

BY WHAT STANDARD

Last week when Nick and I were studying together, I was making a point regarding the "Standard" we live by as Christians. Webster gives the following as one definition for the word "Standard": *"That which is established by sovereign power as a rule or measure by which others are to be adjusted."* When I explained this use of the word to Nick, he was quick to recognize that our "standard" is God's word. Jesus, in Matt 5:46-47 and Paul, in 2Cor 10:12 teaches a lesson we all need to learn in regard to our standard. The lesson taught in these passages is that we as Christians have a higher standard to live by than others. Obviously, God wants everyone to live by this standard, but most do not. In Matt 5 Jesus taught at least five lessons concerning a higher standard of living than what people had been used to observing. Jesus said that even the publicans (those considered by the Jews to be a lower class of people) lived by the standard of returning good for good. The account in Lk 6:32-33 refers to these as "sinners" that know how to return good for good. However, Jesus shows very clearly that His standard is higher than just returning good for good.

We as Christians are expected to live better and do more than people of the world. Our religion is worth little if it does not make us better than average. We are raised to walk in newness of life Rom 6:3, 4 and 2Cor 5:17 says that "old things have passed away, behold all things are become new." We were once darkness, but are now light according to Eph 5:8 and must therefore walk as children of light. The apostle Paul teaches us that we are to be different from the world Rom 12:2. Again in Col 3:7-10 we learn that we once walked according to the world but have put on the new man. Jesus shows that the righteousness of the self-righteous Pharisee was not sufficient Matt 5:20; 23:4-7.

There are many standards that people abide by today but only God's is the right one. Yet, some members of the Lord's church attend no more, pray no more, study no more, work no more and love no more than their religious neighbors. Some religious groups meet as early as 7 A.M. for their assemblies and some of the Lord's people can't seem to get to the assemblies by 9:30 or 10:00 A. M. in most churches and in our case by 2:00 P.M. Some religious groups work very diligently from door to door promoting their particular form of religion. How hard do we work trying to find someone willing to engage in a Bible study or even visit our assemblies? Are we willing to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees as Jesus talked about in Matt 5:20? As we would say today: "They talked a good line, but they did not practice what they preached." What about us today? If we are going to "talk the talk" we must "walk the walk" also.

The Christian is in constant danger of being dragged down by "Mr. and Mrs. Average." Most people are satisfied if they live up to the standards of the average person. Just contrast the standards of Jesus with the standards of the average person in our society today. Taking human life Matt 5:21, 22: many in our society are willing to take a human life if it suits their aims and purposes such as in abortions. Faithfulness in marriage Matt 5:27, 28: such is not even given consideration by much of our society. Truthfulness in speech Matt 5:33-37: people will lie anytime it suits their own agenda. And we could go on with non-resistance to evil Matt 5:38-42; love even for enemies Matt 5:43-48; taking property of others Mk 10:19; Eph 4:28; intoxicating beverages 1Pet 4:3; 1Thess 5:22; obeying civil laws Rom 13:1-7; thinking only of self Phil 2:4; The exclusiveness of the religion of Jesus Matt 15:9,13. These contrasts between what Jesus taught and what is practiced in our society today should be sufficient to prove to us beyond any shadow of a doubt that we as His children must excel the average.

Jesus, not man, is the Christian's standard. Jesus left us an example and we should follow his steps 1Pet 2:21. Jesus said "I am the way" Jhn 14:6. The apostle Paul warns us about measuring ourselves by ourselves and comparing ourselves among ourselves

2Cor 10:12. Note the wording of this passage in the Amplified Version: "Not that we [have the audacity to] venture to class or [even to] compare ourselves with some who exalt and furnish testimonials for themselves! However, when they measure themselves with themselves and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding and behave unwisely."

We as Christians are expected then to follow the example left us by our Lord, Jesus Christ 1Pet 2:21. The standard set by our Lord is far above the average. Let's examine ourselves and see if we have been satisfied with just average. If we have been and still are satisfied with just being average, then think about the question Jesus asks those He was teaching: "WHAT DO YE MORE THAN OTHERS?"

(JLH)