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the message for yourself

Right or Wrong

Setting the Standard
In
Moral Behaviour

THE CHRISTAPELPHIAN 404 SHAFTMOOR LANE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This booklet on moral behaviour does not cover the whole story, but gives a short, easily read summary of Christian conduct.

Almost all the Scripture quotations used in this booklet are from *The New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips, and permission to use them has been generously granted by the publishers, Geoffrey Bles Limited.

SETTING THE STANDARD

People say that the moral standards of young people to-day are very low, and leave God out of the picture altogether. This booklet will help you to judge whether this is so, or not, and to decide what is good Christian behaviour.

The Bible sets the standard, and tells us why we ought to behave in a particular way.

"How can a young man keep life clean? By keeping to thy word." Psalm 119, v. 9.

"The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" 1 Peter 3, v. 12.

Keeping to this standard is not easy.

It needs a conviction that what is done is both right and worth while.

It needs determination.

It needs the best in you.

YOUR WORK

People say: "What about my rights ?"
"What's he ever done for me ?"
"Why break my neck ?"

The Bible says:

"Your job is to obey your masters, not with the idea of currying favour, but as a sincere expression of your devotion to the Lord. Whatever you do, put your whole heart and soul into it, as into work done for the Lord. . . since you are actually employed by the Lord Christ and not just by your earthly master." Col. 3, vv. 22-25.

"Be busy with your own affairs and do your work yourselves. The result will be a reputation for honesty in the world outside and an honourable independence." 1 Thess. 4, vv. 11 and 12.

"Treat other people exactly as you would like to be treated by. them. " Matt. 7, v. 12.

This means no clock-watching, or time stealing; no skiving out of unpleasant duties, or doing slipshod work; no second best at school, at factory or office. It means a good day's work for your wages, and cheerful acceptance of your position in life. It means thinking about the welfare of others. It means showing the kind of God you worship by the kind of person you are.

GETTING RICH QUICK

People say: "What's the harm in a little flutter?"
"There's plenty of easy money for the picking?"

The Bible says:

"Loving money leads to all kinds of evil." I Tim. 6, v. 10.

"He (Jesus) said to them, 'Notice that, and be on your guard against covetousness in any shape or form. For a man's real life in no way depends upon the number of his possessions'."
Luke 12, v. 15.

"Better a little with honesty, than a large income with injustice." Prov. 16, v. 8.

This means no short cuts to easy money, no "pools", no gambling, no betting, no trusting to luck; for the Christian trusts God. It means keeping a sense of proportion. It is not wrong to have money; it is wrong to love it so much that you will get it at all costs.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

People say: "Only a fool pays."
"I know a short cut."
"Well, everybody fiddles now and then."

The Bible says:

"The man who is faithful in the little things will be faithful in the big things, and the man who cheats in the little things will cheat in the big things, too." Luke 16, v. 10.

"If you used to be a thief you must not only give up stealing, but you must learn to make an honest living, so that you may be able to give to those in need." Ephesians 4, v. 28.

This means honesty in little things as well as big; it means no evading bus fares, no stealing the office stationery, no keeping borrowed books, no "finding's keepings". It also means not coveting your neighbour's goods, "nor his ox, nor his ass", nor his bike, nor his girl friend.

I'M ALRIGHT, JACK

People say: "I couldn't care less."
"Why bother? It's not my business."
"Somebody else can mop that lot up."

The Bible says:

"A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell into the hands of bandits who stripped off his clothes, beat him up and left him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. A Levite also came and passed by on the other side. But then a Samaritan traveller came along and was touched with pity. He brought him to an inn and did what he could for him. Which of these three seems to you to have been a neighbour to the bandits' victim?" Luke 10, v. 30-37. (abridged).

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was lonely and you made me welcome. I was naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you came and looked after me. I was in prison and you came to see me there . . . I assure you that whatever you did for the humblest of my brothers you did for me." Matt. 25, v. 35-36,40.

"If you obey the royal law, expressed by the scripture 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', all is well. . . Remember that if a man knows what is right and fails to do it, his failure is a real sin" James 2, v. 8.

The victims of flood, earthquake and famine are quickly helped, but your job is to remember also the chap next door, or the old folk round the corner. There's plenty of need, even in a welfare state.

WHY WAIT UNTIL WE'RE MARRIED?

People say: "Lots of young people have sex before they are married."
"Everybody has sex nowadays."

The Bible says:

"Avoid sexual looseness like the plague!" 1 Corinthians 6, v. 18.

"God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality. Everyone of you should learn to control his body." 1 Thessalonians 4, v. 34.

"Neither the immoral nor the dirty-minded. . . has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Don't let anyone fool you on this point, however plausible his argument."
Ephesians 5, v. 5-6.

This means that boy and girl friends must respect each other and restrain their passions.

It means that a girl must realize that a boy's emotions are more easily aroused than hers, therefore she must be careful in her behaviour.

It means that a boy must not fondle a girl, or play on her feelings, which run deeper than his.

It means that both should realize that true love is unselfish: neither should do anything to cause the other to feel shame.

Immoral sexual behaviour is an offence against God, and against one's own body. (1 Cor. 6, v. 18).

Marriage should come at the end of a courtship which has been clean and free of immoral sexuality, for marriage is an illustration of the marriage of Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5, v. 32).

