

## **The Two-fold Test**

As we begin, it is wise we take a quick look at a couple of of the events of this past week. First, several U.S. military bases were attacked in Syria and in Iraq. At least 24 U.S. servicemen were injured between the two locations. The U.S. has since launched airstrikes against the Iranian backed forces responsible for the attacks. Speculation is that this is in response to the United States support of the war in Israel against Hamas.

Second, Hurricane Oris, a category 5 hurricane, slammed into the Mexican resort town of Acapulco with winds of 165 MPH. Originally it was reported as a tropical storm approaching the Mexican coast. The storm rapidly intensified within a 24-hour period as it hit warmer waters near the coast. The news sources are blaming this phenomenon on “climate change.” This is the strongest storm to ever hit the area and one has never so rapidly intensified.

Sure... it is global warming or “climate change.” Sure... the military attacks are a spillover of the conflict in Israel. The media can and will blame whoever or whatever they choose. It does not matter. Is it any surprise? Not one bit.

**Matthew 24:7-13-** “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in *different* places. Now all these *things are* the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to affliction, and shall kill you; and you shall be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then shall many be led into sin, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another; And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many; And because lawlessness shall be multiplied, the love of many shall grow cold. But the one who endures to *the* end, that one shall be saved.”

It just may be possible that God is heating things up for a reason. Perhaps it is for His called to pay *even more attention to their spiritual condition*. This is not a gloom and doom message nor will there be any fire and brimstone. This will *simply* address the ways we can conform to His standards and be ready to face whatever comes our way.

Jesus tried to keep things simple for those who so *sincerely* choose to follow Him. He set the example, gave us His words and then He laid down His life to bring it all to fruition. We are His works in progress.

When I say *simple*, I do not mean easy. If you think that, you are in for a surprise and maybe not a pleasant one. Jesus made the Commandments easier to follow by giving us two as a reference for all ten.

**Matthew 22:36-40-** “Master, which commandment *is the* great commandment in the Law?” And Jesus said to him,” ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and greatest commandment; And *the* second *one is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The common problem is we forget all too often who we are in Him. Now as we read in the essay, not being surprised about various things or “unaffected” may seem cool to some. In reality for us, it is a state of spiritual assuredness we have by living God’s way of life. We can stand on His word and His promises. The things that may shock the world are really of no wonder to those who know His word and live by it.

When I was in law enforcement, we had a book containing the General Orders for policies, procedures, and conduct. Much like God’s Bible has for His followers, it outlined the way we were to “do things.”

We had a specific order for the use of firearms in a deadly force situation, that essentially eliminated the guess work of when an officer was permitted to use deadly force against a suspect.

Basically, it stated that an officer was permitted to use deadly force to protect himself or someone else against an *imminent* threat of death or serious bodily injury and the failure to use such deadly force would result in death or serious bodily injury to the officer or other person. Now I have been retired for nearly 8 years and this is paraphrased and not verbatim.

The essay alluded to how we interact with others and we can address these issues as they are all part of growing in the likeness Jesus Christ. Things will become easier if we do not overcomplicate trying to remember a laundry list of “attributes.” However, remembering (and living) scriptures is the ultimate goal.

### **Do it all for the Glory of God**

**1 Corinthians 10:31**- “Therefore, whether you eat, or you drink, or you do anything, do all things to the glory of God.”

Before we act, before we speak or confront someone, or any action displayed, are we doing it to glorify God? Will He be pleased with what we are doing, how we are doing it and will it show His love in us? Are we following the examples set by Jesus and does our actions and intent match the scriptures?

This is where I need the most work. Just driving this week or anytime in Naples's traffic for that matter is my true test. Maybe they should have a duct tape dispenser in cars for driving in Naples, at least my truck anyway.

**Ephesians 4:29-** “Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good and needful for edification that it may give grace to those who hear.”

I have probably invented descriptive words for my fellow motorists out there but how quickly I forget. How about dealing with strangers begging from you at the gas pumps? Yep, I need more work there as well.

**Hebrews 13:1-2-** “Let brotherly love be present *among you* continually. Do not forget to show hospitality; for by this some have unknowingly welcomed angels *as guests.*”

Hopefully there were no angels asking for gas money but you never know.

**Proverbs 12:16-18-** “A fool’s wrath is known at once, but a prudent *man* covers shame. *He who* speaks truth shows forth righteousness, but a false witness deceit.

There are those who speak like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals.”

**1 Peter 3:8-10-** “Now the goal *is that* all of you be of one mind, sympathizing, loving the brethren, compassionate and friendly; Not rendering evil for evil, or abuse for abuse, but instead a blessing, knowing that you were called to this: that you should inherit a blessing. For the one who desires to love life, and to see good days, let him restrain his own tongue from evil, and not allow his lips to speak deceit.”

