

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=

Lesson 19

The Christian's Behavior Toward Society

AIM: to teach my pupils to behave toward society in such a manner that if their identity is learned, then the name of Jesus, the name of their church, and their family name will not be hurt.

POINT OF CONTACT: Let us say that an artist wants to paint portraits of us all. What would be painted to represent our behavior toward society? Would a runny mess of black be included to portray our appearance as dirty and untidy? Would harsh orange circles, drawn one within another, indicate that we are loud and boisterous and offensive in behavior? Would red for anger at being told some rules be a part of the painting of our portraits? Would there be at the lower part of the picture chains to show that people wish we were chained to something so that we could not move within their property because we are disrespectful toward it, damaging and soiling it?

As an absolute opposite to the above portrait, would there be pictures of us that would be a pleasure to view—portraits that would show clean, wholesome, caring personalities?

INTRODUCTION: Society, as we are thinking about it in our lesson for today, is found away from a Christian's home, away from his school or place of business, and away from his church. Society, as we think about it in this lesson, is a broad grouping of people—the people of our community, our city, our state, our nation, wherever we are outside of our home surroundings. There are certain patterns of behavior which a Christian should display when he finds himself out in public.

Let's think of some places where the Christian will be out in society: walking down the street, driving down the street, having an outing in a park, studying exhibits in a museum, buying groceries, shopping in a department store, being a patient in a dentist's or doctor's office, visiting in the hospital, attending a concert, examining the cars at an automobile exhibit, being a customer in a restaurant, being a library book borrower, being a spectator at a sports event, etc.

Jesus gave a great rule by which we can conduct ourselves at any time, in any situation: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise," Luke 6:31. A lawyer came to Jesus one day, asking Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him to do what he had read in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus then told him the story that we call, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan." See Luke 10:25-37. First, it is most important that we love the Lord, but it is also important that we love our neighbors as ourselves. Who is our neighbor? Any person to whom we have an opportunity to show mercy is our neighbor. Romans 13:9b says, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." We should behave toward society, toward individuals whom we do not know, as we would have them behave toward us.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE PEOPLE OF SOCIETY.

1. He should not offend people. To offend is "to cause dislike, anger, or vexation."
 - 1) Inappropriate dress offends society. Every Christian should properly prepare himself or herself for appearing in public. Girls and women in slacks or shorts and scanty covering offend. Tight clothing on anyone is disgusting. Boys and men clad in shorts or not covered to the waist offend. Any person whose hair is not combed properly is offensive. Sports clothing is inappropriate when worn to a nice restaurant or the concert, and Sunday dresses at picnics offend because of their inability to participate properly and comfortably. Their discomfort becomes the discomfort of others around them.
 - 2) Lack of cleanliness offends society. Dirt and perspiration cause bad body odors. A dirty person is not even pleasant to see.
 - 3) Talking and loudness of talking can be offensive. Engaging in sports activities brings about expected loud talking and laughter. Walking down the street, shopping in the stores, viewing exhibits at the museum are times when talking and happy laughter are acceptable and expected, but not loud talking or laughing. While the symphony orchestra or the school chorus is performing, there should be no talking at all by any of the audience.

- 4) Manner of walking can be offensive. A boy walking like a girl or a man walking like a woman is offensive. Men and boys should walk erect with a long stride. Women and girls should walk erect with feminine stride. Neither sex is to walk in such a manner as to call attention to their sex nor to excite sexual passions.
- 5) Lack of courtesy offends. People find themselves in crowds very often. The person who pushes against others trying to get ahead or trying to get out of the crowd causes physical discomfort and anger. If the Christian accidentally bumps into another person, or needs to get through a crowd of people who are standing waiting for a clerk or standing watching an exhibit, etc., he should say, "Excuse me, please." An "I'm so sorry" is a necessary apology for accidentally bumping others or stepping on toes, etc. (See Proverbs 10:32.) It is good to let someone who is slightly ahead to go first in a crowd or a line, and it is also good to give someone else the benefit of the doubt and to let him or her go ahead in cases of lines or a crowd moving in the same or crossing directions. While walking, driving, or standing in a crowd, it really does not hurt at all to let someone else get ahead of you or to let someone else cross in front of you. Safety councils and police officers publish the fact that if more drivers, for instance, were courteous, there would be fewer automobile and truck accidents.

How should we behave when going through doorways into and out of buildings? If someone is behind us, we should hold the door until he or she has had opportunity to take hold of it or to hold it for himself. Boys and men should be considerate of ladies and girls immediately around them. Ladies and girls should return the courtesies with a "Thank you."

2. He should not hurt society.
 - 1) His behavior should be such as would not injure others. Careless, rough behavior could cause someone to get hurt, to fall down the stairs, or to pinch his fingers in a door, for example.
 - 2) His lack of caution could cause something to be broken. Breaking glass, for instance, can injure someone close by.
3. He should be careful that society does not hurt him.
 - 1) Caution should be used when wanting to help strangers. The story of the Good Samaritan tells of an adult helping another adult. If children see someone who needs help, they should run to tell an adult that they know. Children should never try to help alone.

Adults should also use discretion and alert proper authorities—police, firemen—who are equipped to be of help to anyone who needs it, if there is opportunity to do so. The Lord gives protection to those who are His, those who are acting according to His direction.

- 2) The Bible warns of the wicked who might be lying in wait to harm. See Proverbs 4:25, 26; 7:5. Unless on an errand which the Lord directs, dark places and places where harm could be lurking are to be avoided by the Christian. Christians should also stay away from riot scenes and other civil disorders so as not to be hurt nor to be numbered with the wrongdoers.
- 3) Children should not talk with strangers at all! They should never accept candy, gum, or money from a stranger. If a stranger wants to talk with them, children should turn and run away, even if a stranger says that he knows one of the children's relatives.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE PROPERTY OF SOCIETY. See Proverbs 10:23.

1. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal," Romans 13:9; Exodus 20:15. Any property belonging to another is not to be taken by someone else. There is an upward trend in shoplifting and in embezzling. "The under-21 group is on the greatest shoplifting spree in our history." Many of the offenders come from "real good families."
2. Remembering the Golden Rule causes respect for public property—property which the public is entitled to use.
 - 1) Do not throw paper on the streets or on the floors of public buildings.
 - 2) Do not touch objects on display in museums. This rule would exclude those displays which may be observed in operation if designated buttons are pushed.
 - 3) Do not put shoes on seats in public auditoriums.

- 4) Do not write on walls or disfigure in any way furniture or any other public property.
- 5) Do not sit on tables.
- 6) Do not pull alarms on fire boxes unless there is really a fire. Anyone who would do such a thing as this is really a criminal. Because of equipment being used to answer false alarms, lives and property have been lost while distant fire-fighting equipment was on its way to answer a real alarm.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE REGULATIONS OF SOCIETY. Rules that have been made for efficient, safe control of the public are to be observed. Some of the rules that are posted in public places are: FORM A LINE TO THE RIGHT, PLEASE WAIT FOR THE HOSTESS TO SEAT YOU, FASTEN SEAT BELT, RETURN BOOKS HERE, QUIET, IN, OUT, NO STROLLERS ON THE ESCALATORS, KEEP OFF THE GRASS, DO NOT PICK FLOWERS, PUT OUT FIRES, DO NOT BUILD FIRES. The Christian should never rebel against regulations governing his behavior. Proverbs 12:1b, "He that hateth reproof is brutish."

CONCLUSION: The Christian should behave properly in public where he is not known as he would in private where everyone knows him.