

Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves

Joe Slater

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
—Matthew 10:16

In every aspect of life, Christians ought to behave wisely and responsibly. Let us concentrate now upon one particularly relevant issue: the spread of false information. Since we live in the “information age,” we are bombarded with messages, many of which simply are not true. For example, the rumor still surfaces periodically that Proctor & Gamble corporation promotes Satanism. P&G’s “moon and stars” logo was assumed by some fanatics to be Satanic. The chairman of the corporation was said to have appeared on the Phil Donahue show or on Sally Jesse Raphael, bragging about P&G’s support of Satanism. Of course no such appearance ever occurred. The company finally removed the logo, but that has not silenced the rumor-mongers.

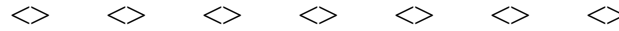
Then there is the ever-present false report that the atheists are trying to have all religious broadcasting removed from radio and television. Before the death of Madalyn Murray O’Hair, she was reported to have been granted a hearing by the Federal Communications Commission on petition #4293. The petition never existed, nor is there any evidence that O’Hair started the rumor; but no doubt she got a good laugh out of the millions of gullible believers who flooded the FCC with letters of protest year after year!

Why don’t such absurd rumors, with no foundation in fact, simply die? One reason is that well-meaning people (including some Christians) pass them on without bothering to fact-check. This seems doubly true with internet rumors. When something scandalous appears on the computer screen about a politician, actor, singer, or

some other celebrity, we’re inclined to believe it (especially if it is about someone we don’t like). Rather than carelessly spreading the rumor to others with a disclaimer like “I don’t know if this is true, but . . .”, follow the wise old adage: “When in doubt, check it out!”

Spreading false information wastes our time and makes us look foolish. Besides that, it is harmful to those who are smeared. I certainly understand why the folks at P&G and the FCC might be more than a little irked at foolish “Christians” who spread false rumors, even with the best of intentions. Bottom line: rumor-mongering is simply gossip. It is sinful, and those involved need to repent.

Let us be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.



Brief Facts about the Bible

The Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament contain the same material, but are divided differently. The Hebrew Bible contains 24 books divided into three sections: The Law with 5 books, the Prophets with 8 books, and the Writings with 11 books. The Christian Old Testament has 39 books in five sections: Law (5), History (12), Poetry (5), Major prophets (5), and Minor Prophets (12).

The Bible’s longest book is Psalms. The shortest in the Old Testament is Obadiah. The middle books of the Bible are Micah and Nahum.

The longest New Testament book by number of words is the gospel of Luke; Matthew and Acts tie for the most chapters at 28. The shortest New Testament book by number of words is Third John. Second John is shortest by number of verses.

--via House-to-House/Heart-to-Heart (adapted)

Resolutions for Religious People

⌘ Let’s quit hiring professionals to serve us, and personally become humble servants of Christ (Luke 9:23).

⌘ Let’s stop following a certain school’s position and take God’s word as truth (John 8:32).

⌘ Let’s stop pretending that preachers are inspired and are receiving direct revelation from God; let’s study God’s written word to personally know the truth (2 Timothy 3:16),

⌘ Let’s stop accepting the false notion that everyone is headed to heaven, and realize sinners need to convert to Christ (Matthew 7:13-21).

⌘ Let’s demand preaching that warns sinners of the condemnation of Hell (Matthew 3:7-10; 5:22; 10:28).

⌘ Let’s stop being manipulated by human traditions and doctrines, and abide in the doctrine of Christ (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17; John 1:9).

⌘ Let’s start taking our role as servants seriously, and realize we personally must surrender to the control of Christ (Romans 12:1; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 6:20).

⌘ Let’s stop being controlled by outside councils, conventions, conferences, and human creeds; let’s return to local, congregational leadership (Philippians 1:1; Acts 14:23).

⌘ Let’s ask our members to give their money at the local level to support evangelism and benevolence (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 2:44-47; 4:33-35).

⌘ Let’s exhort every believer to sincerely participate in the worship (John 4:24), not as a spectator, but as a priest of God (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Romans 12:1-2).

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