

My Clothes Got in the Way!

by David Wilkerson

David Wilkerson shares a personal lesson about the importance of mercy and kindness alongside purity and holiness in the Christian life.

Scripture: Proverbs 21:21, Micah 6:8, Matthew 5:7, Luke 6:36, Romans 15:1, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:12, James 3:17, 1 Peter 3:8

Topics: "Compassion", "Mercy"

Description

David Wilkerson shares a transformative experience from his early evangelistic days, where he confronted a group of young Christian hippies about their appearance, only to be told that his attire obstructed their view of Jesus. This encounter taught him that while purity and sanctification are important, they must be accompanied by mercy, grace, and kindness. He reflects on the misconception that merely abstaining from sin is sufficient, emphasizing that true Christian living involves embodying the qualities of gentleness and compassion as outlined in James 3:17. Wilkerson's lesson serves as a reminder to prioritize love and understanding over judgment.

Transcript

I remember as a young evangelist preaching at a crusade before 5,000 people in Los Angeles. At least 2,000 of those people were Christian hippies. They had just been born again and were brought out of the hippie culture. Many of these young people lay sprawled before me on the floor, barefoot, wearing long hair and tattered clothes.

That night I was dressed in a spiffy blue blazer with a sharp tie, the latest bell-bottom slacks and shiny shoes. When I took the stage, I started railing on those kids. I said, "Some of you look awful. Put on some decent clothes and get a haircut before you come back tomorrow night!"

Backstage after the service, I was met by a delegation of those long-haired, young hippie Christians. One of them ran his fingers down my fashionable coat collar and said, "What a beautiful suit." Then he looked up at me and said, "Brother David, we couldn't see Jesus tonight."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Your clothes got in the way," he replied. I had considered them to be too dressed down -- and they had considered me to be too dressed up.

Those kids were not making fun of me. They were sincere. They wept as they told me, "We believe you're a man of God, but you're missing something." I know now that it was mercy I lacked. I never railed on that subject again. God taught me a hard lesson, one I pray remains in my heart.

Let me say this: Many Christians think it is enough to be pure and sanctified. We think that is the number-one issue and that all we need to do is abstain from evil, come out from the world and remain clean. As long as we don't smoke, drink, fornicate or commit adultery, we think we are pure.

No one has preached stronger messages on holiness and purity over the years than I have. But according to James, purity is merely the first matter of concern: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Yes, first we are to be clean. But mercy, grace and kindness are to follow.

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