

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## “Mark and Avoid”

By W.R. Jones

There can be no doubt that the New Testament commands Christians to mark and avoid certain church members. I'm sorry to say, that in the overall picture, we practice this very little. Churches that choose to ignore the command will pay a price for their neglect on down the line, even in this life. It is somewhat like the mechanic on TV who holds the oil filter in his hand and says, “Pay me now or pay me later.” He is saying, “\$3 for a filter now, or \$1,200 for a new motor later.” It may be unpleasant for Christians to mark and avoid at the moment; so, we tend to ignore the divine instruction. We trade immediate relief for future disaster. The Scriptures command us to mark both the bad and the good. Let us now consider some passages.

### Mark the Evil Ones

***“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”*** (Rom. 16:17-18).

The word **“mark”** is from *skopeo*, which means “to look at, behold, watch, contemplate.” It is used metaphorically of looking to. In Romans 16:17, it refers to watching those who cause division. In Philippians 3:17, Paul told the church to observe those Christians who walk uprightly and follow the examples set by him and his fellow workers. In Luke 11:35, *skopeo* is translated **“take heed.”**

The word **“avoid”** is from *ekklino*, which means “to turn away from, to turn aside, turning away from those who cause offences and occasions of stumbling, turning away from division makers and errorists.” It seems that we are enjoined to keep out of their way and not fall in with them; to shun them, having nothing to do with them. It appears to me that this would pretty much demand absolute avoidance. The reason is obvious. If a quarrelsome person is left to himself, he will soon have nobody with whom to quarrel.

The church had not been in existence very long when false teachers came on the scene.

***“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, ‘Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved’”*** (Acts 15:1).

In Galatians 2:4, Paul called them **“false brethren.”** ***“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.”***

In fact, the books of Galatians and 2 Corinthians were written in part to counteract their poisonous doctrine. It seems these false teachers were working for their own sensual aggrandizement; they served their own bellies. In all likelihood, they would be coming to Rome with their missionary zeal, but not with missionary love. Their smooth and fair speech could easily beguile the hearts of the innocent. Paul called for a strong, sharp, unhesitating stroke to take the wind out of their sails. Sometimes, these false teachers were zealous in their disruptive work because they were jealous of God's accepted leaders. Whatever their motives, they were destructive of God's cause.

I am certain you have observed that the first passages under consideration deal with false teachers. But, what about those who walk disorderly in other ways? ***“For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies”*** (2 Thess. 3:11). Verse 14 gives the answer:

***“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”*** Regardless whether it is a false teacher, one among us who walks disorderly, or one who has chosen to sever fellowship from us and is in sin, the action should be the same. We must note, mark, and avoid them.

Marking begins with a public announcement of their spiritual demise. Avoiding is how we react toward them in the days that follow. Both require great courage.

### Mark the Good Ones

In Philippians 3:17, Paul wrote, **“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”** Here, mark means to “fix the attention on,” which we must do in order to imitate. In Romans 16:17, Paul told them to mark (avoid) those who cause divisions and offenses. Here, he says, **“brethren be followers together of me.”** In 1 Corinthians 11:1, he added, **“As I also am of Christ.”** Christians are to pick out men and women church members who are worthy of imitation and note them. We are to mark those good examples and be encouraged by them. It is regrettable, but some focus on the failures in the church, rather than the successes. Let us remember the advice of the Psalmist. **“Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace”** (Psa. 37:37).

What keeps us from obeying the Lord’s commands to mark good men among the saints as heroes? Most of the time, it is because we have misplaced values.

What keeps us from obeying the Lord’s command to mark and avoid wicked brethren? Sometimes, relatives are involved. On other occasions, close friends are involved. It may even include someone who is powerful financially, and we are afraid of the effect marking and avoiding that person may have on the church. But, brethren, after we give all our excuses, God’s instructions remain. We need to have the same attitude as Peter and the other apostles, who said, **“We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). – **Knollwood church of Christ Articles**, August 2008. ■

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### Frequency of the Lord’s Supper

By Billy Moore

As to the frequency of eating the Lord’s Supper, many have wrestled with this question. Since Acts 20:7 is the only reference of disciples coming together to eat the Lord’s Supper, it is the only reference to which we can appeal to establish frequency. We learn “what to eat” and “what to drink” from the words of Christ when he instituted it (Matt. 26:26-28) and in Paul’s reference to it in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. The Acts 20:7 reference does, in fact, teach “how often” they came together to **“break bread”**, and it does so by a necessary inference, one of the three ways of teaching. I reach this conclusion based upon the following reasoning:

1. A thing that is to be observed annually must have both the month and day of the month for its observance. Example: your birthday. Or a Bible example would be Pentecost, the day following the seventh Sabbath after the Passover, which was an annual occurrence.
2. Anything that is to be done monthly must have a day of the month. Example: a house payment, or rent, due on the first day of the month.
3. That which is to be observed weekly need only have the day of the week. Example: the Sabbath day. The command was simply, **“remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”** And since every week had a Sabbath day the people knew that it was a weekly observance. The local Lions’ Club has a sign in front of a restaurant which says: “Lions’ Club meets here, Friday at Noon.” It does not say “every Friday”, but all who read it will certainly reach that conclusion. Other clubs may meet twice a month and their sign may read: “Second and Fourth Friday at 12:00.”

If the Lord’s Supper were not to be eaten each week, then who is to decide which **“first day”** of which week?

Incidentally, everyone seems to understand that **“upon the first day of the week let every one of them lay by him in store”** (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) authorizes a weekly collection. The identical expression is used regarding the breaking of bread and it also necessarily infers a weekly observance. – **Collegevue church of Christ Bulletin**, January 19, 2020. ■

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

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