

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## WHOM AM I TO AVOID?

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A common phrase used by those encouraging mental health is, “*avoid negative people.*”. Psychologists usually have in mind those who either ignore or oppose suggestions from others. They are the ones who seem to always put a damper on some new program of work saying, “it will never work.”. People full of positive energy can be quickly drained of enthusiasm to accomplish something good by being around a person who is constantly denying and diminishing everything that is before them. So, the Psychologists encourage us to avoid people permeating such negativism.

Our Lord directs us to avoid certain people. This is where the adjectives change from psychology to New Testament Christianity. For example, our Lord never instructs us to “avoid negative people”. But “factious” and “divisive” people are clearly marked by our Lord as that which is to be avoided.

“*A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse*” (Titus 3:10). The word “factious” describes the “self-seeking” ambitious person who

desires to form a party around his way of thinking. He is “self-willed” instead of being concerned in the revealed “Lords -will”. Admonitions showing such a one where his way of thinking is contrary to the truth of God’s word must be attempted by the faithful. Then, the obstinate thinking person having faced the truth of God’s word and not moved to change his way of thinking, must be avoided. The warning process manifests the following truth: “knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth and is self-condemned” (Titus 3:11).

Brethren who refuse to repent of their sins, and continue to live lives contrary to the commandments of the Lord must be “withdrawn” from in the face of their defiance. Such sins may take the form of living in “adultery” or refusing to “work” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). The drastic measure of not even eating with such a person must be carried out by the faithful. Such action is designed by the Lord to cause one to “turn in” on ones self, in “shame” (2 Thessalonians 3:14). Only then is there hope for repentance and the change in one’s life from sin to holiness.

People who cause divisions by teaching and practicing things contrary to the doctrine revealed by Christ must be exposed and avoided. Paul writes, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them*” (Romans 16:17). The condemned divisiveness, and the occasions of stumbling are not caused by the teaching and practice of truth, but by that which is contrary or opposed to the doctrine, which the inspired apostle says “was learned.” We are not to encourage those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ to us with our endorsements or hospitality (2 John 9-11). If we do, the Lord says we are having fellowship with the person’s evil works.

A person who opposes thinking and actions because they are contrary to God’s word is not the “negative person” we are to avoid. Such effort to deny and diminish error is necessary for maintaining fellowship with God— always a positive concept and goal.