

LOVE PEOPLE: USE THINGS

Joe Slater

I expect you've seen the title of this article practiced in reverse, as I have: "Use People; Love Things." Sad, but true. King Solomon observed, "*The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor. But the rich has many friends*" (Proverbs 14:20). Now, why would a poor man's neighbors hate him? And why would a rich man have many friends? The poor man doesn't have much to offer materially, so his neighbors can't use him. The rich man's "friends," however, see opportunity to use him to their advantage. "*Many entreat the favor of nobility, and every man is a friend to one who gives gifts*" (Proverbs 19:6).

Solomon's half-brother, Absalom used people to acquire the power he wanted. See how he buttered up the citizens who came to King David with legal issues: "*Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you . . . Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice*" (2 Samuel 15:3-4). In short order, he conned them into proclaiming him king!

The Pharisees in John 8 used the woman taken in adultery to try to put Jesus into a dilemma. They cared nothing for her soul. All they wanted was to have an excuse to criticize the Lord. By contrast, Jesus loved her and sought her redemption.

The "good Samaritan" in Luke 10 loved his neighbor and used his money and other possessions to help him. Love people; use things. The man who had been robbed and beaten could do nothing materially for the Samaritan. But he needed help, and the Samaritan provided it.

As Jesus said, "*Go and do likewise*" (Lk. 10:37).

Doers of the Word

Three men went deer hunting. As they crossed the field going to the woods, a huge buck jumped up in their path. All three fired at the same time. The buck dropped, but as they came up to it, they realized they had a problem. Which one of them shot the deer?

As they discussed the problem, a game warden came along to check for hunting licenses. He offered to sort out the problem, examined the deer, and said, "One of you guys is a preacher, right?" And sure enough, one of them was. "Well, preacher, your shot is the one that got the buck."

Amazed, the men asked how he knew one of them was a preacher and that the preacher's shot was the one that scored. "Simple," the game warden said, "It went in one ear and out the other."

As a preacher, it does feel that way sometimes. But it's difficult to be too harsh on those who listen to my sermons because I know that sometimes, as a reader of God's Word, I tend to do the same thing. I read what God says. I even understand what God says (though I wish sometimes that I didn't!). It's just that I don't allow what I'm reading to make any real difference in my life. It goes in one ear and out the other.

James wrote, "*Do what God's word says. Don't merely listen to it, or you will fool yourselves. If someone listens to God's word but doesn't do what it says, he is like a person who looks at his face in a mirror, studies his features, goes away, and immediately forgets what he looks like. However, the person who continues to study God's perfect teachings that make people free and who remains committed to them will be blessed. People like that don't merely listen and forget; they actually do what God's teachings say.*" (James 1:22-25, GOD'S WORD).

May God's Word go in one ear, stay there, and then demonstrate itself in how you live this day.

--Alan Smith (via Sayre, OK)

As For The Lord

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:23-24, ESV).

A Christian professor at a State university once received the following evaluation from an agnostic student. As you read it, consider how your neighbors, coworkers, or students might evaluate you.

"When Dr. _____ lectures, he provides the skeleton of the chapter, and allows us to fill in with the "meat" as we go along. While he goes through he elaborates on each point as much as he can to further create the holistic picture (all from his own mastery of the subject matter).

"My favorite thing to mention, however, is that he is genuinely brilliant, utterly passionate and truly cares about us. This is the biggest feature that helped me learn the material: him as a person.

"Another note: on the first day of class he said he wanted us to know that the most important characteristic of him is that "[he's] a follower of Jesus Christ and hopes that shows in the way [he] treats us." Although I'm agnostic, I thought that was beautiful, and I always kept it in the back of my mind when I was in his class. He proved it every single day."

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24, ESV).

*We are the only Bible The careless world will read;
We are the sinner's Gospel, We are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message, Given in deed and word;
What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?*

(Annie Johnson Flint)

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)