

Following the Signs

As I drive around Wichita Falls lately I cannot help but notice the plethora of local church groups that are sending their children out to stand on street corners and ask passers by for money for what they call either “church camps” or “Christian youth camps.” What has struck me the most about this is the many not so subtle messages that these young people present as they walk the medians with their signboards.

The first message I get is the most obvious one. These young people are sent out to ask for money wearing placards scrawled with the name of a local church, typically Baptist, to gather money for an activity that has nothing to do with the worship of God or the purpose of the church. Let us first consider the fact that Christ gave Himself up for the church that it should be holy and without blemish, *Ephesians 5:25-27*. *Ephesians 3:9-11* tells us that the church is not an accident or an afterthought, but it is an entity that was planned by God before time began. The church has a specific purpose, it is the pillar and ground of the truth *1 Tim 3:15* and the power of that truth can set us free from sin *John 8:32*. Yet, from the groups of young people on the street corners we get the idea that the church is about entertainment and its purpose is subject to the thoughts of men rather than God.

The next thought crossing my mind as I drove by with the air conditioning on high is how hot it must be on that pavement as I notice the thermometer on my rear-view mirror says it is 98 degrees. This thought is punctuated by the very obvious young woman walking the length of one of the medians in a tube-top and mini skirt carrying her sign for the Grace Baptist Church. In a recent lesson, John talked about modesty and we studied the garments made for Adam and Eve as well as the instructions given to Moses as to how the priests should dress themselves and “cover the flesh of their nakedness,” *Exodus 28:42-43*. Paying close attention to verse 43 of Exodus 28 shows that not following the instruction for covering themselves as instructed would have resulted in being in a state of iniquity, and penalty for such is death. The organization that these young people represented as they made their plea for aid is recognized by the secular world as a religious body, and these young people were making a statement with their dress. The statement being made is that it is ok to dress as those of the world and to uncover our bodies as they do, after all it’s hot out here!

The third thought to cross my mind as I drove away and could still see the large group of young people in my rear-view mirror was that they simply don’t understand how or why the church was to raise funds. *1 Corinthians 16:1-2* clearly states that the collection to be made was for the saints and was to be taken up on the first day of the week. It was not intended to be solicited at any other time or for any other purpose and it certainly was not commanded in order to send

our children to have a good time at a camp. I don't need to expound much upon this point as it becomes quite clear upon reading what God's word has to say about the collection and its purpose.

Having said these things I realize that we have a great deal of work to do here in Wichita Falls as the children of God and as such are charged with delivering the word of life to this community. The young people that I have written about in this short article obviously won't be hearing the truth from the so-called religious organization that put them out on those street corners. We all feel pain when a young person meets with an early death; what about the thousands of young people in Wichita Falls who are dying or dead spiritually? Brethren, we have a great deal of work to do! Galatians 6:9-10 encourages us thusly:

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Let us take up this attitude and do well, boldly teaching the truth and in so doing we will do good unto those whom we teach. Once again there is much work to do, so let's get busy.