

# Making a Good Impression

by Josh Reimer

## I. Introduction

- a. If we are true followers of Christ, we are - each of us - bound to feel sometimes like the outcast.
  1. Jesus said, in John 15:18+19: *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*
  2. And 1 John 3:13 says: *Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.*
- b. The defense mechanism that we might use is a mindset this like: I don't care what they think of me anyway!
- c. And, under certain circumstances, we don't really need to care - or at least not fear - what others think of us.
  1. First, the scriptures tell us pretty plainly that it will be this way - there are going to be people who don't like us. It doesn't necessarily mean we've done something wrong.
  2. Second, God needs to be our primary concern, not the opinions of the people around us.
    - A. 1 John 2:15 says: *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*
    - B. Having other people on our side is much less important than having God on our side (Hebrews 13:5+6).
      - I. If I'm not well liked by everybody I meet, I can still be content.
      - II. As long as we have God on our side, we have nothing to fear.
- d. But does it ever matter what people think of us? Do we just do our thing and not care what anyone thinks?
- e. (Flow of the lesson)
  1. The first point I want to make this morning is that it does, in fact, matter what other people think of us. As Christians, we do need to be making a good impression.
  2. Point number two will be about why we need to make a good impression within our assembly and some ideas of how we can do that.
  3. And point number three will be about making a good impression outside of our assembly.

## II. It does matter what other people think of us

- a. We are told that it matters.
  1. A requirement for elders is to have a good reputation (Titus 1:5-7).
    - A. Titus is supposed to appoint elders in the cities of Crete and Paul is giving him the requirements.
    - B. Notice the requirement that's listed in verse 6 and again in verse 7 - to be blameless.
      - I. This comes from the Greek word *anenkletos*. Here's what Vine said about that word: *signifies that which cannot be called to account...It implies not merely acquittal, but the absence of even a charge or accusation against a person. This is to be the case with elders.*
      - II. Elders were supposed to have such a good reputation, that there wasn't

anything with which to accuse them.

- C. In the qualifications for an elder recorded in 1 Timothy, 1 Timothy 3:7 says: *Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*
- 2. But this isn't just for elders (Titus 2:6-8).
  - A. This section is addressed to young men.
  - B. It starts out describing some good habits we need to have.
  - C. And then it finishes by saying "sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you."
  - D. It's the same idea that we saw with the elders. There shouldn't even be anything that a reasonable person could use to accuse us. And if he tried, he would just embarrass himself because there is nothing evil to say about us.
  - E. 1 Peter 2:15 is similar. It says: *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* And that one is not addressed specifically to elders or young men or old maids. This is for all of us.
- b. We are God's people and it is our job to glorify Him.
  - 1. Jesus said as much in Matthew 5:14-16.
    - A. It's not enough that we have good works. Those good works should be seen.
    - B. And it's not that we make this big show of doing them. It's that if good works are a part of our life, then they can't be hidden, like verse 14 says.
    - C. And we do this to glorify God.
  - 2. ...because we owe Him that. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says: *For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*
  - 3. And how do we glorify God?
    - A. That's more of the topic for points two and three of this lesson.
    - B. But I think I can say right now without spoiling anything, that we don't glorify God but acting like scoundrels. When other people find out that you are a member of the Church of Christ, then that should give them good feelings about the Lord's Church.
    - C. By our good conduct, this glorifying of God can even spread (1 Peter 2:11+12).
      - I. The Gentiles it mentions here may have started out speaking evil of Christians.
      - II. But when they would see the honorable conduct and good works of God's people, their opinions would change. And in the end, they'll be glorifying God too.
- c. A third reason it does matter that other people think well of us is that it allows us to influence them.
  - 1. This can be true in relationships that are already very close (1 Peter 3:1+2).
    - A. The wives being described here are able to convert their disobedient husbands.
    - B. Notice how they do it, not with guilt trips or even lively debate. They do it by keeping such a high standard in their own lives that their husbands can't help but notice.
    - C. These unbelieving husbands are won over by seeing the moral quality of their wives and realizing from where it comes.
    - D. I don't think it's just a matter of the husband liking his wife enough to be won over. He already liked her enough to marry her. It's probably more a matter of seeing how strong she is in her beliefs and the respect that must come along

with that.

