

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

— ARTICLES —

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Articles

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HOW AM I DOING?

Having seen signs with these words on a number of commercial vehicles, my first thought was that the company wanted to know if the operator wasn't driving safely. Was the reason for putting the sign on the vehicle so that a reckless and discourteous driver may be reported? But is this the only reason? Could there be another purpose?

After considering it for a while, I thought: "What if the driver is being extremely courteous? Would the employer appreciate someone taking the time to write down the number and call to report good driving?"

On one occasion I place a call to commend an especially courteous driver. The person who answered the phone said, "What is your complaint?" Complaint? I said I was calling to express my approval. After a few moments of silence, a shocked, but pleased, employee took my statement.

Then I pondered, "Are we more prone to report bad behavior than good behavior?" It certainly seems easier to spot poor behavior and complain about it, than to notice good behavior and commend it.

CONDEMN AND COMMEND

Condemn and commend sound alike but are worlds apart in meaning: one deprecates, the other appreciates. While both are needed at the appropriate times to achieve the desired results, commendation is often omitted. At times we simply fail to express approval and appreciation.

Maybe it's because it takes effort to see the good in others. Maybe it's because we have a fear that such praise will produce arrogance in another (or in ourselves). Or, maybe, it is because we misunderstand or misapply the teaching of Jesus in Matthew

6:1, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.” Do we feel that in receiving praise (even if unsolicited) we may jeopardize our salvation?

Good deeds are not to be done for the praise of men. But words of praise, credit, and appreciation reinforce good behavior. They acknowledge the great value of such actions. (It must be noted that self-deprecation is a form of false humility. Running oneself down in order to feel humble is not a Bible concept.)

Paul, in his letters to churches and individuals, wrote words of praise and commendation, even to a church that had numerous problems. Not that he overlooked their problems – he addressed them as well he should. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, in one chapter he wrote, “Now I praise you...” (11:2) and shortly thereafter he wrote, “I praise you not.” (11:22). In some things they did well, in others they did not. Paul mentions both.

Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, commended Phoebe, and many others. John, in recording what he was told to write to the seven churches of Asia, penned words of praise as well as criticism.

COMMENDATION

Commendation is sorely needed for one to maintain a proper balance in life, and to maintain a proper view of oneself. This especially applies to those who are trying to live for the Lord. When one fails to do what is right or sins, his or her actions need to be denounced. Conversely, when one does succeed in living righteously, such actions need to be recognized and appreciated. The Lord knows the makeup of his crowning creation: mankind. He knows that poor behavior needs to be addressed, and changes

need to be forthcoming. He also knows that those who strive to do right, and labor to maintain a good conscience, need words of commendation and approval. Let's imitate our Lord. Let's be as quick to commend as condemn. As ready to show our appreciation as our disapproval. As ready to praise as censure. By all means, let's be as quick to commend as to condemn!



LOAVES AND FISHES

It is recorded in John 6, that Jesus took five barley loaves and two fish and fed five thousand people— with food left over. Later, the crowd came back looking for him, but he had gone to the other side of the lake. So they got into some small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. When they found Him, Jesus said to them, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”*

Jesus admonished them, saying, *“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”* Therefore they said to Him, *“What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”* Jesus answered and said to them, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”*

John 6:27-29

SPIRITUAL FOOD

Later in chapter 6 we read where Jesus fed them some “spiritual food” that included some hard sayings about believing in Him. *“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”* (John 6:66) They eagerly ate the loaves and fishes and wanted more, but could not swallow the “spiritual food” Jesus offered.

FOOD FOUND UNAPPETIZING

Today, there are many who “believe in Jesus” and savor thoughts of a home in heaven. But when presented with the hard sayings of Jesus and His Word, they are turned off. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, repeatedly said, *“You have heard ... but I say unto you.”*

For instance: *But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* Matthew 5:28

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matthew 5:32

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

While believing whatever they want to believe, they fail to realize that the power unto salvation is found only in the Word. They hold to the promise “going to heaven,” while they ignore, question, and gainsay Jesus and His Word. One religious group said they base their decisions of what is to be done to go to heaven on “what is the loving thing to do” rather than “what is the thing Jesus said to do.”

THE LESSON FOR US

Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21

There could not be a gift of eternal life without the gift-giver, Jesus Christ. Let's be careful that while we focus on “going to heaven” that we overlook what He requires of us in this life. “*Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10) has two key components: (1) Be faithful and (2) a crown of life. To receive the latter, one must fulfill the first.

Don't be turned off by His hard sayings!

So Jesus said to the twelve, “*You do not want to go away also, do you?*” Simon Peter answered Him, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.*” John 6:67-68

May that be our response, also!

LISTENING TO YOURSELF

[A True Story]

Years ago, when tape recorders were still a novelty, someone decided to hide a microphone in a room where guests would gather. The plan was that, later, during the time refreshments would be served, the tape would be played back to the amusement of all.

