

The Culture of Casual

From our speech to our attire, our assembling with the church to our prayer life, the Christianity of many has been plagued by a culture of casual. More and more, the press for convenience and comfort drives our convictions. We like to be able to approach God on our terms, rather than His. We want a relaxed relationship with the Lord. Too many demands and too many commands cramp our sense of discipleship, thus a shift from a careful handling of His word to a carefree approach to God. Expectations exasperate us. Doctrine is dull. Truth is flexible. It all becomes less about God and more about us. Do we approach God and

by Jonathan Perz
awe?

all that is His with the proper sense of reverence and

And lest anyone think the concern expressed here is about dress clothes and formality, ceremony and tradition, we are mistaken. It is about the attitude and the spirit with we approach all things concerning God. Are we treating that which is holy as common? God deserves more.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him" (Psa. 89:7).



Classes This Week																															
Sunday College Devo Postponed to next week.		Monday 7:00 PM Ladies' class at Yvette Rouse's home, "Teach Me to Love"																													
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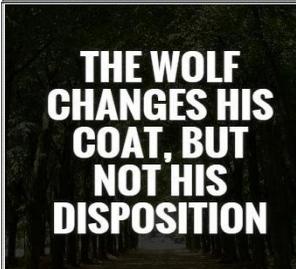
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Volume 9, Issue 3

October 8, 2017

Taking in the Goats and Wolves

by Steve Klein



Thoughts to Ponder

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

The Bible teaches that the Lord adds those who are saved to the universal church (Acts 2:47). Saved individuals then join themselves to other disciples in their area for work and worship as a local church. When a Christian moves from one place to another, it is necessary that he join himself to the church in the new location. This is what Saul attempted to do in Acts 9:26; the Scripture states that "when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple."

Local churches would normally consider it a blessing to receive new members from other places. Yet the Jerusalem church was cautious about accepting Saul. Barnabas had to testify of Saul's faithfulness before the apostles in order for Saul to be received (Acts 9:27). Here then is an apostolically approved example of a church exercising caution about receiving a new member. Although Saul was worthy of acceptance, the cautiousness of the disciples was warranted and implicitly approved by the apostles.

Today, many churches have thrown this caution to the wind. Churches will accept anyone into their number who claims to be a Christian -- without any apparent concern for the person's past faithfulness or lack thereof.

Today, many churches have thrown this caution to the wind. Churches will accept anyone into their number who claims to be a Christian -- without any apparent concern for the person's past faithfulness or lack thereof. This practice not only weakens the local church, it also does nothing for the spiritual welfare of one who may need reproof much more than acceptance.

Choice Bryant, now in his eighties, relates an experience from his many years of preaching which well illustrates the need and benefit of exercising care in this matter. He

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writes as follows: Leaving Grandfield, Oklahoma, we moved to Floydada, Texas to work with the church in that city. One Sunday morning, a lady "came forward," asking to be identified with us. As my custom is, I simply asked from what church she comes, and she said it was the Lockney church. I wrote to the elders of the Lockney church and they promptly answered that she was not faithful as a member, and even her life was out of harmony with Bible teaching. I acquainted our elders with this letter, explaining that this lady needed to be confronted with this letter, that we could not accept her in her sinful life. One of the elders, a very influential man in the area (in fact, he was a business man in the city) said that we need not do anything, we must not "get our feet wet" in such situations, that we must just accept her "as is" and proceed with our work. This disturbed me no little, and I rebuked him for speaking thus as an elder of the church.

Then another one of the elders offered to go with me to talk with the lady (who lived in Silvertown -- a few miles north of Floydada). We set a date to go, and upon approaching her with the letter from the Lockney elders, she first angrily denied the charges and criticized them for writing in, and raved for some time. We just patiently listened to her rantings, and when she finally stopped I simply said, "if what you say is true, then the Lockney elders lied on you, therefore, we are now forced to get with those elders and get all this straightened out." At this point she broke down and cried like a baby, saying, "yes, what they say about me is true; I am guilty of their charges!" I then replied, "you need to do two things, (1) confess your wrongs to them, and (2) do the same before our congregation!" We left on that note. The next Sunday morning she came before the congregation confessing her wrongs, and right behind her was her husband who confessed his faith in Christ and asked to be baptized. The result of our doing

our duty in contacting her as we did, there were two souls saved (instead of being lost)!

