

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

We must refuse to relate to society with self-righteousness or spiritual condescension.

This month there are so many noteworthy issues to comment on that I decided to touch on several. My response to them is indicated by a “thumbs up” or a “thumbs down.” All are important for Christians to be aware of.

Thumbs up. To Jack Hayford and a group of 50 other charismatic leaders who issued a list of affirmations in January that declared their renewed sensitivity to several key points, including “the potential of an aware and awakened church to influence a ... renaissance of values in America.”

These men and women also acknowledged the need for church leaders to, among other things, influence others to commit to:

1. “embrace ethical and moral values ... so as to earn the right to be heard by the wider culture and effectively bear witness to the values we espouse”
2. “proclaim a holistic understanding of the gospel in our society as it relates to the upholding of both behavioral morals and institutional justice”
3. “refuse to relate to society with self-righteousness or spiritual condescension.”

For a copy of the entire document, issued as The 2005 Affirmations of the Charismatic Leadership Council, and to sign a statement agreeing with it, go to

Thumbs up. To Time magazine, which featured in its Feb. 7 issue 25 leaders designated as the most influential

evangelicals in America. Time included in its list four people widely known to be charismatics—T.D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Ted Haggard and yours truly—as well as other leaders whose charismatic side is not as public.

Thumbs down. While charismatics were enjoying a little good press, Doug Wead was being criticized for secretly tape-recording phone conversations with George W. Bush when he was governor of Texas and releasing them just as Wead's new book was being released. Though some critics of the president may have hoped the tapes would make him look bad, they instead made Wead look unethical and greedy.

Wead's position on the staff of President George H.W. Bush's administration helped bring evangelicals to the attention of Washington politicians. But his recent record shows he no longer speaks for this group.

Nevertheless, news commentators highlighted the fact that Wead is a former Assemblies of God (AG) minister. Wead has had no AG credentials for nearly two decades, but his unethical recording and release of the tapes reflected badly on all of us.

Thumbs down. To Bill Moyers, the liberal TV commentator who claimed that James Watt, former secretary of the interior under President Reagan, said, "After the last tree is felled, Christ will come back"—implying that evangelical Christians aren't concerned about the environment because Jesus is coming back soon.

To Moyers' credit, he later apologized to Watt for misquoting him. In a letter Watt sent us, Moyers said he should have done

his homework rather than quoting other sources who erroneously quoted Watt.

At about the same time, the National Council of Churches USA released an open letter calling on Christians to repent of “our social and ecological sins”—specifically, exploiting the earth’s resources for our own ends. The council claims that Christians believe we don’t have to care for the environment because when Christ returns, the world will end, anyway.

Shame on this group for not knowing better! But because evangelicals have been mostly absent from the debate on environmental issues, we are an easy target for those who don’t know what we truly do believe.

Thumbs up. To the readers of Charisma and the other magazines we publish for giving more than \$230,000 to the victims of the Dec. 26 tsunami. This is the greatest outpouring of support for any effort we have backed. Ministries Today managing editor Matthew Green visited southeast Asia to see how the money was distributed through the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka and came back with a good report, which you will be able to read in the next issue of Charisma.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.