2. We can influence people who are close to us when they think highly of us. But we can also influence people who are not close to us (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).
  - A. Paul wanted the Jews to think highly of him, so he kept their customs.
  - B. Paul wanted the Gentiles - those not under the law - to think highly of him, so he kept their customs.
  - C. And the same with the weak, although I admit that I don't know quite how he did that one.
  - D. But the point is, Paul changed his habits or his lifestyle as needed so that different types of people would listen to him.
  - E. He understood that they needed to listen for him to be able to teach them. And he understood that they wouldn't listen to them if they didn't respect him.
- d. We've covered now three reasons that it does matter what people think of us.
  1. First, the simplest reason, the scriptures tell us to have a good reputation - in other words, to be blameless.
  2. Second, we need to glorify God. We are His people and He certainly deserves it.
  3. And third, if people think highly of us, then we can have a positive influence on them.
- e. So it does matter what people think of us. But before we move on to some ways we can make a good impression, I'd like to briefly go over an exception to this rule.
  1. I want people to think highly of me, and if I am a good and moral person, then I believe that many people will think highly of me for that.
  2. But there are some people who don't think highly of good and moral people. There are some people who would think more highly of me if I was a bad and immoral person. And if those people think poorly of me for those reasons, then I guess I just don't care.
  3. You just can't please everyone. So let's please the ones who value the same qualities that God values. These verses kind of say the same thing but from the opposite perspective (1 Peter 2:19+20).
    - A. If I get grief for being conscientious, then so be it.
      - I. In fact, it's commendable. I'm still blameless. Even if some people don't like me for it, there's still nothing they can really accuse me of.
      - II. And these probably aren't the types of people I'm going to be able to have a positive influence on anyway.
    - B. Now if somebody doesn't like me because of my filthy language or my cruelty or my lies, well then that is a problem. I don't get any points for being beaten for my faults.
  4. An example of this: the Apostles didn't seem too bothered when the Jewish leaders were upset with them for teaching in Jesus' name (Acts 5:24-32).
    - A. These Jewish leaders had just thrown the Apostles into prison for preaching the gospel.
    - B. An angel let them out and here they are, right back at it.
    - C. You can see how annoyed the high priest was in verse 28.
    - D. And you can see how much Peter cared in the following verses - seemingly not at all. In fact, he even said a couple things that would have incited the high priest even more.
- f. But let's remember that this is the exception, not the rule. The rule is that we want to make a good impression. We want people to think highly of us because that's what the

scriptures say, because God should be glorified, and because it allows us to influence people for good.

### III. Making a good impression inside the assembly

- a. During our assemblies, our three reasons for making a good impression would apply for each other. I want to make a good impression on you and hopefully you want to make a good impression on me.
  1. Hebrews 10:24+25 says: *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*
  2. While we're together, it's our job to stir each other up for good works and to exhort one another. And as we have already seen, the more highly I think of you, the better the influence you can have on me.
- b. Our three reasons for making a good impression also apply for visitors. We definitely want to make a good impression with them so that we can be a positive influence. And hopefully then they will come back (1 Corinthians 14:13-16).
  1. He's talking here about them not speaking in tongues unless there's an interpreter. If there's no interpreter and someone is speaking in some other language that nobody else understands, then there's no understanding. It's just mass confusion.
  2. And look at who he's concerned about in verse 16. It's "he who occupies the place of the uninformed." It's someone who doesn't know exactly what we're doing here. It's a visitor.
  3. Visitors should not be confused by what we're doing and what we're saying here. Otherwise, how could he say amen? In other words, how can he agree with us and see that we are teaching the truth?
  4. And it's even worse than him possibly not saying amen (1 Corinthians 14:23-25).
    - A. This could be the difference between a visitor coming in and accepting the truth versus a visitor coming in and saying, "those guys at the Wisconsin Rapids church are wackos."
    - B. It does matter what other people think. It does matter what visitors think because we can influence them in a positive way. Or we can make them think we are weirdos and scare them off.
- c. So what are some of the ways that we can perhaps make a good impression during our assembly?
  1. We're not talking about tricking someone into thinking we are something that we're not. Actually it's the opposite. Like we just read, we want it to be clear who we are and what we stand for.
  2. We need to put in the time and effort of preparation so that anything that is said up here from the pulpit (1) has a point and (2) can be understood. I think it's usually pretty easy to tell when someone has put time in to really prepare versus when someone slapped something together to fill up 20 or 30 minutes.
  3. God deserves our best. And Romans 12:1 says: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* I believe every member here understands that.
    - A. So does our behavior during our assembly reflect that?
    - B. Are we following along and paying attention during our activities here?
    - C. Are we minimizing distractions or are we manufacturing distractions by having constant whispering or other noises?

