

## The Imitation of Christ

From Ronald L. Dart's *Born to Win* Notes, written by Allie Dart

Years ago, when I was in charge of a small college, we had a dress code. It was far short of wearing a uniform, and had to do with things such as haircuts for the guys and modesty for the girls. Most students complied and got on with more important things like their studies. But some complained that we were making them into yellow pencils—all of them just alike.

When I heard that, I had to laugh. But it is not surprising, given the psychology of young people who are searching for identity and self-expression. Having spent four years in the Navy, where we not only wore uniforms, we had to maintain a short haircut and shine our shoes, I wondered what all the hullabaloo was about.

Even the NFL has rules about tucked-in shirts on the football field. So I wondered what was going on in the minds of those young people. Having been young once upon a time, I can recall two warring emotions that I personally experienced:

- The desire to be free of restraint, to express myself as an individual.
- The desire to be accepted by my fellows.

It is an age-old conflict between the desire to conform and the need not to conform. I don't think some young people understand what it means to be part of a team and how individuality is demonstrated by performance, not appearance. Young people have two avenues to follow to help with this. Sports and military service. In football, I learned that fullbacks, even though they wear the same uniform as wide receivers, are built differently. Everyone on the field is dressed the same, but the parts are not interchangeable. A 300-pound offensive lineman is no pass receiver.

In the Navy, when they sound general quarters, or battle stations, you learn very quickly that all the parts are not interchangeable even

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though the clothes are the same. Everything is team work. And, to the knowledgeable eye, there are little insignia that tell you what a man can do and what he has done. It is the shape of a man inside that counts, not the clothes he wears or the length of his hair. But it may be that outward things need to conform to the team.

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### ***Make a Difference. . .***

If you're looking for new ministry opportunities, consider CEM and the *Born to Win* broadcast. It would be hard to find a more productive place to invest your donations. Among our greatest financial challenges are large broadcasting expenses. Every dollar helps in getting the Gospel out. We invite you to share in this ministry and participate in making a real difference! If you are interested in changing people's lives and spreading the Gospel, you can make automatic monthly contributions to CEM. Please contact Paula Hughes via email at [PaulaHughes@borntowin.net](mailto:PaulaHughes@borntowin.net) for more information.

# Reconciled to God

Taken from *The Thread, God's Appointments With History*,  
by Ronald L. Dart, article written by Allie Dart

Not long ago, in a discussion that followed a worship service, the conversation made its way to Judgment Day. Much to my surprise, three ministers in the group felt that because they had repented of their sins prior to baptism, that was good enough, and they would not have to stand on that sea of glass and face Jesus Christ for the sins they committed after baptism. We can settle that argument and find the biblical answer in Ronald Dart's book, *The Thread, God's Appointments With History*.

"Most of what you hear about Judgment Day owes more to the imagination of man than to the Bible. . . As Paul said, 'It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment' (Hebrews 9:27).

"One can only wonder why something so meaningful in the plan of God, and so firmly connected to biblical holidays, is so consistently neglected across Christendom. Every one of these 'Jewish' holidays is a festival showing forth the life, work, plan, and ministry of Jesus Christ. The fact that most Christians have forgotten them in favor of holidays that are not in the Bible notwithstanding, these days are crucial to understanding the plan of God.

"So, what do we know about Judgment Day? Earlier, we looked at what Jesus had to say

about it. On the first occasion where he sent his disciples out on their own, he told them where to go, where not to go, and what to do and say. On this journey, they were to take no money. They were to depend entirely on the hospitality of the people of the town. Then Jesus told them that whatever house or city they entered where the people would not listen, they were to leave and to shake the dust off their feet. 'Assuredly, I say to you,' Jesus said, 'it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!' (Matthew 10:15).

"Now it is hard to imagine any place more corrupt than Sodom and Gomorrah and yet we find the curious fact that there may be some greater level of tolerance for them in the day of judgment than for some other city! There is a day of judgment and there are distinctions to be made. And we should make no mistake. If there is reason why a person should have known better, there isn't going to be very much slack. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, but apparently it can be mitigating on the day of judgment. On yet another occasion Jesus chastised his audience and warned, 'But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment' (Matthew 12:36)."

It sends a little chill down your spine, doesn't it? There is not

one of us who has not spilled out words that we later wish we hadn't said. But if every slip of the lip is going to be judged, what about some of our more serious crimes? Every idle word, not just the malicious words, will be judged.

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## Are You a Sheep or a Goat?

When I was in real estate, I went to a dentist's house one night to put it on the market. He was a devout Christian. I learned in the conversation that he attended the Rose Heights Church of God that was founded about the time as the Sabbath-keeping church I attended. In less than ten years the church the dentist attended had nearly 5000 people attend their worship service and we had maybe 200. I was taken aback by the success of this church and asked the dentist why he thought the Rose Heights Church of God had grown so fast. He immediately said it was because the people were a caring people and took care of those who came through their doors.

