

Helping Those Who Hurt

Joe Slater

Whether pain is physical, emotional, spiritual, or some combination thereof, people in pain need comfort! We serve *“the God of all comfort”* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). His children are to give comfort as well as receive it. Sometimes we do it well; other times, not so much.

Job suffered immense pain. But have you thought of his wife’s suffering? She, too, lost immeasurable wealth; she grieved the death of ten children. Then she observed the man she had loved for decades, whose children she had borne, covered head to toe with sores and sitting in an ash heap. In her despair, she urged Job to *“curse God and die!”* (Job 2:9). Perhaps unwittingly, she became an agent of Satan, who hoped Job would do that very thing (2:5).

Job’s three friends likewise failed him. They, too, may have meant well, but their accusations against him were not only false and presumptuous, but cruel. Even if Job had been guilty of some great sin, badgering him wouldn’t have helped! God finally told them, *“My wrath is aroused against you . . . for you have not spoken of Me what is right.”* This expression indicated the gravity of their offense; if Job had not offered sacrifice for them, God would have killed them!

Well-meaning people still offer poor comfort today. “It was God’s will?” (Really? God wanted that drunk driver to kill that family? Who told you that?)

“God needed another angel!” (No, actually, God has plenty of angels. And people don’t become angels when they die.)

We would do better by being like Job’s friends before they started talking. They sat with him for an entire week and listened when he finally spoke. That helps! Free advice rarely, if ever, does. If you must speak, offer to do some specific task (mow, clean, babysit). Above all, be there for those who hurt. Sometimes the less said, the better.

A Better Dog

We have been blessed by our Creator with the ability to practice self-examination. This is a gift known only to man. No other creature practices it. Even the family dog does not reflect on his ability to be a “better” dog. He operates by instincts, often associated with positive or negative reinforcement. By all means, enjoy your cartoons and animated movies. Just keep in mind that, in real life, dogs and other critters neither walk around in an upright position nor carry on meaningful conversation. They can be trained to do amazing things, but they do not possess the gift of self-reflection.

However, those created in the image of God, have been blessed with such ability. But, for many, the gift is so seldom practiced as to have become a lost art. Even the mention of it is foreign to the way our world thinks. It is like asking people to go back to a time which no longer exists. We are becoming a society comprised of unreasoning creatures who operate by instinct and immediate self-gratification. But, without spiritual self-examination, our sights will rise no higher than the world around us. *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”* (Colossians 3:1).

Self-examination is a challenge even for those who have been spiritually regenerated. This is because, in trying to be a “better” person, we are frequently deceived into comparing ourselves to a distorted image. While the apostle Paul encourages, *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith”* (2 Corinthians 13:5), he also warns us about the danger of comparing ourselves to ourselves (2 Corinthians 10:12). It is to Christ’s image that we seek duplication (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). The good news is that we have ready access to the source of such transformation. God’s word casts an accurate reflection of who we are and what kind of changes need to be made in the direction of His image. Spiritual transformation begins with humble

acknowledgement that we are not our own; nor are we capable of making needed changes without God’s guidance. Each day can be a new adventure if we work together with God to bring about a “better.” more Christ-like version, of who He wants us to be. May God bless each to this end.

--Glen Elliot (Greenbrier, AR)

The Five Best Excuses For Missing Church

Listed below are the top five best excuses for missing services of the Lord’s church:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Yes, that’s correct, there are no excuses for not being in service to the Lord. Of course, there are some good reasons one may be out of service, like sickness or death, but there are no excuses.

Jesus told a story about a Great Supper that was planned by a certain man who then invited his guests. As time came for the event to take place, they all began to make excuses to why they could not attend. (Luke 14:18) The invited guests used their personal possessions, business dealings, and family obligations as excuses as to why they could not come to the feast that was prepared just for them. The master of the house became angry and invited others to come and enjoy the great supper. But he also stated that those who were initially invited would never sit at his table again.

The freedom and opportunity to come together for worship, bible study, and fellowship with the Lord’s church is such a blessing and should never be taken for granted. When we make a deliberate decision to place other things before the Lord’s service, we commit modern day idolatry, refusing to take advantage of God’s blessings, even though we may think we have a “good excuse”

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)