Incidentally, thereafter that couple became two of our best friends. I am a firm believer in "checking up" on those who ask to be identified. Either you will uncover the wrong-doing in their lives, or, you will learn of the valuable assets they possess to use in your local work. (Choice Bryant, "An Octogenarian Reminisces: Experiences in Floydada," - With All Boldness, May, 98).

Sometimes, an individual may be like a goat trying to join a flock of sheep. He is not intending to do the sheep any harm, but he really doesn't belong in the flock until he is truly a sheep (this was the case of the woman in brother Bryant's story). In other cases, an individual may be more like a wolf--trying to gain entry into the flock in order to devour sheep with false teaching and heresy. The apostle Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus that, "...savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (**Acts 20:29**). As shepherds of the flock, these elders were bound to do their utmost to keep the flock safe from wolves.

It is vital that churches check up on those wishing to join their fellowship. One sensible and Scriptural way to accomplish this is simply to communicate with trusted Christians who know the individual in question. Barnabas was known and trusted by the apostles in Jerusalem (**Acts 4:36-37**), and he was acquainted with Saul, so he was in an ideal position to offer testimony about Saul's character.

When Apollos went from Ephesus to Corinth, faithful brethren in Ephesus sent a letter of recommendation with him; "the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace" (**Acts 18:27**). Such letters of recommendation from one church to another were regarded as necessary in some cases and seem to have been commonly sent in New Testament times (**cf. 2 Corinthians 3:1**).



Let Another Man Praise You

By R. J. Evans

"Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger and not your own lips." (**Proverbs 27:2**)

Is it safe to say that most of us have difficulty from time to time in heeding and obeying the words of wisdom in our text? I'm sure we have all been guilty of doing a little bragging and boasting at times. In fact, generally speaking, it appears that boasting has become an accepted practice in our present culture. Just think about politics or the social media, and you realize how common it has become.

The boaster is the individual who wants other people to think of him as a great doer of many things. He is the type individual who likes to talk about himself, and is not bashful about bragging about all his accomplishments. There is an old saying that is associated with this kind of person: "If you want to know how great he is (or members of his family), just ask him, and he will tell you." Then there are those who do not have to be asked, they constantly boast about themselves, whether others want to hear it or not.

We just mentioned that boasting has become a part of our present culture. We can also observe that this practice is addressed in God's word. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul described the many evil characteristics of the Gentiles, one of which consisted of "boasters" (**V. 30**). In writing to Timothy, he stated, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (**2 Tim. 3:1-2**). These sins are running rampant today, and most certainly, boasting is no exception.

The Apostle Paul did engage "in a little folly"—a type of foolish boasting in order to expose his opponents who were false apostles—taking advantage of the brethren at Corinth (**2 Cor. 11**). However, he had already established the fact that acceptable glorying or boasting is to be only in the Lord—"He who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (**2 Cor. 10:17**). Likewise, he told the Galatians: "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (**Gal. 6:14**).

The boaster is one who thinks he is better/smarter/more important than others. But the Scripture teaches that "in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others"

(**Phil. 2:3-4**).

There are many admonitions throughout God's word against being proud and boastful. Jesus taught that when we do our good deeds, don't "sound a trumpet" but let it be in secret to the extent that—"when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (**Matt. 6:1-4**). In other words, don't be telling others and bragging about what good deeds you have done. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector teaches against self-righteous boasting and pride (**Lk. 18:9-14**). The Apostle Paul stated, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of your-

selves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (**Eph. 2:8-9**). In planning for the future, James said "you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (**Jas. 4:15-16**).

Boasters are proud, which is totally against the humble spirit that should characterize the faithful child of God. James said, "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (**Jas. 4:6**). The boaster is one who thinks he is better/smarter/more important than others. But the Scripture teaches that "in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (**Phil. 2:3-4**). The boaster often makes others feel bad about themselves, and become discouraged over "falling so short" of all the braggart's alleged accomplishments and abilities. But the Lord says, "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (**Rom. 15:2**). And there are other problems associated with all the damage a boaster causes. Thus, boasting is an attempt to belittle others, while seeking to elevate self above everyone else.

It has been said that no one likes to be around a boaster—having to constantly hear him brag about himself. No doubt about it, that is so true! Who wants to hear and see actions of someone essentially saying: "Look at me and see how great I am"? Never let it be said or observed that the faithful child of God is a boaster. May we at all times heed the words of our title: "*Let another man praise you.*"

