

## ***“Teach truth. Teach it in love. Live truth. Live it in love...”***

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If I had decided to be a Christian solely on how I've seen some Christians act or what some teach, I would have never become a Christian. I've seen some pretty awful behavior in my life from Christians. I've been on the receiving end of some terrible things. I've also acted poorly, to my shame. Based solely on these criteria, I have had many reasons over the years to disavow Christ.

There's a better way. I haven't given up on Christ based on what others do and say for the simple reason that committing to Christ is not based on what others do or don't do, but upon what Christ has done. People will disappoint, act badly, and teach bad things — including Christians. That does not excuse me from following the Lord.

That said, from the Christian's perspective, we have to realize that how we act, what we say, and how we say it can have a disastrous effect on whether others will receive the gospel. I am fully aware that some will take offense even when we speak the truth in love and act as God desires, but that's not what I'm talking about here. Here's what I'm talking about:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20-21)

People will take note of whether we love or don't love one another, and they will see whether or not we seek to remain united in Him. From these, they will make judgments on the merits of Christianity. These are not little matters, for how we behave can destroy how others think about even Jesus Himself. “That the world may believe you sent Me” should be ringing in our ears. It doesn't excuse them. But it won't help our case before God either.

Let us be committed to what Paul taught here: “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” (Colossians 4:2-6)

Teach truth. Teach it in love. Live truth. Live it in love for God and one another. In this way we can be the lights we are called to be (Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-16). Let us avoid being stumbling blocks on the path for others.