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Ethics Between Fundamentalists

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“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (I Cor 15:33).

“Ethics Between Fundamentalists” may seem to be a strange title for an article in a seminary journal, and yet with all my heart I believe it is one of the most needful things between Fundamental pastors that I see in America today.

We ought to answer several questions as we look at this topic. (1) Is the Lord really concerned about how I behave with my brother? (2) Has God set down a set of principles for our behavior toward each other? (3) Does it matter to the lost how I behave toward my brother?

The definition of the word ethics: (1) Webster: a. Moral action b. The moral systems of a particular school c. Rules of conduct; (2) Arndt & Gingrich: The habit of purity; (3) Vincent: Manners, morals, and conduct.

Defining the Areas of Ethics

There are many areas where Fundamental pastors come in contact with each other and certainly in these areas we ought to be concerned about our moral, spiritual and ethical behavior. Let's look at just the following areas:

1. Taking in members of another Fundamental church without ever notifying the pastor or asking why they are leaving his church;
2. Taking students from another Christian Day School that have been expelled or who are being disciplined, or who are upset with the standards.

3. Soliciting money from another church's members to build a new building or other projects, without the knowledge of the pastor of that church.

4. Starting a new church very near to another independent, Fundamental Baptist church.

5. Taking in members from another church who are under discipline of that church.

6. Using other pastors' materials which they have prayed and studied and slaved over without their permission.

7. Contacting an assistant pastor for his consideration of moving away from his present position without first contacting the pastor with whom he works.

Description of the Harm Done by Unethical Actions

When pastors take, are greedy, and self-centered, it causes irreparable harm to the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the local assemblies.

1. **It develops pastoral greed.** Like the robbers with the Good Samaritan, they say, "what's yours is mine, if I can get it." They will take members and students and money. They will take anything as long as it is of personal profit to them and their church.

2. **It shows a pastoral superiority.** When members are taken from other Fundamental churches without contacting their pastor, what you are saying is, I am better than he; I am smarter than he; I am more spiritual than he; they want me more than they want him.

3. **It teaches an unbiblical method of church growth.** The New Testament says, go and SEEK, not go and TAKE. Instead of going out and evangelizing and making disciples, some pastors fill their churches with other pastors' members and then brag about their growth.

4. **It teaches the flock that the end justifies the means.** This is what is called Jesuit casuistry. When members see a pastor doing this to other Fundamental brethren, why shouldn't they do it to each other?

5. **It demonstrates to the sheep that whenever they have a problem, they should run rather than stay and solve it.** When pastors take members in from other churches that are running from problems, from discipline or from standards, they teach those people to run rather than stay and face their problems.

6. **It destroys fellowship** between fundamental brethren in fundamental churches and families. Distrust, anger, wrath,

The New Testament says go and seek, not go and take.

broken fellowship are all a result of Fundamentalists not having good ethics between themselves.

The Declaration of God's Word for Biblical Ethics

1. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

2. "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

3. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

4. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Proverbs 15:27).

5. "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work" (Jeremiah 22:13).

6. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Conclusion

It is an absolute fact that Fundamentalists are going to be close enough together to touch and that touching should be for good and not evil. As you take God's ethics from the Bible and treat your brother like God wants you to treat him, like Jesus Christ Himself would treat him, then you begin to show people what kind of Christian you really are. Our ethics, or our lack of ethics, show many things.

1. **Ethics show your spiritual state**, whether you are led by the Spirit or controlled by the flesh.

2. **They show your earthly goals**, whether to glorify the Lord or have the biggest church and the most popularity.

3. **It shows whether you have the fear of God**, which is the beginning of wisdom, or if you stand in the praise of men.

4. **It shows your love for God's Word and obedience to it**, or your love for yourself and the building of your own kingdom.

5. It shows your relationship to men. Do you really love men, or do you fear men and want their praise? "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).

The Lord is concerned how we behave toward our brother. God has set down principles by which we should have good and godly behavior between each other. It does matter to the world how we treat our brother because Jesus said, "By this shall all men know ye are my disciples if ye have love one toward another" (Matthew 5:16).

Ethics among Fundamentalists—do we need them? We surely do. It is tough enough and difficult enough to start a church, to see it grow, to send missionaries out, send young people to the field, make a budget, have consistent soul-winning. It is hard enough to have the world, the flesh, and the devil against you, but when Christian brothers are also against you, it makes the task so much more difficult. Like Paul said, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:15). Brethren, let's go to the Word of God and not only get the great doctrines of creation, salvation, the church, eschatology; let's get a set of biblical principles by which we shall deal with each other.