

Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.03.19

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Speaker-AM: Nate Vick
Title: Spiritual Responsibility
Recording:
tinyurl.com/NateSpiritualR

Speaker-PM: Patrick Hite
Title: Peace
Recording:
tinyurl.com/PatrickPeace





Articles

Front Porch Christianity, 3/19/2023 By Sam Bunyard

Architecture is a great lens through which to view changes in culture. An interesting observation about a lot of modern architecture? Hardly any front porches. While houses were once designed to appear welcoming and hospitable, giving residents a chance to sit in their rocking chairs and greet strangers passing by on the sidewalk, houses today are built like fortresses to keep the world at a distance! Rather than wishing neighbors a good morning from the front steps, many people today don't even know their neighbor's first name! Our society is increasingly less personal and friendly.

In Jesus' final prayer before His arrest, He prayed of His apostles, "the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (Jn 17:14-15). This is the origin of the popular saying that we are to be 'in the world, not of the world.' Oftentimes, we tend to focus more on the part about not being of the world. That's good, but the first half is important too! In fact, within the next verses Jesus prays, "as You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." He wasn't only praying for the apostles, but for all who would accept their teachings, "that they all may be one... that the world may believe that You sent Me" (Jn 17:18-21).

Later, Paul would write that Christians should not keep company with brethren caught in habitual sin – but that doesn't mean we should live in a bubble of only faithful Christians, "since then you would need to go out of the world" (I Cor 5:10)!

Let's let our front porch lights shine in that darkness!

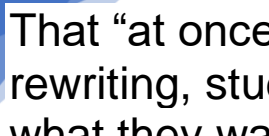
Responding to Other's Comments, 3/17/2023 By Doy Moyer

Among the works of the flesh are strife, outbursts of anger, dissensions, and divisions ([Galatians 5:20](#)). There seems to be a great deal of this in the world, and that should not surprise us. But there also seems to be much of this among those claiming to follow Christ. I'd like to say that this is a surprise, but it's not. Christians have long wrestled with being too influenced by the world and conforming to the attitudes and practices of the age (cf. [Romans 12:1-2](#)). Our lights are often dim because we partake of the darkness far more than we would like to admit.

We see this all over social media, which is, sadly, the most toxic of environments if we let ourselves get lost in its enticement. Disagreements quickly become divisive and anger-inducing, so the insults and derogatory insinuations begin. It's difficult, it seems, to find discussions that are filled with grace, giving the benefit of any doubt, or believing the best intentions in others.

I get it. I've been guilty. And I know it's hard to read something and get the full sense of what someone intends. We read what others say and hear it in our own voice, emphasize it as we think, and may well miss the point of what was meant. Many times I've thought that people go out of their way to swerve around the point and miss it entirely. Whatever it takes, don't hit the point!

I'm being slightly facetious, but not by much. The irony does not escape me. We all make judgments about what others mean and how they mean it. We all have those "bad days" where we are in a bad place and easily snap at others because we take something the wrong way. It is in those times I have to remind myself that "this" is not the best time for me to say anything, for "*a fool's anger is known at once*" ([Proverbs 12:16](#)). It's hard to let an insult go and not respond in kind — or even respond at all (cf. [Proverbs 26:4-5](#)).



That “at once” part gets me. People might spend hours writing and rewriting, studying and working through an issue, carefully wording what they want to say only to be rebuffed in an instant by someone who got immediately triggered — someone who did not study and gave little thought before firing back. Social media platforms do not distinguish. In a moment we can make our thoughts known, for good or ill.

We need to remember that our words have the power to encourage or discourage. We can lift up or pull down. We can help or hurt. I know that not everything posted is great and sometimes we need someone who can provide a gentle rebuke. May I offer some suggestions when thinking about entering a conversation with potential disagreement?

1. Give the benefit of the doubt. Assume the best first. Assume that the other means well and intends to do something beneficial to others. Be gracious and kind upfront.
2. If you disagree, sometimes (maybe most of the time) it’s okay to just move on. I don’t need to comment on everything I disagree with. I’d be most miserable if I did that, and it’s just not healthy mentally to spend all day online arguing and responding instantly to heated fusses.
3. If you feel the need to respond in strong disagreement (make sure this is really necessary), think about sending a private message first to ask about needed clarifications. I have been blessed by several who have done this with me, and this allowed me to make changes, clarify, and sometimes delete before it becomes a mess in the public arena.
4. Watch the words because words do mean something. Insults and evil surmising do not fit the child of God. We expect this from the world. It ought not to be so among us. We are family, not enemies.
5. The world is watching. They will see how we treat one another on social media. They will know whether what we profess is real and meaningful to us. They will see whether we love one another or bicker so much that we despise each other. (See [John 13:34-35](#) and [John 17:20-21](#) to see how important this is.)

The point? As Christians, let us not add to the toxicity of social media. Rather “*Bless and do not curse*” ([Romans 12:14](#)). By how we engage others, we can show the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit. This matters eternally.