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“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. **And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. JOIN WITH OTHERS IN FOLLOWING MY EXAMPLE, brothers and sisters, and take note of those who live ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WE GAVE YOU**” (Philippians 3:14-17).

The Apostle Paul reinforced the pattern of Godly behavior taught by Christ—the Word of God, for all believers. He noted, “if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.” Christians are teaching many different interpretations of scripture, however, most important in this age, is building an intimate relationship with God without changing the pattern of Godly behavior towards others. Continuing to humbly serve God and love your brothers and sisters equally with respect and honor regardless of a different point of view is the principal set by Christ and reinforced by the Apostle Paul.

**LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT** (Ephesians 4 and 5):

- **Be honest**

“Therefore, each of you must **put off falsehood and speak truthfully** to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Ephesians 4:25).

Being blameless like the 144,000 of Revelation includes being truthful, do not apply a personal slant onto the story or hold onto a blind-eye personal view. Being truthful is unbiased and an accurate to God’s standard retelling of the event in question.

- **Resolve issues with your brother/sister quickly, one-on-one**

Love and peace are both critical to the strong foundation of God’s kingdom. Dealing with conflicts will not lead to peace if God’s way is not practiced. Going to the person privately is fundamental to achieving peace because it maintains an even playing field where neither one has greater power over the other. The building of gangs is a tactic of Wickedness to create an uneven playing field, which leads to over-powering the other member with the intent to hurt. This will not lead to peace.

“If your brother sins against you, **go and confront him privately**. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matthew 18:15).

“In your anger do not sin: **Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry**, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:26-27).

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there **remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and first go away, be reconciled to your brother**; and then having come, offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-25).

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Carefully consider what is right in the eyes of everybody” (Romans 12:17).

“Argue your case with your neighbor without betraying another’s confidence” (Proverbs 25:9).

“A gossip reveals a secret, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence” (Proverbs 11:13).

“Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore, do not associate with a simple babbling” (Proverbs 20:19).

- **Do not steal, work to help others**

God certainly does not want believers taking from their brothers and sisters, rather working and being able to give, build up and share with those less fortunate.

“Anyone who has been **stealing must steal no longer**, but must work, **doing something useful with their own hands**, that they may have **something to share with those in need**” (Ephesians 4:28).

- **Tame the tongue, speaking the truth in wisdom**

Communication is important to building relationships. Constructive communication builds while careless, accusatory and aggressive communication destroys.

Saying the right thing at the right time requires God’s knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Since all of mankind fall short in this area, it is best to take the time to think before a response is made and never stop asking God for the words to speak.

“**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths**, but **only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs**, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11) and “**A man takes joy in a fitting reply, and how good is a timely word!**” (Proverbs 15:23)

“**The good man brings good things out of his good store of treasure**, and the evil man brings evil things out of his evil store of treasure” (Matthew 12:35).

- **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit**

The danger of every human on earth is self-reliance and self-direction. God gives His Holy Spirit to believers for them to be able to understand spiritual knowledge and receive God’s wisdom, however, when believers rely on themselves trusting in their own judgment, they are grieving God’s Holy Spirit.

“And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

Christ is our example and he said, “Not my will, but your [God’s] will be done (Luke 22:42). God’s way will always bring the best results. There is a tendency for believers to deceive themselves into thinking that what they are doing is correct, but bold self-confidence is blinding causing many to wander off onto a wayward path.

Jesus said, “**Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’** Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, **you workers of lawlessness!**’ Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and **ACTS ON THEM** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matthew 7:22-24). Choosing to live according to your own logic and ways is lawlessness. Righteousness is **hearing and ACTING** on the words spoken by Jesus.

- **Cleanse yourself of anger, bitterness and malice**

The opposite of love is anger, bitterness and malice. These emotions harden the heart and obstruct truth and understanding.

“**Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice**” (Ephesians 4:31).

It is only during this evil age that ignorance and deception covers the earth keeping mankind from learning about their great calling and the most honorable positions held for those who repent. Love your enemies; they are likely living in ignorance.

- **Abstain from sexual misconduct and perversion**

The creation of male and female was specifically designed by God to image the spiritual reality. The male gender pictures the creation in heaven while the female gender pictures creation on earth. Man was created first because the creation in heaven was first, woman was created second because the creation on earth was second. The marriage institution was ordained by God and designed intentionally to mirror the intimate relationship of Christ and the faithful church, his bride, in eternity. This is one of the mysteries the Apostle Paul discovered and taught.

