

"DO YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE?"

Text: Psalm 142:4

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Delivered: April 21, 1968

People need to know that someone truly cares for them. Wallace Speers, a businessman, was standing in New York's Penn Station. An unshaved, ex-convict walked up to him and said: "You look friendly." He went on to tell him the sad story of his life. When he finished, he looked at Mr. Speers and said: "Will you do something for me? There's not a soul in the world who cares if I live or die. Would you mind thinking about me for a couple of weeks. If I could think that there was someone somewhere thinking about me as a human being, why it would be worth a million dollars to me~"

One could make a study of the Psalms of lonely souls. In Psalm 22:11~ we read: "Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help." In Psalm 38:11: "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off." In Psalm 88:18, we read: "Lover and friend has thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." But nowhere in the Psalms is there a lonelier cry than in the words of our text: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

Here was the cry from the lips of man who evidently had great sufferings. His enemies were vindictive, and his friends were indifferent. We might think that here was man given over to self-pity. But here was man whose sufferings were real, not imaginary. His enemies were real! His friends were silent. Like so many others in life, he felt that no one cared for him.

Against the backlit sound of this lonely utterance, let me raise the question. "Do YOU really care about people?" Let me in turn outline three questions:

1-DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE THEM?

2- DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT PEOPLE TO ENJOY THEM?

3- DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT PEOPLE TO ENLIST THEM FOR CHRIST?

I. DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT PEOPLE TO ENCOURAGE THEM?

The Psalmist, perhaps, was in prison as indicated by his words in verse 7: "Bring my soul out of prison." Here was a man who needed encouragement. He wants God to encourage him with the conviction that God is not indifferent to him. He is secretly longing that in some way he may discover that some of his friends are speaking about him, perhaps even interceding for him in prayer. Even in the last part of Psalm he is taking a great step forward when he says: "the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." (V.7)

Both young and old need encouragement. Have you ever seen the longing look in a boy's eyes when two people are choosing up sides, and they are saying with their eyes: "Will someone choose me?" Or look into the eyes of that elderly man who sits at the window of a nursing home, wondering if a car will drive up bringing someone who cared enough about him to visit.

Dr. Lee Bristol says that caring may express itself in many forms. "It may mean being severe when the occasion demands it with men you wish to help. It may mean patiently listening to the complaints from a sick bed. It may deliberately be letting a child learn the hard lesson of taking a beating from a school mate when you want to rush out and yell "Stop"! It may mean just a wink to a loved one across a crowded room."

One of the best ways that we can "Help God" is by encouraging others. One of my favorite poems is this:

If I have planted hope today in any hopeless heart
If someone's load has lighter grown because I did my part,
If happily I have caused a laugh that chased some tear away,
And if tonight my name be known when someone kneels to pray,
Then, humble though I be, I know I have been helping God, and so
Serene I claim my nightly rest, just glad that I have done my best.

Do you care enough about people who do not normally interest you? There are people you may not like. There are people whom you are not drawn to. This is the test of real caring. It is easy to encourage someone who pats you on the back, feeds your ego, and does nice things for you. But how about the one who criticizes you, who says nasty things about you? Faith helps you to love the unlovable. In an exercise of real caring, start by encouraging the one who apparently could care less about you. Say something nice about the one who didn't say something nice about you. You may be surprised, in time, to find that you come to like them, and they to like you. Ask God to help you see in others what God sees. Remember that we love God because he first loved us. He loved us when we were not lovely. He befriended us when we were His enemies. After all, we don't love our children only when they make 100 on an examination. We love them even when they come home with D's

What are you doing to encourage others? I like this quotation: "Jesus makes it clear that when a man comes to judgment, he will not be asked on what committee he served, but what he did with cups of water, bread, clothing, and with other acts of caring."