At the scheduled time, the tape recorder was brought out. The guests were eager to hear themselves. However, as the tape was playing, grins soon turned grim, and laughter was replaced with soberness. What happened? Everyone was hearing themselves as they actually sounded, and it didn't sound good.

Now, everyone finds their voice sounding "strange" when it is played back on a recorder. But it wasn't the strangeness of their voices that took the joy out of this gathering. What took them back was what they said and how they said it. They didn't realize how they sounded to others.

They had no idea how harsh their words were at times. How insensitive they were to the feelings of others. How self-centered their comments were. In short, they hadn't been listening to themselves talk. Humbled and humiliated, the guests left with a fresh understanding of how they sounded to others.

LISTEN TO YOURSELF!

Often, we think of ourselves as speaking in a forthright manner, but if we listened to ourselves we may hear painfully blunt words. We perceive ourselves as merely passing on information, but if we listen to ourselves, we might hear only gossip. Often what is thought to be frank speech sounds harsh and

cruel to the listener. We may think we are speaking with a velvet tongue, when literally we are wielding a sword.

It is imperative to keep the listeners in mind. How will it sound to them? How will it affect them? If I were in their place, how would I receive it? These questions must be foremost in our minds. Kindness must be on our tongue. *“And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”* Colossians 3:12

EDITOR'S NOTE

The impetus for this article came from an occasion when I stopped to listen to myself. It was a jarring “ear-opening” experience. I had no idea how I sounded until I took the time to listen to myself. I didn’t like what I heard. Listening to yourself is one sobering and humbling exercise, but without a doubt, a necessary one!



CONVINCING OUR CHILDREN

It's essential that we convince our children the importance of serving God. However, it is difficult to do so when by our actions we show it's not all-important.

What they see outweighs what we say.

It's vital that we teach our children to be regular and faithful in assembling. However, it is difficult to do so when we permit them to engage in other activities that prevent them from attending.

What they see outweighs what we say.

It's important to instruct our children that the church is the most important institution on earth. However, it is difficult to do when one does little to finance its work.

What they see outweighs what we say.

It's critical that we teach our children to love one another. However, this becomes troublesome when they hear us constantly criticizing and complaining about others, especially Christians.

What they see outweighs what we say.

It's crucial that we teach our children to obey all of the Lord's commands. However, the job becomes hopeless when they see us excusing ourselves from obeying certain commands we may find "too restrictive."

What they see outweighs what we say.

It's consequential that we teach our children how the Lord wants them to act as husbands, wives, and parents. However, there is more likelihood they will follow our example rather than follow our teaching.

What they see outweighs what we say.

Unless, and until what we say and what we do are one and the same, we will never be convincing. **Be convincing!**

ONE WORD MAKES A DIFFERENCE

ONE WORD LEFT OUT

In printing the King James Bible, 1631 edition, in Exodus 20 a very small word was forgotten by the printers. The word “not.” This changed the commandment to read “Thou shalt commit adultery!” The printers were fined 300 pounds (a lifetime of wages in those days). Most of the copies were recalled immediately. Only 11 are left today. The few copies that are left are sometimes referred to as “The Wicked Bible.” (One copy is said to be in the Bible Museum in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.)

ONE WORD ADDED

*...The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will **not** die! Genesis 3:1-4*

The printer’s error resulted in a huge fine as well as embarrassment. The serpent adding the word deceived Eve and as a result of sinning Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden. A greater penalty that has affected all mankind.

Today there are some who are seeking to remove the “not” in Galatians 5:19-21, where the deeds of the flesh are listed: immorality, impurity, sensuality ... carousing ... that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Do not be deceived. Removing or adding a “not” In God’s word can have a devastating effect on one’s future—in this life and in the life to come.

THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11

FACTS

Stop signs don't stop cars—people still fail to stop.

Laws don't stop crime—people still commit crimes.

God's commandments don't stop disobedience—people still disobey.

When something is prohibited by law or command, it doesn't prevent someone from doing it. Traffic signs only designate what is to be done. Laws against an activity only state that it is against the law to do it. God's prohibitions only state what is not acceptable. The "teeth" in a law or command is in the punishment (consequence).

The tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden was easily accessible. There was no fence or wall around it. No locked gate. Adam and Eve had the ability and opportunity to eat it's fruit at any time. God's command did not keep them from eating the fruit of that tree.

GOD SAID

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." Genesis 2:16-17

THE SERPENT SAID

The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4-5

SATAN’S STRATEGY

Deny the consequence.

You won’t die.

(Plant the seed of doubt.)

Promote the benefits.

You will gain knowledge, and be like God.

(Plant the seed of desire.)

Question God’s motive.

(Plant the seed of distrust.)

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE AND THE DEFENSE

First – Doubt the consequences.

(Doubt either the possibility or the severity.)

DEFENSE

Don’t doubt or question the awesome power of God.

Second – Consider the benefits.

(Savor the thought of having or doing.)

