

"Everyone Else Is Doing It"

Sometimes people attempt to justify their sinful conduct on the basis of "well everyone else is doing it." If "everyone else" is dressing immodestly, what are we going to do? If "everyone else" is going to a "must see" R-rated movie, what are we going to do? If "everyone else" is lying, stealing, or cheating what are we going to do?

In the days of King Nebuchadnezzar, "everyone else" was bowing down and worshiping his golden image (see Dan. 3:1-7). But what did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego do? They said "let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods..." (Dan. 3: 18). These men loved the Lord and courageously served him regardless of what everyone else was doing.

May we too have the courage to be different. Brethren, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). God's children are not to follow in the sins of others, but are to lead others out of darkness and into the light.

- by David McPherson

Setting Your Spiritual Clock

Several years ago it was reported that the telephone operator in a town in Cape Cod received a call every morning asking for the correct time. Finally, overcome with curiosity, she asked the inquirer, "Would you mind telling me why you call about this time every day and ask for the correct time?" "Sure, I'll tell you," the man said. "I want to get the exact time because I'm the man who blows the whistle at twelve o'clock." Well, that's funny, that is," said the operator, "because every day at the stroke of noon I set our clock by your whistle."

How often do we set standards for ourselves based on what others are doing -- without even considering what standard they are following? It is good to follow the examples of others ONLY IF those setting the examples are following the CORRECT standard themselves. This seems to be Paul's point in Philippians 3:16b-17 when he states, "let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern." To follow the example of others without being aware of what standard they themselves are following is the height of folly. The Scriptures speak of those who, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Setting Your Watch

Every individual has a personal standard which he takes with him everywhere. He may either choose to follow it or ignore it. This inner standard is the conscience. Like a wristwatch that we may check through the day to keep us "on time," the conscience can be used to keep us on the right track if it has been correctly set. But the conscience can be set by a false standard. Saul of Tarsus lived "in all good conscience" when he was a blasphemer and persecutor of Christians (Acts 23:1; 1 Timothy 1:13). The individual who sets his watch by asking a stranger on the street for "the correct time" is a lot like a man who sets his moral standards and religious beliefs by others.

This careless conscience setting is seen, for example, in a Christian whose conscience allows him or her to wear immodest attire because "it is not as immodest as what others wear" or "other Christians dress like this." It is seen in the person who believes that they can be saved by "faith only," not because they ever read it in the Scriptures (see James 2:24), but because that's what their parents or grandparents believed.

Setting the "Church Clock"

Groups of people sometimes also set their collective conscience by an uncertain standard. In the days of the judges, Israel pled for a king; they wanted to be "like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). As a group of people, they had set their clock by the surrounding nations. In doing so, they rejected the Lord as their standard of authority (1 Samuel 8:7).

Even so, many churches today set their programs of work according to what surrounding churches (denominations) are doing. Children's church, Easter observances, and "rallies" to

entertain the young people are just a few of the practices adopted by some churches of Christ (so-called) which illustrate this point. Each of these things have been done among denominations for decades, and now some churches of Christ are setting their clocks accordingly. Not one of these practices can be found in Scripture, either by command, statement, apostolic example or necessary conclusion. These practices are of human origin. Jesus said, "in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

-by by Steve Klein

"Given To Hospitality"

Hospitality is a trait that should characterize all Christians. In fact, we are commanded to show hospitality: "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." (1 Peter 4:9). When we fulfill this command, we will take a huge step in the direction of developing the close, personal relationships that are so vital to us all as Christians (1 Cor. 12:25,26). How can we do a better job in this important area of hospitality?

1) Realize that hospitality is an outgrowth of love. In 1 Peter 4 (cited above) the command to love (vs. 8) immediately precedes the command to show hospitality (vs. 9). When we show hospitality we give a message that we love others. When we fail to show hospitality we give a message, too. Think about it!

2) Recognize that demonstrating hospitality is not always easy. We must work at it. Romans 12:13 says we are to be "given to hospitality." This phrase suggests the idea of effort, of pursuing a thing, planning, preparing, making sacrifice, etc.

3) Hospitality should not be done with the idea of receiving something in response. Many people give invitations with the expectation of receiving an invitation in return. But Jesus taught: "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:13-14)

4) Don't resent the time, energy and money spent on hospitality. It is to be done "without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9)

When we give hospitality we obey the direct command of God; show our love toward others; and help one another on the road to heaven. Just do it!

- by Greg Gwin