

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Paradoxes of Living: CARING

"Every time I care, I get hurt. My three kids got all my love, my energy, my everything. I really cared for them. But since they've grown up I've had to insulate myself from them. They have hurt me too much already. Two of them married bums and the only time they care about me is when they need money. To the third one, I'm just a babysitter while he and his wife go out with HER parents. Care a little, stick your neck out, and you get it chopped off."

What a strain it is on one's faith in virtues like caring if he cares for the wrong purposes or with the wrong ends in mind. As commendable as it is to throw yourself into loving and caring for another, such a virtue can become a destructive vice.

For caring to be a worthwhile part of your life:

(1) Let it be an expression of love. Paul suggests how far caring could go without love: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). When you care because you love, you are "never selfish, not quick to take offense." Such love "keeps no score of wrongs" (v. 5, 6a, NEB).

(2) Especially care for those who don't care for you. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee" (Proverbs 25:21, 22).

(3) Care wholly, wholeheartedly. You can't afford to do this unless you are wholly, wholeheartedly Christian. The risk is too great. But if the care of a surrendered child of God is wasted, he won't fall far before the arms of His heavenly Father cushion him.

(4) Don't expect reward or even recognition. This is caring for the wrong purpose. Let reward or recognition be a surprise, like it was to the righteous people described in Matthew 25:34-40.

Caring is risky. But caring because God cares for you isn't.

- Unknown, via The Reflector, November, 1981

Clippings . . .

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT GRACE

- Grace Defined - God's unearned favor flowing from His love (Ephesians 2:4-5; Romans 5:8).
- Grace Revealed - Fully manifested in Jesus Christ (John 1:14-7; 2 Timothy 1:9-10).
- Grace Saves - Salvation is impossible apart from grace (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5).
- Grace Received - Accessed by faith, not human merit (Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 2:16).
- Grace/Baptism - Grace saves when faith submits in baptism (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21).
- Grace/Obedience - Grace does not excuse sin; it teaches godliness (Titus 2:11-12; Hebrews 5:8-9).
- Grace Excludes Boasting - Works cannot earn salvation (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 11:6).
- Grace Produces Works - The saved are created for good works (Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 5:16).
- Grace Sustains - Forgiveness continues as one walks in the light (1 John 1:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:9).
- Grace Requires Faithfulness - Grace can be rejected (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 10:26-29).
- Grace's Goal - Eternal life and glory (Titus 3:7; Romans 5:21).

- via The Spiritual Sword, April, 2026

Kingdoms of Men and the Kingdom of God!

The inescapable law of God, who governs history, is this: "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people." (Proverbs 14:34). Students of history know all too well the disgraces of our beloved country both past and present. Students of the Bible know to rely in thankfulness on the longsuffering and patience of a loving Father who continues to create opportunities for repentance: "The Lord is . . . patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). But such students also know that there comes a time when patience runs out and divine wrath is poured out to curtail the growth of evil.

Who is really in control? — "the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes." (Daniel 5:21). He taught men this lesson before, requiring men to humble themselves before Him. Those who do not may end up

eating grass (cf. Daniel 4:30-31). But with the free choice remaining, many refused humility, choosing paths of their own devices with destructive consequences (Philippians 3:18-19) because they have no fear of God (Romans 3:10-18). All who heeded the divine message were consequently blessed.

In the realm of mankind, God is in control. God's kingdom takes priority over all others (cf. Matthew 6:33); it is spiritual (cf. John 18:36), and it is superior (Isaiah 2:1-4). Human governments come and go, even the ones who present themselves as representing God's values. Earlier in my life I heard government officials quoting Scripture and supporting high moral standards. Was it real or fake? But now you hardly ever hear the virtuous things you once did.

Let us rise above primary devotions to the kingdoms of men and seek first the kingdom of God, just as Jesus Christ taught (Matthew 6:33). Citizenship is available now (Philippians 3:20) since the kingdom of God was ushered in on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). The gospel of Christ (New Covenant, Hebrews 8:7-13; 12:24) with its apostolic preaching and requirements for salvation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17-20) are presently in effect to provide citizenship and all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3) for penitent, obedient believers (cf. Acts 2:38)! Through the gospel of Christ we may be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;" (Hebrews 12:28).

Many are not in the kingdom of God today. Many have listened to the countless false teachers that are teaching people that God's kingdom has not yet been opened to man. The apostle Paul had the privilege of being a citizen in the kingdom. Are we barred from entrance at the present time by faith in and obedience to the same gospel? Are you a citizen in His kingdom today? May we assist you in your entrance?

- Gary Smalley

* "Many of people waste too much sympathy on themselves!"

* "Always do right. This will gratify many people and astonish the rest!"

* "A modern bathing suit is the difference between not very much and nothing at all!"

* "A half-truth and a whole lie are close companions!"

* "When I want to speak let me think first; Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? If not, let it be left unsaid!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)