

Evaluation for Personal Growth

Someone has said that the greatest failing of the Christian Church is in the difficulty to distinguish between the lives of professing Christians and non-Christian people. This seems to be a fair criticism. The church is surely failing in its mission when it does not produce a distinct change in the conduct and mode of living of those within its fold. If professing Christians and non-Christians use the same language, have like personal habits, are engaged in the same business practices, seek the same amusements, spend an equal amount of time in private and public worship and are similar in their observance of the Sabbath, there is very little that can be said in support of church membership.

Unless we, as Conscientious Objectors to war, can be distinguished by our conduct from those who do not claim these high religious convictions, we are failing the great cause for which many have suffered and died. It would be well for us to examine our unit and ourselves in this light.

What is there about our speech that shows our determination to be Christ-like? Are we guilty of taking the Lord's name in vain? Does our conversation sometimes descend to the "gutter" level?

We should expect to find that our personal habits reflect the best of which we are capable. In regard to these habits, I do not think that it is unkind to say that I sincerely wish that none of our group were users of tobacco. Instead of contributing to our welfare, it subtracts from us physically and at the same time wastes our money and binds us heavily in the clutches of a strong, stubborn habit. Surely its use is not consistent with the highest ideals of clean living. The use of alcoholic beverages is such an obvious evil that it needs only to be mentioned here.

In matters pertaining to our work, we need to examine ourselves carefully. Are we thorough and complete in fulfilling our duties? Does our Christian belief have an effect on the way we deal with fellow employees and patients? The ability to be kind and considerate under adverse circumstances, as well as the practice of common courtesy at all times, is a part of Christian conduct and a necessary part of consistent Christian living.

The way in which we use our leisure time should reflect our religious convictions. Commercial amusements ought always to be questioned. They are often lacking in qualities of character building and many times are designed to destroy wholesome character. Do we let our leisure time contribute to the upbuilding of character or do we squander it thoughtlessly without return or benefit?

As concerns Sabbath observance and worship, we should be most thoughtful. Only the most urgent circumstances should prevent our attending the worship services provided for us. Anything less than 100% of our group in attendance at our religious services is entirely unbecoming the high standards we have set for ourselves by the very fact of our presence here. To fail in regular attendance upon private and public worship is to shrivel inwardly and at the same time decrease the benefit that comes to the group as a result of complete participation.

As I enumerate these points of Christian conduct, I am acutely aware of the many ways in which I fail to meet these high standards with the best of which I am capable. In failing to do so, I am untrue to myself, my family, my C.P.S. associates, my church and my God. I have not done so deliberately. Like many others, I have been careless about these important matters, but the results are just as devastating as if the acts had been deliberate. Careless Christians have done far more to delay the coming of widespread Christian Brotherhood than have the many active foes of Christianity who darken the pages of history.

May I ask that you too will test yourselves on these points and that after doing so you will endeavor with me to pledge yourselves anew to the high standards that should characterize Christian Conscientious Objectors. It is our high privilege and stern duty to live so carefully that we shall be known by our lives and conduct and that the Name of Jesus will have new meaning at this place because we have lived here.

--Richard Bentzinger