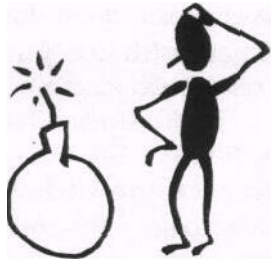


“Abstain From All Appearance Of Evil”



Allen Webster

Before this day is over you will have influenced someone to be closer to God or further from Him. Influence is defined as "that invisible force in one's personality that causes others to act."

While we do not have a choice as to having influence, we do have a choice in the *kind* of influence we exert. Not only do we have a choice, we have a *responsibility* to be a good influence on others. Some "Christians" rebel at the thought of being held responsible for words and actions that cause others to think bad of Christ, but it is the case nonetheless.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 should be constantly on the minds of faithful Christians because it gives a principle by which to live. This verse shows that...

We are responsible *for what others think of us*. To the best of our ability we are to have a good reputation among those of the world. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). Notice this principle: "Sound speech, *that cannot be condemned*; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no *evil thing* to say of you" (Titus 2:8).

We must be careful about what people think of us, because what

they think of Christians is what they think of the church of Christ.

We must avoid the questionable.

Some seem to delight in seeing how close they can come to sinning without going over the line. This "flirting" with sin is wrong! We are to "abhor" evil (Romans 12:9) and "eschew" (flee) it (1 Peter 3:12), not "adhere" to it and pursue it! This principle applies: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth I **not** of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). The conscience cannot be offended without sin being committed. Yet, one cannot go solely by the conscience because it can be hardened and must be educated by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Things such as gambling, dancing, R-rated movies, immodest clothing, mixed swimming, smoking and social drinking should be avoided for this reason (among others).

Additionally, we must be careful that our liberties as Christians do not offend those weaker in the faith. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended, or is made weak" (Romans 14:21). "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:11-13).

We should not knowingly do anything **that offends** our brethren because each soul is worth more than all the world (Matthew

16:26).

The Christian's influence is described as salt (Matthew 5:13), light (Matthew 5:14-16), personal (1 Corinthians 7:14,16), honorable (1 Timothy 6:1), beneficial to others (1 Peter 2:11-12), soul-saving (1 Peter 3:1-2) and permanent (Hebrews 11:4). With these thoughts in mind, let us guard our influence closely and use it fully!