

GIVING GOD CONTROL OF YOUR CONDUCT

Living for Christ requires having the kind of faith in God that gives Him control over every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:5-7). One element of giving God control of your life is giving Him control over your conduct. This lesson will focus on some basics about what this should look like.

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

God calls people to Himself for salvation through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). However, the gospel's message is not just some news people must believe as fact and then live however they desire. Rather, the call of the gospel requires a response of obedience (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Acts 2:37-41). Then, even after initial obedience, those trying to live a life of faith (2 Corinthians 5:7) must "walk worthy of the calling" received through the gospel. The word "walk" is often used to speak about the way a person conducts his/her life (manner of living). So, God is expecting people to live "step-by-step" in harmony with His revealed will (Colossians 2:6-7)! Part of this walk will require unity with other Christians who are striving to live according to the revealed will of God (Philippians 1:27; Jude 1:3). Notice how God has given a perfectly unified system centered around seven "ones" (vv. 4-6). So, your task is *not* to find your own truth and way to live, but to live according to the way God has revealed!

EPHESIANS 4:17-24

After obeying the gospel of Christ, your life must look differently on both the inside (heart and thoughts) and the outside (words, character, habits, conduct, etc.). As a Christian, you should no longer conduct your life in the same way "Gentiles" do (i.e. those who don't have a right relationship with God, 2:11-13). This life was characterized by

the desires of your flesh rather than a concern for the things God's Spirit has revealed in the Scriptures. However, now your life must look different than it once did – putting those old ways to death and putting on new ways that are fitting with God's nature of righteousness, purity, and truth (Romans 6:3-4; 8:1-8; 12:1-1; 13:11-14; Galatians 5:16-26; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Peter 4:3-4)! Although the Christian can still sin (1 John 1:8-2:2), the one who desires to please God will not allow himself/herself to continue practicing the sin (1 John 3:8-10). While changing your conduct may take time, becoming a Christian changes the focus of your life which will result in changed conduct!

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

Your goal should now be to become an imitator of God. That is, your life should reflect that you are a dearly loved child of God. As there is a physical resemblance between parents and children, there should be a spiritual resemblance between God and His children (i.e. in holiness, 1 Peter 1:13-16). The entirety of your conduct should be committed to your Heavenly Father and letting His seed (His word, 1 Peter 1:22-25) work powerfully in you! This is one reason Jesus Christ left Heaven and came to earth – to help people know what it would look like for God to live in the flesh (Matthew 1:23; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 2:14-18). As a Christian, your goal should be to walk as Jesus walked (John 13:14-17; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:3-6). Of particular note in Ephesians 5 is to walk in love, which is a core characteristic of God (1 John 4:8-10; John 3:16). Your life should now be controlled by the love that has been shown to you so that you can no longer live for yourself, but for God and others (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Matthew 22:36-40)!

EPHESIANS 5:6-14

Your life was once characterized by the ways of darkness (sin, evil). However, you have been rescued from this domain of darkness and have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Son and God's marvelous light (Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Now, your task is to continue walking

in the light to continue having fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7). Doing so involves producing the fruit of the light (things consisting of goodness, righteousness, and truth). Rather than having a focus that is on yourself and your flesh, your focus now must be to test everything and find out what is pleasing to the Lord (testing it by the Scriptures, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22). The task of walking in the light is made even more challenging, however, by other people who are walking in the darkness. Therefore, you must be on your guard against those living in darkness and must not join them in any fruitless work of darkness! Rather, you must work to expose the darkness with the light of God's word!

EPHESIANS 5:15-17

It can be easy to get busy in life and not think much about the ways you are conducting yourself. You may find yourself just acting and reacting according to however you feel in the moment rather than carefully calculating how you should live in ways that please God. However, you must pay careful attention to every step you take (1 Peter 5:8-9)! Your life is no longer being conducted according to the ways that may be most natural for you. Rather, your life is being conducted according to the ways of God's wisdom and focused on making the best use of your time on this earth in God's service. Recognize there is much evil in the world and the threat to misuse your time on earth by conducting your life in unwise ways is real. So, focus on understanding what the will of the Lord is and how to apply it to honor God in your life!

CONCLUSION

Giving God control of your conduct will impact everything you do. While your conduct has been rebellious toward God in the past as you lived according to the desires of the flesh, firmly establishing God as the only one who gets to mold your conduct is critical to living to please Him. Therefore, you must humble yourself to accept and obey these and all of God's instructions about your conduct.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does the call of the gospel require of people?

How has God revealed the way you should conduct yourself?

How was your life conducted before obeying the gospel?

How must your life be conducted after obeying the gospel?

Why should the Christian's conduct look like God?

How have you been transferred from darkness to light?

What is required of you to live in God's light?

Why is it important to pay careful attention to each step you take in life?

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