

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Examine Your Attitudes

By Dennis C. Abernathy

Nothing is more hurtful and cancerous to a local church than to have a few members with a critical, carping and negative attitude. Such an attitude is infectious and a few “well-placed” gripes and criticisms sprinkled with several timely “innuendos” and “open-ended questions” can sour a church’s spirit and enthusiasms and turn a peaceful congregation into a contentious, bitter battleground.

The following suggestions are offered as we seek to evaluate our attitude toward the church with which we might work. A member's relationship with local churches depends very much on attitude.

1. Examine Yourself. How do you talk to your brethren? What about outsiders? Are your comments positive, encouraging and edifying, or, do you spend your time criticizing the church and those who are trying to make right decisions and grappling with the problems the church may face, so that a peaceful and scriptural solution may be reached?

James says, “*Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned*” (Jas. 5:9). Peter says, “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling*” (1 Pet. 4:9).

2. Concentrate On “Building Up” And Not On “Tearing Down.” Are your remarks and comments offered to help the church grow, or, are they merely given out of envy, bitterness or malicious motives? We must exercise care to “let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth:” but always to speak “*what is good for necessary edification*” that we “*may impart grace to the hearers*” (Eph. 4:29).

It is much easier to “tear down” than it is to “build up.” I am reminded of a little poem entitled “*The Wrecking Crew*,” which reads as follows:

I stood on the streets of a busy town,
Watching men tear a building down:
With a “Ho, heave, ho,” and a lusty yell,
They swung a beam and a sidewall fell.

I asked the foreman of the crew,
“Are those men as skilled as those you’d hire if you wanted to build?”
“Ah, no,” he said, “no indeed.”
Just common labor is all I need.

“I can tear down as much in a day or two,
As would take skilled men a year to do.”
And then I thought as I went on my way,
Just which of these two roles am I trying to play?

Have I walked life’s road with care,
Measuring each deed with rule and square?
Or am I one of those who roam the town,
Content with the labor of tearing down?

3. Never Cut Down And Criticize Something Unless You Have A Solution Yourself And Are Willing To Work To Implement It! Anyone can criticize! The story is told of the man who said he was afraid he was going to be of no use in the world because he had only one talent. The preacher said, *“Oh, that need not discourage you. What is your talent?”* *“The talent of criticism,”* the man said. To this the preacher replied, *“Well, I advise you to do with it what the man of one talent did with his. Criticism may be useful when mixed with other talents, but those whose only activity is to criticize the workers might as well be buried, talent and all.”*

Some criticize decisions made by the leadership in the church. They criticize the business meetings, but never attend one to offer suggestions to help. Others criticize the teachers, but never volunteer to teach themselves. Not a few criticize the preacher, and all too often that is the sum total of their effort. I was once told that you don't need to know much about preaching to be a preacher. Just start and a great many of the brethren will tell you how to do it!

Some criticism is needed and can be helpful, if it is the right kind and stemming from the proper attitude. William Penn said it well: *“They have a right to censure who have a heart to help.”*

4. Go To Your Brethren If You Have A Complaint. Go to the person involved and talk to him as a Christian should. Don't ever engage in gossip, backbiting, and whispering campaigns to others. Do your best to communicate your complaint to your brethren in the right way. Usually this will clear the air and take care of the problem unless there is some malicious intent or an ulterior motive involved. Brethren need to talk to one another as brethren!

5. Ask Yourself The Question, *“If every member of the church here had my attitude, what would the church be accomplishing right now?”* Attitude and disposition are so very important. They can build friendships or make enemies. Jack Hyles said, *“I want to be willing to make enemies because of my position but not because of my disposition.”*

6. If You Disagree with a specific program of work or activity the church is engaged in on “scriptural” grounds (not just personal opinion or through stubbornness), go to the leaders of the church and discuss it with them. If it is wrong, the church needs to stop it! But first they must know it is wrong. If it is a matter of judgment, maybe a solution can be reached with all examining all sides. But above all, don't undermine the work of the church, the elders, and the preacher by complaining and accusing, behind the back. Not only is this sinful, but it is cowardly!

Attitude! How important it is. Examine yours, my friend and brother. May I examine mine. Is your attitude helping the church or hurting it? Think about it. – *Guardian of Truth*, July 4, 1985. ■

The Motive of Love

By Joe R. Price

“Let all that you do be done with love” (1 Corinthians 16:14, NKJV)

Love is known by the actions it prompts. Just as love prompted God to send His Son into the world to save us, the motive of love must undergird everything we do as followers of Jesus (1 Jn. 4:9-10). Obeying God's commands in faith is a full expression of loving God: *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* (1 Jn. 5:3). We should not discount obedience to God and love for God – they are bound together. God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mk. 12:31). This elevates the value of others above oneself, so that we treat them with virtuous **attitudes** and actions. The things we do have no spiritual benefit without the motive of love (1 Cor. 13:1-3). William Barclay called agape (love), *“unconquerable benevolence, undefeatable goodwill.”* Love must drive everything we do. Love keeps our hearts right with God, and it keeps us living in the truth of God. – *Sword Tips*, November 11, 2017. ■

“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10, NKJV).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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