My mother-in-law always gets excited when I tell a story without giving the ending. I am going to give you one, and, frankly, I don't know how it ended. Bishop Frederick Warnecke tells about a lonely man who felt so discouraged and desolate in a cold city that he decided to kill himself by jumping into the river. As he left his home, he told himself, "If I meet someone on the street whose eyes catch mine, who somehow takes notice of me as a human being, I'll turn back, only then." So he began his long walk across town to the river. Here the story ends. I can give this story a personal twist: "Had he met YOU on the street, would he have changed his mind about taking his life?"

A religion without caring is no religion. We have a lot of people who think they are religious because they have their names on some church roll or because they have followed some religious rite. But even James the brother of our Lord taught that our devotion to God is demonstrated toward others. "Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27) What good is it, what profit is it, to keep yourself unspotted from the world if you are at the same time untouched by the needs of others! Henry Drummond once said: "The final test of religion is not religiousness, but love." After all, you can't love God whom you have not seen, if you can't love man whom you have seen as implied in 1 John 4:20.

II. DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT PEOPLE TO ENJOY THEM?

I have always felt that God wants us to enjoy life. God welcomes us to a life of freedom and fun, of emancipation and enjoyment. Some people go through life without enjoying it. The Saturday Evening Post had this poem by Richard Amor:

TO HAVE AND TOO OLD

"The bride, white of hair, is stooped on her cane, Her footsteps, uncertain, need guiding,
While down the church aisle, with a wan, toothless smile, the groom in a wheelchair comes riding.
And who is this elderly couple you ask? You'll find when you've closely explained it,
That here is that rare, most conservative pair, Who waited till they could afford it!"

How grateful I am that I did not wait to get married until I could afford it.

Dr. Robert W. Burns says that if you want to enjoy your husband, wife, your children, or your friends, there are three key words: **ACCEPT, APPRECIATE, AFFECTION.**

1. To enjoy people, ACCEPT them.

People will differ. Everyone is not going to think as I think. They will not all have the same attitudes I have. I must not try to make them over. I see so many homes destroyed because mothers and father were unwilling to accept the girl who married their boy or the boy who married their girl.

Too many of us are destroyed by buried resentments. We resent those who differ from us. We so often do little to understand them. Few of us recognize the right of the other person to be another person.

Jesus accepted people as they were and then helped them to become their best. But he didn't try to squeeze them all into one individual mold. He didn't even try to make Simon Peter like John the Beloved!

2. To enjoy people, APPRECIATE them.

Too many people magnify the differences. This can destroy any home. How I thank God for the times I have helped some couples to look for the best in others. Sometimes it grieves me that there are some I have married who did not come back to me. How I wish I had tried to help them even when their complaint seems to be that of the man who said: "I took her for better or worse, but she was worse than I took her for!"

I like what Dr. Robert Burns says to the couples he marries: "I ask for an exclusive franchise on the complaint department. I will give you a lifetime guarantee with your home, providing all the repairs are made at the factory." I don't want an amateur mechanic bungling with the carburetor. Stay away from friends, neighbors, lawyers, and relatives."

I don't care who you are, you like to be appreciated. Aunt Het once said: "I don't mind sacrificing myself for my family. What aggravates me is having them act like it was my duty and nothing to take special notice of." All of us like to be appreciated.

3. TO ENJOY PEOPLE, REMEMBER THE WORD: AFFECTION

It is not enough to accept people and to appreciate them, unless we show them affection. To enjoy people, you've got to let them know you love them.

I like that story of the farmer boy in north Georgia. He was very bashful and timid, but finally, he summoned up enough nerve to say: "Mary, I've been loving you for a long time. I can't talk much, but I would like to provide what you need. Will you be my wife?" She said: "Yes, John, I've been loving you for a long time too. I'd like to do anything I can to make you happy. I'll be happy to be your wife." Later, that night, John looked up at the stars and said: "Oh Lord, I ain't got nuthin against nobody now."

DO YOU CARE ENOUGH ABOUT PEOPLE TO ENLIST THEM FOR CHRIST?

Let me discuss this last point around a WHAT, a WHO, and a WHY.

1. WHAT does it take to care enough to enlist people for Christ?

(1) CONVICTION. Conviction of the worth of that soul.

