

Compassion, Kindness and Forgiveness

Introduction

1. Every follower of Jesus must be impressed with the basic attitudes and feelings toward others which He taught and exemplified.
 - a. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus emphasized and illustrated His desire to change people's attitudes to conform to those which He possessed.
 - b. Those attitudes not only affect one's relationship with Jesus but also relationships with others.
2. One cannot, in reality, be a Christian without the proper attitudes and conduct toward others. (Matt. 22:34-39)
3. A fundamental portrayal of the attitudes which are needed is seen in Colossians 3:1-15.
 - a. The "new man" of Colossians 3 is to be continually developed after the likeness of the Lord.
 - b. Three of the outstanding qualities and desirable attitudes presented in this passage and exemplified by the Lord are compassion, kindness and forgiveness.

I. Compassion

- A. Compassion reflects the deepest of human feelings.
- B. The example of Jesus.
 1. He was moved with compassion on the multitudes. (Matt. 9:36; 14:14)
 2. Hebrews 4:15. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."
 - a. The King James Version and American Standard Version translate "sympathize with" as "touched with."
 - b. Jesus is touched by, feels compassion for and is able to sympathize with our infirmities.
- C. Children of God need to have deep compassion for each other. (1 Pet. 3:8)
 1. In physical and material circumstances.
 2. In spiritual weaknesses. (Gal. 6:1-2; Rom. 15:1)
 3. In stressful situations in the congregation.
- D. Some, who claim to be Christians, tend to be "hard-nosed," uncaring and unfeeling.
 1. A lack of compassion shows that the person is really not converted.
 2. Consider "love" as it is presented in 1 Corinthians 13:7. Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

II. Kindness

- A. A Christian is a kind person who constantly manifests a “kindly spirit.”
- B. Kindness is enjoined on the Christian.
 - 1. Ephesians 4:32. “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”
 - 2. It is a part of the “love” that should characterize the Christian. (1 Cor. 13:4)
 - 3. Kindness is part of the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
 - 4. As part of the “new man” in Christ, the Christian is to put on kindness. (Col. 3:12)
 - 5. Kindness is to be added to faith. (2 Pet. 1:7)
- C. This quality is needed:
 - 1. In business meetings when there is a difference of opinion.
 - 2. In Bible classes when there is a difference of understanding.
 - 3. In preaching. One cannot allow unkind, bitter remarks and feelings to take over his message.
 - 4. In personal comments.
 - a. Face-to-face.
 - b. About another person (including such things as gossip).
 - 5. In order to be a person of goodwill and love.

III. Forgiveness

- A. This attitude is a must for every Christian.
 - 1. Ephesians 4:32. “Forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”
 - 2. Colossians 3:13. “Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”
 - 3. The principle found in verse 12 of the model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.
 - a. “Forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.”
 - b. The importance of applying this principle is seen in verses 14 and 15. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
- B. The attitude of forgiveness is plainly manifested by those we should emulate.
 - 1. Jesus. (Luke 23:34)
 - 2. Stephen. (Acts 7:60)
 - 3. Paul. (2 Tim. 4:16)

- C. The attitude of being willing to forgive others, even enemies, is closely related to the spiritual love taught and demonstrated by Jesus. (cf. Matt. 5:43-48)
 - 1. It stands in contrast to grudges, “chips-on-the-shoulder,” hatred, bitterness, revenge and other sinful attitudes.
 - 2. A forgiving spirit will prevent these wrong feelings from developing.
- D. This forgiving spirit should be the result of an appreciation for the forgiveness of sins which the Christian enjoys through the sacrifice of Jesus. (Col. 3:13)
- E. Many who claim to be Christians are unforgiving because they have a selfish, inward view of life.
 - 1. They feel sorry for themselves most of the time.
 - 2. They feed on hurt feelings and criticism of other people.
- F. If one is going to be like Jesus, he must develop a forgiving spirit.

Conclusion

- 1. Do you feel compassion? Are you kind? Do you have a forgiving spirit?
- 2. If the answer is “no,” I do not know whose name you should be wearing but it is not the name of Jesus Christ.
- 3. Those who are truly Christians, those who are following the teachings and example of Jesus, are compassionate, kind and forgiving persons.