

How Much Manure do You Want in Your Ice Cream?

“Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” 1 Timothy 3:7

In watching the 2004 inaugural festivities, one news anchor stated that President Bush does not drink and there will be no alcohol served in the White House. I do not know where you stand on this issue, but the statement struck me as quite amazing. Think of the heads of state and high-powered men and women who are routinely entertained with vast amounts of alcohol present. How many leaders in our culture today have the backbone to take such a stand? The issue is not about alcohol, but compromising God’s standards. So, the question that begs an answer is this: How much compromise can we tolerate, or should we tolerate, in our personal lives as Christians?

Standing against the cultural tide of compromise can have a high cost. It will cost friendships, possibly family relationships, and even business relationships. However, if our motives are right, by standing in integrity before God and His word, God has promised He will heal our nation.

“...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their adverse ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14

When those in leadership raise a standard, it encourages us to follow. In the Old Testament, when the Israelites were leaving Egypt, each of the twelve Hebrew tribes raised a banner-like standard with their particular markings and symbols. The raised standard brought unity and order as the children of Israel followed the banners through the wilderness.

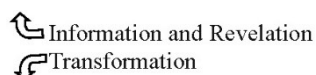
Likewise, as Christians, we are to be “standard-bearers,” leading the people God has placed in our lives—friends, family, and co-workers. God has called us to a reconciled relationship with Him, and we are intended to represent His standard to the people we know.¹ We do not want to lead people to a false hope by a careless standard.

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20

We have a calling to be ambassadors of His kingdom, which means that we must lay aside those things that will hinder us, snare us, or cause us to stumble in our appointed tasks. God has called us to be “vessels of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” 2 Timothy 2:21-26

Last week, in our Sunday school class, the teacher presented us with a pictorial question so we could better grasp the reality of what “a little sin” should really look and taste like to us. He asked, “How much manure would you be willing to tolerate in your bowl of ice cream?” It worked. We puckered our mouths as we thought about the idea of having *any* manure in our ice cream. —Ω



Taking God’s Word Back to Him

Heavenly Father, thank You for inviting me to separate myself from the entrapments of sin that surround me. LORD, I so much desire to be a vessel of honor, sanctified and useful for You, prepared for every good work. Help me be strong in Your might to stand against the cultural tide of compromise that wants me to lower my standards, which are Your standards—I want to stand in integrity before You and Your Word. Help me raise Your standard that encourages others to follow You. LORD, I do not want to represent You dishonestly and imply that You have loose standards, giving the people I know and meet a false hope. Help me pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. LORD, as Your standard-bearer, help me to speak Your truth in love so my friends and family may know the truth of Your Word, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil. LORD, I ask for more revelation, touch my heart, so that I can better grasp the reality of what “a little sin” really does to discredit You and Your message of redemption. I praise You and ask these petitions in Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

By David E McFadden

“Let’s Make Disciples Together!”

¹ See Mark 9:43-50