Above and beyond, we are not to take offense to anything. This is quite difficult these days as the evil is constantly in your face. Now I did not say we are to be a welcome mat to unbelievers, I am speaking more in general to the things within the family of God. Even Jesus turned over tables in the temple.

**Matthew 21:12-13-** “And Jesus went into the temple of God and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple; and He overthrew the tables of the money exchangers, and the seats of those who were selling doves. Then He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer;’ but you have made it a den of thieves.”

Jesus did so with a righteous indignation. We are not to be spineless or wishy-washy when it comes to our faith. It may be tested from time to time and we must learn to have the faith to stand our ground. Especially within the body of Christ, His Church.

**Psalm 119:165-** “Great peace have those who love Your law, and there is no stumbling block (offense) for them.”

**Galatians 5:13-14-** “For you have been called unto freedom, brethren; only do not *use* this freedom for an occasion to the flesh; rather, serve one another with love. For the whole law is fulfilled in this *commandment*: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Definitely not an easy task.

## **Edify One Another**

Merriam-Webster defines “edify” as: to instruct and improve especially in moral and religious knowledge: uplift, also enlighten, inform.

In addition to step one of “are we glorifying God,” we need to keep in mind in our conversations and actions if we are edifying one another, especially withing the church.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**- “Therefore, encourage one another, and edify one another, even as you are already doing.”

There are several scriptures to keep in mind that guide us in good conduct with others. These provide a great checklist to remember to aid us in conforming our behavior.

**Romans 12:10**- “Be kindly affectioned toward one another in brotherly love. *Let* each esteem the other more highly than himself.”



Putting the needs and feelings of others ahead of our own, especially in the society we now live in is a rarity. “Gimme, gimme, I me, I me, seem to be the preferred vocabulary of the self-centered.

**Romans 15:1-2-** “Now we who are strong *in the faith* are obligated to support the ones who are weak, and not to please ourselves. Accordingly, let each one of us please *his* neighbor for good, unto edification;”

Asking for more faith comes with more responsibility. God will not permit any increase of it if it will be a hinderance to one’s spiritual growth in other areas.

There are many things we must do within ourselves necessary to proper spiritual growth. An increase in faith will not necessarily make us a more caring person.

Those of us who are strong in the faith are obligated to care for the weaker.

Overcoming the flesh with respect to pride and seeking to have the contrite heart is a wall that must be broken down.

**1 Corinthians 10:23-24-** “All things *that* are lawful *are permitted* to me, but not all things *that are permitted* are profitable. All things *that* are lawful *are permitted* to me, but all things *that are permitted* do not edify. Let no one seek that which *benefits* himself; but let each seek that which *benefits* the other.”

Once again, we must remember to see the needs of others above our own. Just because we think something is right, even if it is, does not give anyone permission to put himself above someone else. These qualities are primary within the church.

**1 Corinthians 14:12-** “In the same way, since you are desirous of spiritual gifts, seek *them* that you may abound for the edification of the church.”

We are all held to a higher standard, some more than others, depending on our roles within the church. No matter what role, we all have the same goal.

**Ephesians 4:11-13-** “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the body of Christ; Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ;”

We are God’s servants and Ambassadors for Christ. Keeping this in mind and Who we are serving may change our way of thinking or at least keep things in the proper perspective.

**2 Corinthians 6:3-4-** “We do not give offense to anyone in anything, so that the ministry may not be blamed; But in everything we are confirming ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses,”

**1 John 3:16-** “By this *very act* we have known the love *of God* because He laid down His life for us: and we ourselves are to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Uplift, enlighten and inform. When we do these things in dealing within our own brethren, we create an atmosphere of peace and joy. God is watching closely those who serve Him.

**Romans 14:17-19-** “For the kingdom of God is not a *matter* of eating and drinking; rather, *it is* righteousness and peace and joy in *the* Holy Spirit Because the one who serves Christ in these things *is* well pleasing to God and acceptable among men. So then, we should pursue the things of peace and the things that edify one another.”

We often used the K.I.S.S. principle in Special Operations. “Keep it simple, stupid.” This is a great rule to apply in our spiritual understanding and growth. We

need not complicate God's word and much like our General Orders, the easier something is, the easier it is to understand.

Our two-fold test for our actions and dealing with others is simplified if we remember to "glorify God" and "edify one another." If we fail to meet either of these standards, we should rethink our motive and perhaps simply be quiet. If both of these themes are met, we will be in right standing by God's standards. Being in harmony within God's church will bring us closer to Him and brighten those around us!

**2 Corinthians 13:11-13-** "In conclusion, brethren, rejoice! Be perfected; be encouraged; be of the same mind; be at peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send salutations to you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen."