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What was really important to Jesus? I ask because maybe we should have the same priorities, right? And maybe this was why Jesus was so popular – well, popular with **some** people, if not with the religious leaders.

What was the priority for the religious leaders of his day? Maybe this was why they were so **un**popular with those who followed Jesus.

I think I could probably stop here and you could work it out for yourselves, right? My shortest article ever – under 100 words! Oh, go on then, I'll use the other 400.

For Jesus, it was people and our relationships with one another, and it is the attitudes of our hearts that really, really matter. For the Pharisees, it was our actions; obeying the rules.

To be fair to the religious leaders of today, it's much easier to specify actions: do this and don't do that. Then, as a leader, you can look around your flock and decide which church members need a metaphorical clip around the ear.

And not just those **in** the church; we can see clearly what 'they' are doing, and we must speak out and name the evil things 'they' are doing ('lights in a dark world'), and we must make sure that we don't allow 'their' evil ways to mould our thinking in the church.

(But always, it's about actions, not about attitudes.)

There was a time when we used to call a spade a spade: some people were 'living in sin'. But now we don't bother; I gather that some churches are even willing to baptise the children of people 'living in sin', without insisting that they get married first. Shocking! Can you see how the church is being forced into the evil mould of the world?!

And some churches are allowing women to lead. Again, this is going against the clear teaching of the Scriptures, that men should be the leaders, and the women – as equals, of course – should take their roles of supporting the leaders. (The world's mould again.)

Not to mention our couldn't-care-less attitude to divorce, which again the Bible – including Jesus himself – has very clear teaching about.

But to revert to being positive again, almost everyone you talk to in Taverham, where we live, says that St Ed's is 'such a welcoming place' – whether they attend the church or not. Is it because we have a really well-trained welcome team? OK, we're not a perfect church, but I think what counts with people is our non-judgemental welcome of all-comers.

Does 'non-judgemental' mean 'anything goes'; are we saying it doesn't matter what you do? No, it means that we try to help people in the difficult real-life situations they face, and insist that how we treat each other is the central issue; that's what leads to restoration of relationships, and not 'sticking to (somebody's) rules'.

What is most important to your leaders – or to you, if you are the leader?

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