3,4
Do not let _____ ... _____
_____,
 10. What articles of dress were worn by the heathen, but not by God's true people? Hosea 2:13
She decked herself _____,
 11. How is the symbolic woman, representing the true church, dressed? Revelation 12:1
A woman clothed _____, _____, _____,
_____.
 12. How is the symbolic woman, representing the false church dressed? Revelation 17:4
The woman was arrayed in _____, _____
_____.
- Is it your plan to uphold the high Christian standards mentioned in this study? _____.