

WWJD Bracelets

by John Cleveland, Jr.

We believe that WWJD bracelets are not appropriate attire for the Reformed Christian to wear. This idea for the saying “What Would Jesus Do,” originated in 1886 by Charles Sheldon in his novel, *In His Steps*. The main character in this book wanted the world to be a better place, so he came up with the saying “What Would Jesus Do,” hoping it would make the world a better place in which to live. It hasn’t been until recent years that the initials WWJD have been put on a bracelet for people. Since then these bracelets have been selling by the millions worldwide, with 14 million being sold in the United States alone.

Why are these bracelets something that the Reformed Christian should not be wearing? The following are a few negative arguments. First, they are a temptation to idolatry. Someone is guilty of idolatry when he trusts in anything else besides God for his salvation and protection. Proof for this is found in L.D. 34 Q and A 95, where the question is asked, “What is idolatry?” The answer, “Idolatry is, instead of, besides that one true God, who has manifested himself in his word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust.” Many who wear these bracelets claim that they will help them from falling into sin. If one trusts in a bracelet to help him, he is guilty of idolatry. This is a violation of the first and second commandments. This is not to say that everyone who wears these bracelets is guilty of idolatry, but rather that there is a strong temptation to fall into the sin of idolatry and therefore they should not be worn.

Secondly, there is a problem with the question, “What Would Jesus Do?” When one asks the question, “What Would Jesus Do?” he asks that question as if Jesus is not there. Jesus is all around us. He is omnipresent by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the question is not proper. We should rather be considering the question of “What has Jesus done for me?” and “What does my Savior command me to do to show my thankfulness to him?” And also, “What is He doing right now within me?” These are the things we should be constantly considering.

There are people who wear these bracelets because they truly think that it helps them live godly lives. There are also those who wear them because everybody else does. By wearing these bracelets, one associates himself with the Arminians and other hypocrites who promote evil doctrine while wearing these bracelets. Here is a sample of something that a person wrote that was found on the Internet.

“I thought those bracelets were cool at first but now they’ve just become a fashion thing. It’s like now it’s just something you wear if you’re a Christian...and the sad thing is that even non-Christians are wearing them too (even though some probably don’t even know that the WWJD stands for let alone the concept).if you ask me they’ve lost their value and meaning...”

Here we can see that even those who wear these bracelets know that they associate themselves with people with whom they don’t want to be associated—they associate themselves with the world.

The following are a couple of positive arguments. First, for a work to be a good work, it must proceed from faith which is first of all knowledge of God and sound doctrine. We must not rely on a bracelet to cause us to do a good work, for a good work comes from thankfulness for what Jesus has done for us.

Secondly, when the devil tempted Christ, Christ used the Scripture to fight those temptations. He quoted Scripture and didn't look at a bracelet. One must know the Scriptures so that when he is faced with a temptation he will know how to fight it. How does a bracelet compare to the power of Scripture?

During the time of Jesus, the Pharisees trusted in a phylactery which means "something that guards." This is found in Matthew 23:5, "they made broad their phylacteries." These phylacteries are not different than the WWJD bracelets. The Pharisees were rebuked for showing off their phylacteries and trusting in them. Those who promote these bracelets, promote the same things that the Pharisees did. They think that God is pleased with an external obedience. They also think that God will be pleased by having His word on the outside rather than in the heart. People who don't have an internal love for God often try to show that they do by external things such as this.

There are many Bible texts that people like to use to show that there is nothing wrong with WWJD bracelets. The following texts refer to having the Word of God on one's hand and forehead: Exodus 13:16, Deuteronomy 6:8, and Deuteronomy 11:8.

These verses must be taken in the spiritual sense and not the physical sense. The Old Testament saints were to do this spiritually in their hearts. We never read of the saints doing this physically and we never read of God rebuking them for not doing this physically either. It would also be impossible for us to do this physically because it would mean that we would have to put the entire law of God on our hands and foreheads.

Another argument that is used is that these bracelets are a good way to witness and that they are a mark that distinguishes us from others. But how can these bracelets distinguish us from the rest of the world when, as we have seen already, many people wear the bracelets as a fashion statement and don't even realize what WWJD stands for? We already have a sign that distinguishes us. This mark is Baptism. Also, this is not the way we witness to other people. We witness by confessing and living out the knowledge of God that He has sovereignly worked in our hearts. The good witness is one that glorifies God. When we live out that truth others will see this, and ask us what it is that makes us live the way we do, and what the reason is for the hope that is in us.

In conclusion, we see many things that are wrong with these bracelets. Just to review, here are the three main things that are wrong with the bracelets. First, they are a temptation to idolatry. Secondly, there is a problem with the question. And thirdly, by wearing these bracelets one associates himself with people who promote false doctrines and evil practices. ❖

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