“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. **This mystery is profound, but I am speaking about Christ and the church**” (Ephesians 5:31-32).

The Apostle Paul worked hard to preserve the mirroring of the genders that God created on earth. That is why he reconfirmed the need for a husband to “love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:33), because the relationship was intended to mirror the eternal relationship between Christ and the faithful church.

Hence, the perversion of the sexual relationship is wrong as it distorts the heavenly mirroring and confuses God's theology.

"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

- **Refrain from crass talk**

"Let there be **no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking**, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving" (Ephesians 5:4).

Christians have come a long way since their pagan days, no doubt much of the language has been cleaned up and it remains a job that has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- **Avoid drunkenness**

"And **do not get drunk with wine**, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Drunkenness leads to an unsound mind and often harmful behavior. Our calling is too great to carelessly put yourself in a vulnerable position, giving Satan an opening for his destructive work.

- **Use your time well**

"**Making the best use of the time**, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). This life on earth is temporary, intended only to teach mankind the ways of God before being transformed into eternal bodies. Unfortunately, the rogue heavenly rulers, powers and principalities long ago hijacked mankind and identifying them has been a difficult struggle.

Believers are ahead of the pack and do well to remember the teachings of Christ taught by the Apostle Paul.

- **Love one another**

"Be **kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other**, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but **have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal**. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but **have not love, I am nothing**. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but **have not love, I gain nothing**.

**Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES ALL THINGS, HOPES ALL THINGS, ENDURES ALL THINGS." LOVE NEVER ENDS...** So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but **the greatest of these is love**" (1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13). **Love** is the jewel that will remain precious and invaluable throughout eternity. Find it and keep it close.

- **Be imitators of God**

In summary, simply choose to imitate God throughout your life.

“**Walk in love** just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2).

- **Give everyone a warm welcome**

All of mankind were created to be God’s children in His holy, royal, eternal family. Pray for the repentance of all of mankind, even those who have done terrible things.

“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Ephesians 5:19).

- **Thank God always**

“Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).

God is gracious and sadly, His deep and enduring love for mankind is understood by only a few. “I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that **you love them as much as you love me**” (John 17:23).

- **Strengthen your faith in God**

“And **without faith it is impossible to please him**, for whoever would draw near to God **must believe that he exists** and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Believe that God exists and that He will fulfill His promises: salvation, eternal life, a member of His holy royal ruling family, and rulership in His kingdom.

- **Trust in God**

“**Trust in the LORD with all your heart**, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Trust God: His plan for mankind, His perfect laws, His understanding, His wisdom, His ways.

- **Build an intimate relationship with God** and “**find out what pleases God**” (Ephesians 5:10). **Learn and live God’s way.**

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to **fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**, so that you may **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord** and may **please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power** according to His glorious might so that you may have **full endurance and patience**, and joyfully He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son...” (Colossians 1:9-13).

"And now, O Israel, **what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul**" (Deuteronomy 10:12).

Loving God because you know Him has many rewards. "**Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will do it" (Psalm 37:4-5).

- **Walk humbly with God**

God has given all of mankind grace. We are eternally indebted to our Savior and God who was willing to extend to all of mankind a second opportunity for eternal life. The created can never declare greatness over the Creator who is the source of their life, power and glory. Seek to please God; seek recognition from Him only.

"How can you believe if you accept glory from one another, yet **do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?**" (John 5:44).

There is greatness in servitude; there is greatness in putting others before yourself; there is greatness in being kind and extending mercy and there is greatness in walking humbly with our God.

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And **what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God**" (Micah 6:8).

Believers have been given the pattern of behavior that imitates God, Christ and the righteous family in heaven who are from the first creation. Preserved long ago is the praise from the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians. "We remember before our God and Father **your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters who are beloved by God, we know that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction**—just as you know we lived among you for your sake. And **YOU BECAME IMITATORS OF US AND OF THE LORD when you welcomed the message with the joy of the Holy Spirit, in spite of your great suffering**" (I Thessalonians 1:3-6).

Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the pattern of behavior for believers has not changed regardless of what church they go to or what doctrines they teach and believe. In time all of the spots, wrinkles and blemishes will be removed, then all believers from everywhere will come together to walk on the narrow path of God's one pure theology of love and peace.

*Compiled by Janette Andrejowich*