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Funny thing about people. We seem to have a need to conform to something or someone. Children, for example, are great imitators. It is how they learn. One day I was walking across campus behind a fellow faculty member who, because of an old injury, walked with a peculiar, bowlegged gait. Alongside him was his very young son who, although he had nothing wrong with his legs, was walking exactly like his dad.

The curious thing about it is that this childhood tendency doesn't go away. You can walk through the mall and see it if you are looking. You see it in store windows and in people walking through the mall. For me, one of the most dramatic illustrations was a shop window filled with designer jeans. Every one of them looked like a Salvation Army reject. They had holes in them, had been distressed to look worn and faded, and they cost in excess of \$70. I wondered, what on earth are these young people conforming to?

A psalm comes to mind, and I often think of it when sitting in an airport watching people. Psalm 39:6: "Surely, every man walks in a vain show." Every man walks in an image. It is my desire that more young people, in particular, could come to understand that there is a higher standard of conformity. Paul told the Romans in chapter 12:1-2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer

your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV).

It is worthwhile to ask what you are conforming to. Paul doesn't merely speak of conforming. He speaks of transforming. Here is an interesting contrast to help with your understanding: Conform: to give the same shape, outline, or contour to; bring into harmony or accord. Transform: to change in composition or structure; to change the outward form or appearance of; to change in character or condition.

So, how does a man get from here to there? You need this *Born to Win* program titled, *Imitation of Christ*, to shed great light on the problem and to help you imitate Christ in every aspect of your life. This becomes more crucial with every passing day. People and our nation are suffering as never before: floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, unprecedented droughts with record-breaking temperatures resulting in raging wildfires. Don't you think God is trying to tell us something? Don't you think we need to conform to his image? Return the enclosed card to request your copy today.



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I've given that a lot of thought over the years and have wondered if this Sunday-keeping church had the keys we are missing. If so, what would those keys entail and how could we get them? Was the key having a lady assigned to purchase a box of assorted greeting cards — sympathy, get well, birthday, congratulations, etc., and pass the appropriate card around for all the brethren to sign? When she put the stamp on the envelope and put the card in the mail, had they fulfilled their Christian duty? Had people flocked to their church because they got a card signed by people in their church? Or is there more to being a proactive Christian? Does it require a hands-on touch, where you literally show up, show genuine love, and do something useful? What did Jesus have to say about this?

"When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation.' And here's why:

"I was hungry and you fed me.  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.

I was homeless and you gave me a room.

I was shivering and you gave me clothes,

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I was sick and you stopped to visit.

I was in prison and you came to me.

“Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you? Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’

“Then he will turn to the ‘goats’ the ones on his left, and say, ‘Get out, worthless goats! You’re good for nothing but the fires of hell.’ And why? Because—

“I was hungry and you gave me no meal.

I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,

I was homeless and you gave me no bed,

I was shivering and you gave me no clothes,

Sick and in prison, and you never visited.

“Then those ‘goats’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and didn’t help?’

“He will answer them, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was

me—you failed to do it to me.’

“Then those ‘goats’ will be herded to their eternal doom, but the ‘sheep’ to their eternal reward” (Matthew 25:31-46, *The Message*).

Brethren, this is hands-on, proactive Christianity—you get your hands dirty. You give of your time and your money. You make a sacrificial investment in your brothers and sisters—in people. But how?

All you have to do is go to a hospital or nursing home and you’ll see plenty of people you can help in the name of your Savior, Jesus Christ. These peoples’ needs will vary. Some of them may need you to sit with a sick loved one while the caregiver goes home, takes a shower and gets some rest. If the sick or elderly person is home, taking a pot of soup, casserole dish, or even a loaf of bread made in your breadmaker (how much trouble is that?), can be an enormous help. A woman caregiver will find a man’s help in doing the “honey-do” projects around the house invaluable. Calling the caregiver before grocery shopping to pick up a few needed items can be an enormous help as well. Put yourself in the shoes of the sick person and/or the caregiver. Think about what you would need and what you would hope someone with a servant’s heart would do to help you. You should be able to think of a long list of things you can do.

This is down-to-earth Christianity that built the Rose Heights Church of God, contrasted with the passive Christian too self-

centered or important to get involved in making someone’s life just a little better. Keep in mind the Bible says “as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me” (Matthew 25:45 RSV). Is it worth the effort? Those who don’t do these things “will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (v. 46). You have the opportunity to make your church a “caring church” and to gain an eternal reward. What will you do about it? Just send a card, or get busy caring for the needs of God’s people? Make no mistake, it’s a delight to receive a card from a friend and it may be the best you can do. But look around you and ask, “Who needs help and can I do more?” There is no shortage of people who need help. Will you get to know people, get involved in helping, and insure your reward in the Kingdom? Or will you be one of the goats herded to eternal doom, while the “sheep” get their eternal reward?

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proficient and equipped for  
every good work.*