

## **Minding our Spiritual Manners**

### **Proper Behavior for God's Little Ladies and Gents**

**Pastor Kerry S. Doyal**

Let's face it, children are born little savages. Little boys and girls, as sweet as they are, do not start out fine little ladies and prim and proper gentlemen. They must be taught proper behavior: how to act, speak and conduct themselves in different social settings and situations.

For instance, they learn it is improper to bring one's picnic manners to a formal dinner. Likewise, nifty e-mail lingo and shorthand - LOL & L8OR- does not belong in Pap paw's death notice or one's wedding invitation.

To get along best in this world, avoiding offense as much as possible, it is important to know what is proper behavior and what is not.

Far more important though, for those of us in God's household, is the need to learn proper spiritual graces. When we are born the second time (John 3:1-16), we need to learn how God wants us to conduct ourselves – spiritual manners if you please.

Being redeemed little savages, we are ignorant of the proper expressions of our inner desires and drives. We need to know what is appropriate for fitting conversation and conduct.

As we relate to others, we must know God's behavioral expectations of those claiming to be in His kingdom, as well as what awaits those who are not family.

These spiritual manners are most important since it is God more than anyone that we want to avoid offending and insulting. Note what this section from Ephesians has to say about proper behavior by dealing with several areas of improper behavior.

*“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

*“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” Eph. 5:3-6 (NIV)*

Giving way to improper passions such as sexual immorality, moral impurity and greed are not to even be hinted at as part of the lives of God's people. It is not proper spiritual behavior (vs. 3).

Nor is conversation that is obscene, foolish, foul, demeaning or demoralizing. Rotten talk is not to be part of our lives (see Eph. 4:29).

Instead, our talk is to be filled with the giving of thanks (vs. 4). Indeed, those who consistently "walk and talk" with such crude spiritual manners show that they are not part of Christ's kingdom (vs. 5; see also 1 John 2:9-11 & 3:1-10).

Regardless of the many pleadings today for tolerance of sinful living, God's wrath will indeed come to those who live spiritually improper lives of unchecked passions (vs. 6; see also Rom. 1:16-20; John 3:36; 5:24).

In a day of slack manners, crude behavior and people ignorant of proper conduct, it would not hurt us to learn more of the social graces.

Yet, a far greater need in our day of unchecked living and unclean lips is to live proper lives of fitting conduct as God's holy people (see Isaiah 6).

While social customs change over time, God's standards are fixed and eternal. They are not determined by ever-shifting culture, changes of technology or philosophy.

Instead, His ways are rooted in His very nature, which does not change (see 1 Peter. 1:13-2:1; Heb. 12:8; Lev. 11:44, 45). God is immutable - unchanging.

As we seek to live a life of love, imitating God as His dearly loved children (Eph. 5:1, 2), let's seek to change to be more like Him in every way. His passions are always holy and controlled and His speech is always befitting of Him.

Let's behave as citizens of His kingdom, into which we gain entrance by His grace as we place our faith in His risen Son (Eph. 2:1-10).

Not being selfish – which is very bad form - let's tell others of His grace, as we warn them of the certain coming wrath of our holy and just God (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:1; 2 Thess. 1:8-10; Heb. 13:4-6; Rev. 21:8).

God wants to use His redeemed and spiritually refined ruffians to point others to our gracious God. He loves to forgive, cleanse and change each of us, even the most spiritually crude and ill mannered (read and meditate on these passages: 1 Timothy 1:9-17; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; Titus 2:11-14 & 3:3-8).

God alone can make a silk purse out of pig's ear. If you don't believe it, and you are one of His children, go look in the mirror. So, for Christ's honor and other's sake, let us keep our spiritual pinkies up, little dearies.