

22. Christian Behaviour

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness.

As Christians our conduct in the world should be modelled after Christ.

- Our actions should give evidence that we are living for God, not for this world. Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1
- We are God's ambassadors to the world. 2 Corinthians 5:20
- Our lives should be like Christ's life. 1 John 2:6
- Putting away worldly things and living for the Lord will produce good fruit in our lives. Ephesians 5:1-21
- Entertainment and the things we think about should be pure and uplifting. Philippians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 10:5
- We should set our minds on and seek heavenly, not earthly things. Colossians 3:1-2; Matthew 6:31-33
- We should dress modestly and in simplicity, avoiding display and jewellery. 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and should be cared for in a way that glorifies God and promotes health. We should partake moderately of that which is good and avoid all that is harmful.

- Everything we do should glorify God. 1 Corinthians 10:31
- We should care for our bodies as God's temple by eating and drinking only health-promoting foods and participating in healthful activities. (Alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and misuse of or trafficking in narcotics or other harmful drugs and mind-altering chemicals have no place in the Christian life.) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- Self-control is important in Christian living. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
- God desires that we be healthy. (Adequate exercise, rest, and a good diet are important.) 3 John 2
- God never intended for unclean animals to be eaten. Leviticus 11:1-47

The Bible makes many practical applications of the principle of putting God first in our lives. Consider the questions that follow, look up the texts listed, and draw your own conclusions about how God wants you to live.

- What sort of behaviour will the Holy Spirit produce in the Christian's life? Galatians 5:22-23
- What difference does being Christians make in our attitude toward the world around us? Colossians 3: 1, 2; Matthew 6:19-21
- How should we treat others? Romans 12:14-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15
- How should I react to people who sin against me? Colossians 3:13; Matthew 18:15-17
- How should I treat people who oppose me? Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:20

- Should Christians be selective in the movies or television programs they watch, literature they read, or music they listen to? Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:11
- Can I ask Jesus' blessing on activities such as gambling, theatre going, or dancing? 1 John 2:15-17
- Should Christians attend or allow their minds to dwell on violent sporting events or programs? Philippians 4:8
- Should Christians attend church regularly? Hebrews 10:24-25
- Should Christians worship idols? Exodus 20:4-6; 1 John 5:21
- Should Christians tell "dirty" jokes? Ephesians 4:29, 5:4

Note the following characteristics of Christian conduct in the world.

- Love. John 13:34-35
- Prayerfulness. 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Ephesians 6:18
- Christian testimony. 1 Peter 3:15; Revelation 12:17
- Honesty. Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:9
- Hospitality. 1 Peter 4:9-10; Hebrews 13:2
- Humility. Ephesians 4:1-2
- Enthusiasm and diligence. Colossians 3:23
- Peacefulness. Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:17-19
- Exemplary behaviour. Philippians 2:14-15
- Modesty in dress and behaviour. 1 Timothy 2:9; Philippians 2:3
- Respect for authority. Hebrews 13:17; Titus 3:1
- Thankfulness. 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 13:15

The following passages list general principles for Christian conduct.

- Romans 13:13
- Colossians 3:12-17
- 2 Timothy 2:19-22
- 1 Peter 3:8-11
- 2 Peter 1:5-7

Good Christian behaviour is not intended to earn us God's favour. Rather it is our response to His goodness. He gives us the power to live in a way that will bear testimony to His goodness.

- He works out His will in the surrendered Christian's life. Philippians 2:13
- He can keep us from evil. Matthew 6:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3
- He can keep us from falling. Jude 24

Personal Application

-  What part do Bible study and prayer have in helping me serve as God's ambassador in the world?
-  What does maintaining good health have to do with representing God?

Commitment

- Father, I believe that You intend for me to experience healthful living and to rightly represent You in the world. I will carefully control my habits so that spiritually, mentally, and physically I will be prepared to fulfil Your goals for me. Fill me with Your grace to bring my life into harmony with Christ.