



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

May 26, 2019

The Myth of the White Hat

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." —John 8:31-32; 34-36

Back in grade school, my hero was a cowboy named Roy Rogers. I understand that he and his wife were both devout Christians and role models of moral integrity. They stood for right and fought against evil. Their weekly TV sagas reinforced essential values that gave moral clarity to me and to everyone else in American society. In half an hour every week, the man with the white hat foiled the schemes of the liar, cheat, thief, or murderer wearing a black hat. Kids like me were entertained and instructed.

Children need this kind of instruction. Families and society benefit when entertainment offers moral clarity and a clear understanding of right and wrong, based on universal standards of truth. In America, the Bible played a central role in defining the truth that everyone adhered to, or at least felt we should follow. The years when I grew up were a kind of golden age of American ideals—days many long to return to. Good guys always beat bad guys, just like America did in World War Two. It's funny how we always identify ourselves as the "good guys."

It's essential to identify with the moral ideals we strive for. But moral integrity demands honesty and constant vigilance to be sure we're honestly doing what's right. Jesus' famous command, "*Judge not, that you be not judged,*" doesn't mean it's wrong to judge. It means we need to judge ourselves first, since we ourselves will stand before God in judgment. God's Word is a two-edged sword that cuts both ways. It judges us as well as others—the "Good guys" and "bad guys" alike.

Honest judgment messes with our hats. The truth is, our "white hat" is dingier than we like to think, and those guys with black hats aren't always as bad as we'd like to think. I came of age just as America was confronting its own sins—institutional racism, self-serving foreign policy, inconsistent application of the principles of democracy, hypocrisy in our personal and national standards. Moral honesty hurts. It's healthy but hard to swallow.

It's so easy to take pride in our high standards yet ignore our persistent lapses. We know standards are important but deny our inability to live up to them. We hide from the truth of who we really are and adjust our standards so we look better. Life's more livable that way. "Nobody's perfect," we say, hoping we won't be held accountable—won't be judged. Funny. We hide from the truth about ourselves and call that freedom.

But clinging to a lie is anything but freedom. The ugly truth is that everything we do is fraught with sin—even our best moral efforts. The Bible does more than reveal God's perfect standards. It exposes our wicked hearts, self-serving motives, and moral depravity. It forces us confront the connection between our brokenness and the sin in our lives. Like surgery, God's truth causes pain in order to bring healing.

One thing on earth sets us free to face the healing truth—the grace of God in Jesus Christ. No longer condemned for our sin, we can now see ourselves honestly, because our sin died with Christ on the cross and no longer controls us. We rose with Christ at His resurrection, so now we're free to live in harmony with God and each other, as He intended. No longer slaves to sin.

Putting on a white hat doesn't turn us into good guys. Only Christ does that. No amount of men in white hats will save our nation. The Son of Man, God the Son, has conquered sin. Christ sets people free indeed. Ask Him to lead you to someone you can lead to Him for eternal salvation, and see what He does. He's mighty to save.

For the praise of His glory.

The Gospel Truth

There's a difference between believing that Jesus rose from the dead and trusting in the living Christ. Our faith is more than intellectual assent to a particular set of ideas. We were saved when we trusted Christ to forgive our sin, and we walk by faith that He cleanses, enables, and provides for us every day.

There's a difference between agreeing with the faith *once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3) and believing that Jesus is mighty to save. The "Church Militant" advances by winning souls to Christ. No soul can be compelled to trust Him for salvation. Everyone must choose to trust Jesus as Savior, and God is the one who accomplishes that miracle.

God has chosen us as Christians to proclaim salvation in His name. He calls us to speak out in faith that He will work through His saints as we tell others that Jesus died for their sins. Being a moral example and setting a Scriptural standard is essential for us as Christians. But the Good News is that Jesus saves, and Jesus alone.

Pray for boldness and guidance in telling others about Jesus and His love. Pray for faith that He will save others through the Gospel, as you tell it to them. Faith overcomes the world. That's a fact, the hope of the world, and it's the Gospel Truth.

Pray for our pastors and elders to lead us forward in faith. Pray for ...

1. **Our Pastors and Directors:** Scott Williams, Tony Chute, Taylor Mendoza, Terilyn Brown, Geoff Grant, and Marti Wiegman.
2. **Our Lay Elders:** Tim East, Steve Flood, Mark Kiker, Mike Russell, Vinoj Zechariah, and new elders who come onto the board.
3. **Our Church Staff:** Michelle Balga, Bob Brown, Andria Brucks, Chelsae Grant, Carolee Jefferson, Amber McEwen, Tamene Menna, Mark Norland, Corie Saunders, and Teri Vaughn.

Praise Record

Note when and how God answers your prayers. It will help you to see that He really is paying attention.

Date	Request	Date	Answer

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.
 -1st Peter 2:16