

A Dozen Ways to Murder a Church

If you would like to kill the work of your local congregation, then I have the perfect plan:

1. Skip services often and encourage others to skip, too.
2. When you do attend, come in late and cause a little disturbance. While there, take a good nap.
3. Always be critical and nit-picky
4. Never volunteer to help, but always complain about the way the volunteers are doing things.
5. Even though you don't want to volunteer, still act annoyed and put out when you don't get an important job.
6. If asked directly to give your opinion, act like you don't have one. Later, get on the phone and tell others how things should have been done in the first place.
7. Never do more than absolutely necessary, then accuse those who are doing the work of being a clique.
8. Withhold your contribution and tell-others why you don't think they should support the work either.
9. When you do volunteer for a job, just do a half hearted mediocre job.
10. Never compliment or encourage any of the members.
11. Don't bother with converting anyone, but if you do, then make sure that they are as negative and disruptive as you.
12. Every time you hear some juicy gossip be sure to tell everyone you can. After all, it is your duty to proclaim the truth. Your brethren have a right to know.

- by **Mark White**

The Importance of Thoughts

If you are concerned about your character, your conduct, your life and your destiny, THEN BE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS. "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*" (Proverbs 4:23). The heart is the mind, and the mind is the center of thoughts. "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (Proverbs 23:7). A man may not be what he appears to be, but he is what he thinks.

What goes into your mind, then, is extremely important. Be careful about the interests you acquire, the tastes you cultivate, the desires you develop. They shape what goes into your mind. The conversations you listen to, the scenes you observe, the movies you view, the TV programs you tune into, the newspapers, magazines and books you read, the songs by which you are entertained, the jokes you laugh at, the things you are taught all have a part in feeding information into your mind.

You evaluate and monitor all that you hear and see. Your standard for evaluation and your conscience are vital and play their roles. You may seek out or receive what is vulgar or distorted, or you may reject and refuse it. You may pursue and embrace what is wholesome and true, or you may have no interest in it and neglect it. Be cautious, particular and selective about what goes into your mind. If you allow garbage to go in, then garbage will come out in the form of words and deeds.

What goes on in your mind is also extremely important. Be careful about your thoughts, meditations, desires, ambitions, daydreams and fantasies. You determine what goes on in your mind. You are the master of it because you have control over it. It is your own little secret world -- except that God knows all about it, and will one day bring it to light when you have to answer for it in the judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:16; II Corinthians 5:10). And sooner or later it will find expression in your life and make itself known.

We cannot be like God without thinking the thoughts of God. We cannot know the thoughts of God apart from the revelation of the things of God in the word of God (I Corinthians 2:11-13). We

cannot have the thoughts of God in our hearts apart from reverent study of and meditation upon the word of God, coupled with a sincere desire to do the will of God (John 7:17).

- by **Bill Crews**

Clothes and Culture

Everyone realizes that cultural factors **DO** influence our decisions about the clothes that we wear. For instance, a person living in America today would look odd wearing the kind of clothes that Jesus and the apostles wore - and vice versa. Cultural "norms" have clearly changed.

The Scriptures show us that two elements ought to be considered as we make choices about our clothes. First, we have the absolutes of God's law. Throughout the Bible we find that something called "nakedness" is condemned. This is not complete nudity. The term is used to describe the display of certain parts of the body such as the thigh (Ex. 28:40-43) or breast (Ezek 23:18-21). "Nakedness" has been associated with sin and shame in every dispensation of time. Beyond this, the Christian has the stricter command to maintain "modesty" (1 Tim. 2:9,10). This requires **MORE** than simply avoiding "nakedness." A modest individual will certainly stay far away from the limits of "nakedness." Other New Testament instructions order us to abstain from "uncleaness" (moral impurity - Thayer) and "lasciviousness" (unbridled lust, wanton acts or manners - Thayer) (Gal. 5:19-21). These Biblical absolutes must be carefully observed.

As a secondary consideration, we should observe the dictates of our culture to the degree that we can without violating God's absolutes. For example, a man in America would look completely out of place wearing a (modest) skirt. But, not so in Scotland! God's word suggests that we ought to be mindful of such factors and honor them so that we do not diminish our ability to influence others with the truth. In 1 Cor. 11:1-16 Paul taught that the Corinthian custom of women wearing a veil should be observed by the Christians who lived in that place at that time.

Some have mistakenly argued that if a certain manner of dress becomes an accepted "norm," that it is therefore approved by God. Such reasoning has given rise to the wide-spread wearing of shorts by Christians. Others wear swimming suits, tennis outfits, athletic uniforms and similar scanty attire. The argument is made that swimming suits are "accepted" as normal on the beaches of Florida, incredibly short skirts are "accepted" as normal for women playing tennis, etc.

These folks fail to take their "logic" to its full limit. Reasoning after this fashion would lead one to conclude that full nudity would be alright - so long as all members of society "accepted" this as the norm. (By the way, there are some places in this world where such IS the "norm!")

. . . We must remember that - when it comes to the clothes we wear - the dictates of culture are secondary and subordinate to the clear limits that are taught in God's word. Cultural factors may lead us to wear **MORE** clothes (as the veil in Corinth) or a different **KIND** of clothes (tunics vs. long pants), but these cultural factors can never be used to justify wearing **LESS** than God expects and demands.

- by **Greg Gwin**