True friendship and true marriage are based on far more than sex, therefore cultivate each other's interests, and win each other's respect.

ONE FOR THE ROAD

People say: "Be a man, have one I"
"Come on-be sociable."
"Another one won't hurt you I"

The Bible says:

"Don't be under any illusion. . . No drunkard . . . , shall have any shine in the Kingdom of God." I Cor. 6, vv. 9 and 10.

"Be on your guard-see to it that your minds are never clouded by dissipation or drunkenness . . . or else that Day (Christ's coming) may catch you like the springing of a 'trap'." Luke 21. v. 34.

"Don't get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls." Ephesians 5, v. 18.

"Let us live cleanly, as in the daylight, not in the delights of getting drunk." Romans 13, v. 13.

Drinking can reduce your power to think clearly and act sensibly. It can weaken your self-control; and if you are behind the wheel of a car it can cause you to kill.

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE DIFFERENT?

People say: "I like to go with the crowd."
"He's peculiar--doesn't mix,"

The Bible says:

"Never give your pearls to this world or to any of the things in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. For the whole world system, based as it is on men's primitive desires, their greedy ambitions and the glamour of all that they think splendid, is not derived from the Father at all, but from the world itself. The world and all its passionate desires will one day disappear." I John2,vv.15-17.

There can be no direct guidance in the Bible about some things like modern dancing, smoking, cinemas-but if we accept that the Christian life is the right one, then we look at these things in a new way.

If we get too involved in the social life, and with friends for whom dancing and cinema-going is an absolute "must", then we shall have less and less time for Christ. Or if it is terribly important to us that we fit in with the crowd in smoking and drinking, then our friends and what they think and do are more important to us than Christ.

Nothing should loom so large in our lives that it crowds Christ out, and nothing should gain such a hold over us that we can't give it up. Smoking in particular is a habit which really 'gets a stranglehold because the body craves for the nicotine drug. It has been proved without doubt that smoking is harmful, so it is not only downright foolish but definitely un-Christian to poison ourselves deliberately in this way.

If you put God first in your life you will see these things in proportion and decisions about them will be simpler.

LOOSE TALK

People say: "I'll please myself what I say."

The Bible says:

"You shall not use the name of the Eternal, your God, profanely; for the Eternal will never acquit anyone who uses his name profanely." Exodus 20, v. 7.

"He that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." I Peter 3, v. 10.

"Let there be no more foul language, but good words instead. . . which God can use to help other people." Ephesians 4, v. 29.

"Neither the. . . foul-mouthed. . . shall have any share in the kingdom of God." I Cor. 6, v. 10.

This means no swearing, and no loose talk. It also means no gossiping, no passing on that somewhat exaggerated juicy bit about old so-and-so! It means that if you feel criticism is really necessary, it must be kindly and helpful. Can you imagine Christ being unkind?.

I READ WHAT I LIKE

People say: "I like a bit of hot romance."
"It's tame without a bit of sex."

The Bible says:

"Have nothing to do with sexual immorality or dirty-mindedness, uncontrolled passion, evil desire. . . . It is because of these very things that the holy anger of God falls upon those who refuse to obey Him." Col. 3, v. 5-6

"Have done, then, with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others." James 1, v. 21.

There are many books and magazines which deliberately aim at bringing out the worst in you. Read them and you are fixing your mind on rottenness. There are plenty of books and magazines which are really entertaining and enjoyable. Fix your mind on good things and give the best in you a fair chance.

ASKING TOO MUCH?

People say: "I could never live up to that lot."
"I'm only human after all."

The Bible says:

"No temptation has come your way that is too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance. He will see to it that every temptation has a way out, so that it will never be impossible for you to bear it." I Cor. 10; v. 13.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. 4, v. 13.

Of course it's a tall order! Jesus- Christ is a tremendous power, and God is even more tremendous, and they expect big things--but you don't know what you can do till you try; and you don't have to do it on your own. You can have all the help you are willing to ask for through prayer.

WHAT'S THE GOOD OF PRAYER?

People say: "You never get an answer."
"I can't talk to somebody I can't see."
"How can we possibly know what to pray for ?"

The Bible says:

"If. . . any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem, he has only to ask God . . . but he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts." James 1, v. 5-6.

"Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer." Phil. 4, v. 6.

"We have such confidence in him that we are certain that he hears every request that is made in accord with his own plan. And since we know that he invariably gives his attention to our prayers, whatever they are about, we can be quite sure that our prayers will be answered." 1 John 5, vv. 14-15.

We always get an answer-'yes', 'no' or 'wait'! The trouble is we often don't like the answer we get, but we have to accept that God knows what is best for us.

It's not so difficult-you trust the driver of your train to know what he's doing, and generally speaking he does.

You can trust God. Always!

Let Paul, whose words we have read so often in this booklet, sum up for us. The passage is taken from his letter to the Christians at Philippi.

"Here is a last piece of advice. If you believe in goodness, and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on whatever is true and honourable and just and pure and lovely and praiseworthy. Model your conduct on what you have learned from me, on what I have told you and shown you, and you will find that the God of peace will be with you."

The Bible has a wonderful message of hope for every man and for the world. If you would like to read more about its true teaching, write for a list of pamphlets and books to

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