We take care of things in proportion to their value. If the soul is more important than the whole world, if that soul has unlimited possibilities, if that soul is eternal in duration, then such a conviction will cause you to care enough for that soul to enlist that soul for Christ.

(2) COMPASSION. Not only will you have a conviction of the value of the soul, but you will also have solicitude for the welfare of that soul. Jesus, when he saw the multitudes was moved with compassion. (Matt. 9:36) The word compassion implies the pain of love. If you truly love people, you will know the pain of Love. Like your blessed Lord, you too, will weep!

(3) **CONSTRAINT** to do something. Conviction and compassion always lead to the constraint to do something. Paul says: "For the love of Christ constraineth us." (2 Cor. 5:14) The word "constraineth" signifies to "bear away, to carry on with the force and rapidity with which a torrent hurries along whatever it meets with in its course."

The kind of love that constrains makes us want to do something. It motivates zealous exertion and ardent effort. Such love makes you pray for others, makes you visit others, and makes you use every opportunity to win that person to Christ.

2. **WHO** should care enough about people to enlist them for Christ?

PARENTS should care enough. I can't understand parents who are anxious to provide for the material needs of their sons and daughters, but do not seem concerned about their spiritual welfare. Parents have a responsibility not only to provide food for the body, but food for the soul. The greatest clothing a parent provides is not for the body but for the soul. The home that youngster lives in on this earth is not as important as the home in which they will spend eternity.

CHURCH WORKERS should care enough about those with whom they work to win them to Christ. You have not done your best with any group if there is one in that group to whom you have not witnessed. Church workers are failing the Lord when they expect the Pastor and other Staff members to do their witnessing.

EVERY CHRISTIAN is supposed to be a witness for Christ. Jesus gave every Christian the sphere of witnessing, which begins at home "beginning at Jerusalem". (Acts 1:8) I don't believe a man has the right to reach the heathen by leaping over people in our own homes and streets. Every Christian has been appointed to be a witness for Christ. Every Christian has been given the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to witness. Every Christian is under obligation to tell personally what he knows about Christ. We are to be witnesses for Christ not only by what we say but also by what we are.

"A good farm is the best witness to a farmer, a good painting to an artist, a good book to the author". Your life should be the best evidence of the power of God in your life. You are not a ceremony, an insipid imitation, but you should be a living example of what God has done in your life, and what he can do in the lives of others.

What does Christ mean to you? Is he to you a real Saviour~ Brother~ Helper~ Friend? You don't need eloquence, genius, or philosophy to go to another person and say: "I have found Christ to be the bread of life. Won't you help yourself to the satisfying spiritual bread he offers you?" Only two things you need: Honesty and Experience. If you have these two things~ then you are under obligation to go and share with others what Christ has done for your soul.

The final question:

3. **WHY** should we care enough about people to enlist them for Christ?

(1) It is **CRUEL** if we don't.

How cruel it is to have food for the soul while others die of spiritual hunger. How cruel it is to have water for the soul while others are dying of spiritual thirst. How cruel it is to have a pardon and refuse to take it to a condemned prisoner. How cruel it is to have a remedy and then withhold it from someone dying for its lack.

(2) It is **CRIMINAL** if we fail to do what we can to enlist others for Christ. Add cruelty and disobedience to God and the result is **GUILT**. You and I can never be innocent when we are guilty of criminal neglect of the souls of others.

(3) It's **COSTLY**.

When I fail to share Christ with others, I may be costing them eternally. When I fail to tell them about Christ it may cost them forever in eternity, unless someone else comes along and does what I failed to do. But there is another cost involved, the cost to me. Think of the joy that I am missing. There is no joy comparable to the joy that comes to a child of God when he shares Christ with someone and sees that life changed by the transforming power of God. Think of the cost in eternity. Think of the rewards that I might enjoy throughout eternity, which I will miss, if I do not care enough about people to enlist them for Christ.

Let me summarize this message: Do you really care enough about people to **ENCOURAGE** them, to **ENJOY** them, and to **ENLIST** them for Christ!