

What Are You Discussing?

Joe Slater

When people get together, they usually talk about something (weather, sports, current events). Such conversations serve to encourage the downcast, pass on important information, or even solve problems. But they may also be abused to gossip or stir up trouble.

The birth of John the immerser made for abundant conversation, and understandably so. Both of his parents “were well advanced in years” (Luke 1:7). They were probably the last people the neighbors would expect to have a child! Other unusual happenings occurred in association with this event: Zacharias’ vision in the Temple, his inability to speak or hear, Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, and the restoration of Zacharias’ speech and hearing when John was named. *“Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea”* (Luke 1:65).

Shortly after Jesus began His earthly ministry, however, another sort of discussion took place. His fame was spreading far and wide as a great teacher and miracle-worker, but His healings on the Sabbath in particular aroused the ire of the Jewish leadership. *“But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus”* (Luke 6:11). They would have other such discussions, leading eventually to their murder of the Son of God.

Discussions, then, are neither bad nor good in and of themselves. Since it is normal and natural for people to discuss things, let us make certain that our discussions build up, encourage, warn, inform, explain, and help. May our conversations never degenerate into backbiting, gossip, slander, or any other sort of ungodliness!

Contentment

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have" (Heb. 13:5).

If we are not content with the things that we have, we will never be content with the things that we want.

All the riches and honor that Haman had meant nothing to him as long as he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate (Esther 3:5). It appears he was never content.

Ahab, king of Israel, was not content with what he had but craved the vineyard of Naboth for a vegetable garden because it was next to his house (1 Kings 21).

Adam and Eve, with a bright new world at their feet, were not satisfied with Paradise (Genesis 3).

Solomon, in all his glory and with all his blessings from God, still wanted to try out everything the world had to offer (Ecclesiastes).

Yet the other side of the coin tells us, "My people shall be satisfied with My goodness," says the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:14).

Paul learned to be content with whatever his lot might be (Philippians 4:11).

Jesus said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (John 4:14).

The writer of Hebrews finished his thought with these words, "For He Himself has said, 'I will never forsake you'" (Heb 13:5).

--Hugh Shira (deceased)

How's Your Prayer Life?

It is not wrong, or offensive to ask God for whatever is on your heart. Speaking only from personal experience and observation, it seems that there are more "give me" prayers than "thank-you" prayers. It is very possible for "give me" prayers to have a tendency to treat God like some cosmic bell-hop, always there on standby waiting to provide me with amenities that will make life more pleasant.

On the other hand, if we combine our "thank-you" prayers with more "make me" prayers, I believe that our prayer life will take a dramatic turn for the better.

"Lord, make be a better husband, a better wife. Help me love my partner as Christ loved the church."

"Lord make me a better parent. Make me patient and understanding through adversity and experience. Help me to model faithful living by following the example of Jesus' life."

"Lord, You have placed a difficult challenge before me, but I trust that You desire only the best for me. I lean on Your strength to provide what I need to rise to the occasion."

That's not so hard to do. We read in Luke 11:1 of the disciples of Jesus asking, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

This week try being more aware of your prayers. Don't pray "give me" prayers exclusively, but rather try "make me" prayers.

--Dennis Russell (Santa Maria, CA)