

Strive Towards Christlikeness

By: David Burruss

I understand how disheartening it can be when we witness behavior that contradicts the principles of Christianity. As followers of Christ, we are called to exhibit love, humility, and compassion in our interactions with others. Here are some thoughts on this matter:

1. **Humility and Compassion:** The Bible emphasizes humility and compassion. In Philippians 2:3-4, the apostle Paul writes: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others." As Christians, we should strive to treat everyone with kindness and empathy, regardless of their beliefs or actions.
2. **Reflecting Christ:** Our behavior should reflect the character of Christ. In John 13:34-35, Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another." Our love for others should be a powerful testimony to the world.
3. **Avoiding Arrogance:** Arrogance and condescension have no place in the life of a Christian. In Romans 12:16, Paul advises, "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." Let us seek unity and understanding rather than superiority.
4. **Gentleness and Respect:** When discussing matters of faith, we should do so with gentleness and respect. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter encourages believers: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Our words and actions should draw people closer to God, not push them away.
5. **Prayer and Self-Reflection:** When we encounter behavior that troubles us, let us pray for those involved and examine our own hearts. Are we living out the principles we profess? Are we showing Christ's love to others? Prayer and self-reflection can lead to growth and positive change.

The challenge lies in the fact that certain Christians diverge sharply from the very traits we are called to embody. It's akin to the behavior of affluent, self-important high school students who, with an air of superiority, exclude others from joining them at their table.

As soldiers in Christ, our sacred mission indeed includes evangelism—to proclaim the Good News and illuminate the path toward salvation. Yet, the paradox lies in the stark contrast between this divine calling and the behavior of some who bear the name "Christian."

For example, how many of you when talking to someone and during the conversation, it was discussed that you attended the "church of Christ", and their responses is something along the lines of "aren't you the ones that claim that you are the only ones going to heaven?"

Recently, I've been troubled by observing this very behavior among those who claim to be Christians and part of the Lord's church. While looking at various Facebook groups, I noticed some of them exhibiting an arrogant and condescending attitude in their interactions with others and have made these exact statements.

As a Christian, I can see and understand what they were attempting to say, but I disagree with the way they handled these circumstances. We must acknowledge that some who identify as Christians yet belong to different denominations may not fully comprehend the teachings of God's divine word. To them, when we make a statement that only those who are part of the "church of Christ" are the only ones going to heaven, they are thinking of this from a denominational standpoint by what name is on the building, versus the one church that Christ purchased with his blood.

We must understand that just because the "church of Christ" is on the building doesn't mean that everyone there or only those worshipping in these buildings is going to heaven. One must be a part of the church that Christ purchased with his blood by being obedient and faithful to God's word, following his plan for salvation and not man-made doctrines, traditions, or creeds.

As followers of Christ, it's essential that we avoid such behavior. If the Lord's church is to grow and if we are to save lost souls, we must approach others with humility, compassion, and love. Our words and actions should reflect the character of Christ, drawing people closer to God rather than pushing them away."

Remember that none of us are perfect, but as Christians, we are called to continually strive toward Christlikeness. May our interactions be marked by grace, understanding, and a genuine desire to lead others to the truth.