

Cape Coral
Church of Christ
1010 S.W. 20th Avenue
Cape Coral, Florida 33991
(239) 283-4880
http://www.thelordsway.com/capecoralfl

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:30 A.M.

Worship: 10:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible Study: 6:00 P.M.

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Casual Dress in Worship

Another example of churches trying to give people what they want instead of what they need is the advertising of "casual dress - come as you are to worship God. It's okay to wear cutoffs and sneakers."

Not far from here, a young man served communion while wearing a T-shirt that advertised a particular brand of beer. It is interesting that the word "profane" means "to take what is holy (such as God and the things of God) and treat them as common." What a disgrace! Outrageous! What in the world was he thinking?

We appreciate it when you wear clothes that are appropriate for the occasion. When asked what is appropriate to wear, I responded, "Just wear what you would wear to your best friend's funeral." Jesus is our best friend and we assemble to commemorate his death (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-26).

Though we are not under the law of Moses, it is interesting that the priests were not to have a casual attitude in their dress while engaged in worship (Ex. 39). We have a better covenant, based on better promises (Heb. 8). Today, all Christians are priests (1 Peter 2:9).

The clothing we wear is dictated by our attitude toward the occasion. We dress respectfully when attending a funeral. It is a solemn occasion. We choose appropriate attire when attending a wedding. I have never seen shorts, sneakers and T-shirts at a funeral or wedding.

We wear casual clothes when working in the yard because we have a casual attitude toward yard work. We wear casual clothes when engaged in sports because we see it as a casual occasion. We wear casual clothes when taking out the garbage because we have a casual attitude toward the job. We wear casual clothes to worship the God of the universe because we have a ... ! (You supply the reason).

You are invited to attend where God is revered and not treated casually or as common.

God's People Are Distinctive

The great thrust of liberalism is to make the church become like the world around us. In a world so filled with sin and indifference to godliness, it is refreshing and uplifting to notice the distinctiveness of a faithful Christian. A true follower of Christ is:

Distinctive in speech – The Christian's speech is "sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:8). There is a noted void of profanity and vulgarities. He calls Bible things by Bible names (1 Peter 4:11). His language is the language of godliness, not worldliness.

Distinctive in doctrine – His consent is only "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Timothy 6:3). The Christian is greatly concerned about abiding only in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), and will teach no other doctrine than that which is authorized by the Lord (Galatians 1:6-8; Colossians 3:17).

Distinctive in worship – Historically, apostasy makes its inroads by changing the way in which man worships God. A true follower of Christ avoids the vain worship of teaching man's doctrines (Matthew 15:9). He also refuses will worship (Colossians 2:23), and he rejects the idea that man can worship God in ignorance (Acts 17:23). The Christian distinctively worships God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Distinctive in manner of life – A true follower of Christ always conducts himself in a manner which "becometh the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27). The Christian's modest apparel is distinctive from the world's dress (1 Timothy 2:8-10); his entertainment is unlike that of the world's; his priorities in all matters place Christ first.

What this world needs is more distinctiveness! "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

When Nobody Is Watching

It is easy to appear faithful when others are watching. The greater test of character is what we do when no one else can see us. Integrity means that our private life agrees with the faith we profess publicly.

Proverbs 15:3 reminds us, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." We may hide actions from people, but nothing is hidden from God. Our words, choices, motives, and thoughts are always before Him.

Hebrews 4:13 makes this truth even clearer, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." That should cause every Christian to examine the private areas of life. What do we watch? What do we say when certain people are absent? What choices do we make online? How do we behave when we believe no one will ever know?

Faithfulness is also seen in how we serve. Paul wrote, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men" (Colossians 3:23). Christians should not need applause, recognition, or supervision to do what is right. We serve faithfully because our ultimate Master is Christ. Joseph demonstrated this kind of integrity when he refused temptation in Genesis 39:9, asking, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" His concern was not merely being caught. His concern was sinning against God.

True faithfulness begins when we remember that God is always present. Live honestly when no one is watching. Speak carefully when no one repeats your words. Refuse temptation when no one would discover it. Serve faithfully when no one applauds. The Christian who lives for God in private will have little difficulty honoring Him in public.

Striving for the Crown

The apostle Paul wrote on the necessity of striving for the victorious crown, the one that "never perishes" (1 Cor. 9:25). Like

a respected coach in athletics, he urged the Corinthian brethren onto victory in Christ. What refreshing words of encouragement!

Now consider our souls in this matter. Would we take the attitude of our contemporaries in the world and submit to the idea that it is "too hard" being a Christian and therefore forfeit ever trying to live as one? This is a serious conclusion for anyone to make, yet many who refuse to turn to God's assuring Word do not understand the destiny of such a decision.

First of all, if God knew that it would be too hard for people to be a child of God, it would be an injustice on His part to have laid down the principles and commands in the New Testament. Instead, He states,

> There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

Rather than focusing on the "never win" attitude of the world, we should be girded with the strengthening and encouraging words of the apostle! It is with this positive and godly attitude that we can run in such a way to obtain the imperishable crown (9:24-25).

Will you strive for the crown or give up your soul?

Growing through Thankfulness

Thankfulness, studies show, has multiple physical, mental, and emotional benefits. Psychologist Robert Emmons calls gratitude "fertilizer for the mind" because of its powerful effects.

He admits gratitude isn't always easy, especially when life throws us curveballs (see the year 2020) but says it can be most helpful during and after difficulties. Emmons suggests reframing challenges using thankfulness-based language. Ask, for example: "Though I wasn't grateful for the experience at the time, how can I be now? What lessons did I learn, and how did I grow as a person?"

Throughout his letters, the apostle Paul reframes his extensive sufferings and urges us to do the same. "Give thanks in all circumstances," he writes, "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).