

WHAT DOES THE WORLD SEE WHEN THEY LOOK AT THE CHURCH?

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If you see a man in a long black coat, with a white shirt and a black tie and a beard, there is a good chance that he is an Orthodox Jew. If you see someone who is Amish or a Mennonite, there is a good chance you will recognize them as well, because of the way they are dressed. There are other religious groups who dress a certain way that distinguishes them from the rest of the world. I don't write this to place stereotypes on these or any other religions, but to simply point out that religious groups are often identified by their behavior and appearances.

How are Christians recognized? What is the world supposed to see whenever they look at the church?

John 13:34-35 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." NLT

Jesus said that the way the world would know that we are His disciples is by our love for one another. Not by how we dress. Not by our church attendance. Not by our giving. Not by good deeds. By our love.

It is sad, but true, many people don't go to church today because they have seen just the opposite of what Jesus said they should be seeing. Instead of love, many have seen hate. Instead of unity, many have witnessed division.

1 Cor 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

Many are deceived today, saying that they love God, yet hating their brother.

1 John 4:20-21 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

John says that our love for others is not just a sign for others but also to ourselves. Love is how we know that we have passed from "death to life."

1 John 3:14-16 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Again, what does the world see whenever they look at the church? What do they see whenever they look at you and me? I hope and pray that they see love.