DEFENSE

Look past it and focus on the consequences
that will surely follow.

Third – Question the reason for the prohibition.

(Why is it prohibited?)

DEFENSE

Realize your wisdom is limited; trust God's infinite wisdom.

* * * * *

God's commands are given for our benefit: (1) to lead us in the right direction and, (2) to keep us from harm.

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*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

Jude 1:24-25



# **SERENITY PRAYER**

An 18th Century theologian by the name of Reinhold Neibuhr is considered to be the author of the famous Serenity prayer. It has been quoted, printed and memorized by many people. While it is not inspired Scripture, it does illustrate Bible principles.

God, grant me the  
SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change;  
COURAGE to change the things I can; and  
WISDOM to know the difference.

Unknown to many is the fact this is only part of the prayer. There is more. Here is the remainder of the prayer:

Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I  
would have it.  
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender  
to His will.  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.  
Amen.

## **SERENITY**

*“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”*

John 14:27

*“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

2 Corinthians 12:10

## **COURAGE**

*“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord — for we walk by faith, not by sight — we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”*

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

## **WISDOM**

*“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”*

Hebrews 5:14

*“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.”*

Philippians 1:9





## **The Birth of Pseudo-Facts Oft-Repeated ‘Truths’**

*Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’... and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.”*

Matthew 28:11-15

Untruths and half-truths repeated frequently and unceasingly have a habit of becoming established facts. They acquire a life of their own. Once established it is extremely difficult to refute them. Challenges to them are seen as railings of one who is ignorant and are dismissed without due consideration. Here are a few classic examples:

### **GOVERNMENT**

**“The United States constitution requires separation of church and state.”**

This statement is not found in the constitution. Article 1 of the United States Constitution actually states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

This untruth is often repeated in the effort to remove any vestige of religion from the American scene. The one who questions this “fact” is characterized as a person who wants to bind their religious views and morals on others.

## SCIENCE

**“The facts of evolution are evident and beyond dispute.”**

This statement is used to establish evolution as the true history of man. It doesn't matter that the “evidence” is subject to various interpretations, with many scientists in disagreement. It does not address the fact that many “facts” of evolution have been debunked or modified by scientists themselves. Evolution is a theory that produces more questions than it answers. Any one who denies this “fact” is marked as a willfully-ignorant, narrowminded, Bible-thumper, who refuses to accept the truth.

But who is narrow-minded? Those who summarily rule out a supreme force (Spirit) behind the origin of the universe by saying: “We know that it was not created by a superior being.” What “wisdom”, what arrogance!

## RELIGION

**“It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere.”**

This statement finds wide acceptance in this age of “tolerance.” To think otherwise is to harbor unhealthy thoughts, according to one professor. Anyone who challenges this statement is branded as narrow-minded and intolerant. It doesn't occur to them that they are the ones who are actually narrow-minded and intolerant – allowing no other view than the one they espouse.

One can be sincerely mistaken. For example: Saul of Tarsus.

*“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”*

Acts 26:9

*“... I acted ignorantly in unbelief ...”*

1 Timothy 1:13

**Untruths and half-truths repeated frequently and unceasingly will never become established facts.**

# **PASSION**

A powerful emotion, such as love, joy, hatred, or anger;  
Boundless enthusiasm.

—American Heritage Dictionary



Passion in and of itself is neutral: it can be helpful or it can be harmful. Love and joy certainly are beneficial passions. Hatred and anger are passions that cause much harm. The powerful emotion of passion among Christians can be constructive or destructive.

## **CONSTRUCTIVE**

Passionate about spreading the Good News to  
a lost and dying world.

Passionate about protecting the church from false teachers.

Passionate about living as a Christian in a hostile world.

Passionate about sharing one another's joy or sorrow.

Passionate about loving one another.

## **DESTRUCTIVE**

Passionate about traditions to the point of tearing up  
congregations.

Passionate about personal feelings and desires to the point of  
intimidation or retaliation.

Passionate about changing things to keep up with the times and  
running rough shod over plain Bible teachings.

Passionate about being preeminent.

Passionate about "policing" the brotherhood.

## **BIBLE EXAMPLES OF PASSION DISPLAYED**

### **Love and Joy**

Jesus' love for the world caused Him to suffer death on the  
cross for the sins of mankind.

The Apostles' joy in being counted worthy to suffer for Christ.  
The abundance of joy among the Macedonian Christians in  
aiding needy brethren.

### **Passionate About Traditions**

The Jews sought to kill Jesus because he healed on the  
Sabbath.

### **Passionate About Doing What One Thinks Is Right**

Saul of Tarsus relentlessly persecuting followers of the "Way"  
believing he was serving God.

### **Passionate About Idols**

Demetrius the silversmith started a riot in Ephesus over lost  
revenue due to many turning away from the worship of  
idols to become Christians.

## **BE PASSIONATE!**

***But make sure it is constructive, not destructive.***

