

LESSON XXXIV—THE CHURCH AND WORLDLINESS

INTRODUCTION: When the purity of the Church is corrupted, its identity is destroyed. The line of distinction must be kept clear between the Church and the world. By what standard can a Christian today determine what is permissible as Christian recreation and what is worldly, harmful, and therefore wrong? The Bible does not deal with this problem in specific "Thou shalt Not" statements, but in principles. This lesson proposes a study of these principles. They have application to those things that are not wrong within themselves but are made wrong because of their influence and effect. Apply these principles to your problems concerning pleasure and recreation:

- I. Does It Destroy Your Identity As A Christian by Causing You to Be Regarded as of the World (II Cor. 6:14; 7:1; Rom. 12:1-2)?
- II. Is the Practice Questionable in Your Own Mind and Therefore an Offense to Your Own Conscience?
 1. Rom. 14:23 — "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Must have "full assurance" that it is acceptable before God.
 2. The approval of the conscience does not make anything right which is otherwise wrong. To violate our conscience is to weaken our own resistance against sin.
- III. Does It Have a Weakening Influence on Others and Will It Become a Stumbling Block to Them?
 1. Wrong to eat meat sacrificed to idols when it led others to stumble, though apart from this influence, when done with a good conscience and sanctified with prayer it was all right (I Cor. 10:23-33; 8:7-13).
 2. The seriousness of wielding the wrong influence (Matt. 18:6-7).
- IV. Is It Destructive To Your Body (I Cor. 6:19-20; 10:31)?
- V. Does It Conflict With Your Duty as a Christian (Matt. 6:33; II Tim. 2:4)?
- VI. Does it Cultivate an Inordinate Fleshly Appetite (Col. 2:20-23; Titus 2:11-13; Col. 3:5- 6; I Cor. 8:27)?
- VII. Does It Bring You Under Weakening Association and Influence (I Cor. 15:33; I Thess. 5:21-22)?

VIII. Does It Bring Upon You an Unequal Yoke and Place You at a Disadvantage in Serving the Lord (II Cor. 6:14-18)?

Conclusion: If the above questions, any of them, must be answered in the affirmative when applied to the pleasure and recreation in which one takes part, then the Gospel of Christ demands that we leave that thing off. Put your own life to the test.

Questions For Discussion

1. How does the impurity of the Church affect its identity?
2. What is to be done with our bodies (Rom. 12:1-2)?
3. How should one always regard his conscience?
 - a. What if the things done cannot be of faith?
 - b. How should one train his conscience? What is the basis of such?
 - c. What if the conscience is violated?
4. How should each Christian regard his influence?
5. What if our indulgences cause others to stumble?
6. What if our amusements encourage fleshly appetite?
7. How should the Christian handle his environment, control it or be controlled by it?
8. What if our association, and contacts with others, bring us under obligation to the world; or, we are weakened by such? What is to be done?