

PEOPLE ARE IMPRESSED

Some people are so self-conscious about what others think about them as to be unbalanced. They slink around, afraid to speak or act, for fear that someone will criticize them. They are right, of course. Whatever one does or does not do, someone will criticize it. Furthermore, criticism generally comes in direct proportion to the degree one is in the “public eye.” Those who cower before the super-critics are slaves to them. They must be very miserable. The world is impressed with such cowardice, but the impression is not very good. A try-to-please-everybody person ends up pleasing no one.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who never give a thought to others. These folk storm through life as Sherman did on his march to the sea, leaving unnecessarily wounded feelings, crushed hearts, and ill will. They care not how their words or deeds may hurt others, especially the young and innocent. To such ones, guarding one’s influence for good is a foreign concept. Granted, even the most even-tempered human beings may get “out of sorts” occasionally, but I have in mind those who operate on this level as the norm.

It is bad enough to have to deal with people in the world who are constantly irritable, moody, and hypercritical. It is infinitely worse to see a Christian behave so immaturely. One brusque, demanding, censorious member of the church can do more to damage the good influence of the church than the rest of the church can overcome. (Also, one such person running loose in a congregation can do incalculable harm to the peace that should prevail among brethren.) Brother or sister, ask yourself if this describes you. If it does, think with me for a moment. Suppose you have a complaint about your utility bill. That hardly gives you the right to burst through the door of City Hall, raising your voice, making ugly demands, and causing a “scene.” The damage is

compounded if you are so enraged you throw in a few profanities. Such behavior really impresses people, so much so that they will spread it far and wide. It gives the church a “black eye” to all who know you are a member of it.

A part of the fruit of the Spirit is kindness (Gal. 5:22–23). Love is kind, does not behave itself unseemly, and is not easily provoked (1 Cor. 13:4–5). Do you speak **to** people, or do you bark and growl **at** people? Are you aware that it takes less energy to smile than to frown? If you must be a grouch, do those around you a favor and stay indoors or go out in the woods somewhere until you get over it. Otherwise, your ill nature just may cause the loss of some soul besides your own. Yes, people are impressed.

—Dub McClish

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