4. What about coming for class?
  - A. 2 Timothy 2:15 says: *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the truth.*
  - B. The scriptures tell us God's word is important and studying it to better understand it is important.
  - C. Do we believe that? I think we all do, so let's show it with our actions.
  - D. I understand that not everyone can always make it for class, but let's think about the impression it must be leaving for a visitor who does come for class when half the group skips it.
  - E. It must leave the impression that studying God's word is less important than sleeping in. Or that serving God is not the focus of our lives, we are just putting our time in for the week.
5. What about hospitality?
  - A. 1 Peter 4:9 says: *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*
  - B. And Hebrews 13:2 says: *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.*
  - C. We know hospitality is important, but do our actions convey that?
  - D. Do we make visitors feel welcome here? Do we make each other feel welcome here?
  - E. When someone visits here, do we invite them for lunch or perhaps try to schedule a bible study with them?
6. There are so many things we can do to show people that we are serious about worshiping God here. And there are probably just as many things we can do that would make people think we aren't serious about it.
  - A. Making a good impression matters.
    - I. The scriptures say that it does.
    - II. It glorifies God when His people are good people.
    - III. And it allows us to be a positive influence.
  - B. When someone walks into this building, let's make sure they know that this group is serious about serving God. And then we can be a positive influence and perhaps some souls will be saved as a result.

#### IV. Making a good impression outside the assembly

- a. Making an impression during our assembly is important. But that's only a small fraction of our time and a small fraction of the people we come in contact with. By making a good impression outside the assembly, we have the opportunity to influence even more people.
- b. The Thessalonians are a good example of this (1 Thessalonians 1:5-10).
  1. Paul didn't have to go around telling people that the Thessalonians had accepted the gospel.
  2. It was obvious.
  3. They were serious about serving God and everybody around them could see it.
  4. And it seems they were able to be a very positive influence.
- c. So what are some ways we can make a good impression in our day-to-day lives?
  1. First, we should be known as peaceful law-abiding citizens.
    - A. In Matthew 22:21 Jesus encouraged His followers to pay taxes when he said:

*Render...to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.*

- B.** And Romans 13:1 says: *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*
- C.** 1 Timothy 2:1-4
- I.** We shouldn't be known as rabble-rousers or trouble-makers. We shouldn't be known for stirring things up, unless it's stirring each other up for good works.
  - II.** We should be known as good, peace-loving citizens who follow the rules, pay our taxes, and don't make trouble.
  - III.** This is the kind of life we should want and it's worth praying for.
  - IV.** No mature person is going to think ill of us for living this way and so we can be a good influence and hopefully bring people to the truth because, as verse 4 tells us, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- 2.** We should also be known as good neighbors.
- A.** And of course we want the word of God to sound out from us, like it did from the Thessalonians. And of course we want to be known for our service to God. But we should also be known for our service to others. This was a big part of Jesus' teaching.
  - B.** In Matthew 5:41+42 He said: *whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*
  - C.** In John 13, after Jesus washed the Disciples' feet, in John 13:15 He said: *For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*
  - D.** And the parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:29-37 was Jesus' answer to the question, "who is my neighbor?"
- 3.** These are just a couple of ideas, but I'm sure there are many many ways we can make a good impression in our everyday lives. And again, this isn't a matter of tricking people into thinking that we're something that we're not. It's a matter of putting into practice the things we hopefully already believe.

## V. Conclusion

- a.** We covered three reasons that it's important to make a good impression.
  - 1.** First, the scriptures say we need to.
  - 2.** Second, it is a way of glorifying God.
  - 3.** And third, it allows us to be a positive influence.
- b.** So let's make this a priority.
  - 1.** The things we believe should be a big enough part of our lives that they are visible to others.
  - 2.** And when they see that we are peaceful, law-abiding citizens, that we are good neighbors, that we are God-fearing people, then they might just turn to us when they are looking for the truth.
  - 3.** And when they visit us here and see that we are serious about serving God, then they might just know they've found the truth.
- c.** It matters what other people think because other people matter. Their souls matter. So let's leave a good impression and do our part in bringing as many people as we can to the truth.