

Does It Make Any Difference? (2)

Joe Slater

I don't know who first said "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere." The saying has been around at least 50 years and remains a popular sentiment today.

In no way am I suggesting that civil government should tell us what to believe. Nor am I saying that we, as individuals, ought to coerce others as to what they believe. However, God has already spoken on the matter. Our duty is not to force or coerce, but to teach and persuade.

For example, does it make any difference what one believes about Christ? Jesus Himself indicated it does! "*If you do not believe that I am He (i.e. the Christ, the Son of God), you will die in your sins*" (John 8:24)

Countless sincere people, many of them religious, believe Jesus either never existed, or He was something less than the Son of God. Should it matter to us if they believe He was just a good Rabbi? Maybe even a prophet? If we believe what Jesus said, then it matters because we love our neighbors; we don't want them to die in their sins.

Jesus said He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him (John 14:6). Multitudes don't believe that. Some, like Oprah, come right out and say Jesus is **not** the only way! Should we have Oprah arrested? Of course not! But we should firmly and kindly seek to inform and persuade her and those who agree with her. Jesus died for them; God wants them to be saved, and so should we.

Some say it's arrogant to teach one must believe Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to Heaven! But true arrogance is contradicting Jesus. (More next week)

Laughter

The late comedian Victor Borge once said that "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." Life is a wonderful gift. Too many people are wasting it being negative or unhappy.

Researchers have noted that the average child laughs 150 times a day. The average adult only laughs 15 times a day. We are losing our smiles, and a laugh is really nothing more than a smile that finally bursts.

The presence of laughter improves virtually every situation. I recently read a suggestion from a marriage and family therapist who said that we should tell jokes at the dinner table to our family members. First, of course, we need to sit down long enough to actually enjoy being with our family. Once we do that, some night let each family member bring 5 jokes with them to the table on a piece of paper. Then take turns telling them. See if you enjoy your supper time more.

Laughter also blesses mankind with inner peace. Actor Alan Alda once said that "When people are laughing, they're generally not killing each other." It takes a willing heart to open up enough with another person so as to laugh with them. Laughter builds relationships. It rewards with memories. It is positive reinforcement. It reminds us that life is great!

The Bible pictures the Son of God as one who was full of joy. Children do not flock to grumpy people. As Jesus took the young people into his arms, I believe there were wonderful smiles and amazing laughter. It was the most natural thing for our Savior with them. He experienced every emotion a man could experience. The people who are the closest to God are the happiest. How close was Jesus to the Father? His closeness must have made Him a man who usually wore a smile.

The promise Jesus gives the faithful servant at the end of time is "...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (**Matt. 25:21, 23**). Heaven is going to be a place where laughter abounds. There will be nothing to prohibit eternal rejoicing there. Laughter, then, is a momentary taste of divine blessings. It is a prelude to a greater time when we will all be in the presence of God.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!"
Philippians 4:4

--Jeremiah Tatum (via Sayre, OK) adapted

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Don't Give Up!

When you think of giving up, remember the countless achievements made by those who at one time had the same thought, but resisted the temptation to throw in the towel.

Elijah thought he was the only one left, but God pointed out to him that he was not.

Paul was discouraged at Corinth, but the Lord reminded him that He still had many potential people in that city (Acts 18)

A commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office in 1865 proposed that Congress close it because all of the great inventions had already been made. No doubt many negative thinkers would have agreed!

You might as well face the fact that whether you do something or do nothing, you will be criticized. The only choice we have is whether to be opposed for doing good or for doing evil. Peter said we should be sure it is for doing good (1 Peter 3:16-17). Your critic then has a more serious problem than you have!

--Jack Wilhelm (via RSVP Newsletter)