

## Christian: Image or Reality?

- Allen Dvorak -

It's campaign season. Politicians are trying to identify themselves and convey their message to voters. Depending upon the audience, of course, identifying oneself as a Christian is seen as a positive attribute. I suspect that such self-identification is designed to suggest that one is a moral person and holds conservative values long cherished in the United States. Certainly we need to elect moral people with a respect for God's word to public office.

I am concerned, however, that some candidates may be "trotting out" their Christianity because it serves to further their political ambitions rather than being a confession of the kind of person that they genuinely are. Being a Christian, according to the Bible, was never intended to be simply a way of creating a good public image.

In the early history of the church, disciples of Jesus were persecuted first by the Jews and later by the Romans. The Roman persecution during the second and third centuries was virulent, but the church survived because of the faith of people who chose to die rather than deny their Lord. Eventually the church conquered the Roman empire as the emperor Constantine granted tolerance to the Christians. With that shift of imperial policy, the church entered a period of history in which it grew rapidly in number but declined in spirituality. It became fashionable, even financially profitable in some cases, to belong to the church. Conversion for material or political advantage, however, is not real "conversion."

Today the word "Christian" is applied to nearly anything which has any remote connection to the Bible, but in the New Testament, the word only described a baptized believer. The word translated "Christian" only appears three times in the Greek text (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16) and always is applied to an individual person, not a nation, organization or even a church. By etymology, the word denotes one who belongs to Christ. That's an important fact because the Scriptures also inform us that those who belong to Christ are those who have been bought with His blood, the price of redemption from sin (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 Peter 1:17-19). Paul wrote to the Romans that we are baptized into the death of Jesus (6:3). In a metaphorical way, we come into contact with the blood of Jesus at that point (see also Acts 22:16).

The implication of belonging to Christ was well stated by Paul when he observed to the Corinthians that they were not their own, but should glorify God with their bodies and spirits (1 Corinthians 6:20). Being a Christian demands a certain lifestyle; it is not simply a matter of joining some fraternity and then going about one's business as before! I have personally been acquainted with people who used obscene and blasphemous language in my presence, only to proclaim that they also were Christians when they discovered my vocation! As one person put it, "Don't tell me that you are a Christian ... show me!"

- via *Teaching Truth*, Copyright © 2007-2008, Hughes Road at Gooch Lane Church of Christ, Madison, AL  
All Rights Reserved ( used by permission)

About politics: "You can fool too many of the people too much of the time." - James Thurber

### News & Notes

CONFESSIONS: Lori States, Sharon Roberts.

CONGRATULATIONS: To Alex & Jill (Beatty) McClung, who were married this past week in Martinsburg, WV. Their address: 701 Sheridan Ave., Martinsburg, WV 25401. Best wishes to Alex & Jill for a lifetime of happiness together.

CARE & SHARE BEARS: Each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. All ladies are invited to participate in this good work.

NURSING HOME VISIT & DEVOTIONAL: This coming Saturday, July 12th, at 2:30 p.m. at Fox.

MOVING: Bob & Martha Noland will be leaving Chester to begin work with the church in Hanoverton, OH on August 31st. We wish them the very best.

PANTRY: Toilet tissue, soap & deodorant.

REMEMBER IN PRAYER: Phyllis Nelson (stroke) - David's mother; Anna D. Snell (stroke) - Jeremy's grandmother; Crystal Baker (cancer) - Connie Cowdery's daughter; and those of our congregation who have serious health concerns or need encouragement.

ENCOURAGE: Lloyd & Virginia Ferrell.

SICK: Home: Matthew Malcomson, Carl Miller, Blondenia Orr, Jenny Rhodes, Pauline Clutter, Ruby Eddy, Rob Martin, Ella Beagle (at Vera Groves'), Bob & Scharlotte Cyphers (with their daughter, Joyce Vantilburg), Dan Williams, Bette Gentry. Others confined to their homes and in nursing homes are listed on the bulletin board.

### Hope And Its Rewards

The happiest people you will ever meet are those who are on good terms with hope. They are confident that something good is just around the corner. They are actively engaged in helping others; they are optimistic about the future; they are filled with joyful enthusiasm.

Helping others we find ourselves. We see most clearly when we open our eyes to the hidden needs of a stranger; we hear most keenly when we attune our ears to the silent call of a friend. Service to others is what living is all about!

Optimism - The kind that springs from a deep faith - Always puts us on good terms with home. Be an eternal optimist, and shadows will fall behind you, cheerfulness will walk beside you, opportunity will rise in front of you, and doors will open for you! Practice dynamic optimism, and you will always spread the blessing of hope wherever you go.

Enthusiasm is the seed of hope. Samuel Goldwyn once said: *I have found enthusiasm for work and life to be the most precious ingredient in any recipe for successful living. And the greatest feature of this ingredient is that it is available to everyone - within himself.* Call forth the sleeping giant of enthusiasm within you, and you will radiate hope; you will know the thrill of success; you will experience the joy of fulfillment.

- William Arthur Ward, via *Lifelines*, Bella Vista Church of Christ, Bella Vista, AR