

Jesus' Concern For Others (#4)

Joe Slater

Jesus concern for others wasn't limited to His enemies. The apostle John tells us of Jesus compassion toward His mother even as His intense suffering drained His strength and His life approached its conclusion. In the third of seven utterances from the cross, Jesus *"said to His mother, 'Woman behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!'"* (John 19:26-27). The disciple was John himself, who took Mary to his own home to care for her as a son would care for his mother.

Jesus concern for His mother goes well beyond merely seeing that she had life's necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. The Lord's brothers could have seen to such matters easily. John 7:5 tells us, however, that His brothers didn't believe in Him at that time. That would change after the resurrection; meanwhile, Jesus was concerned with Mary's spiritual and emotional wellbeing, not just her material needs. He wanted her to be with someone who would be sympathetic to her grief and who would encourage and nurture the faith she already had in Him.

Realizing how much Jesus cared about others, and how He cares about us even now, let us cultivate a spirit of compassion toward all people, friend, foe, or family! Demonstrate that care by being ready and willing to forgive as Jesus was. And when someone has material, spiritual, or emotional needs, either handle it yourself or give the task to a trusted friend.

Are you concerned for others as Jesus was?

Geese And Difficult People

When we first moved into our present home, I enjoyed the beauty of the geese that nest nearby. I admired the way they cared for each other and the way they moved in straight lines in the water and in majestic V-formations in the air. It was also a joy to watch them raise their young.

Then summer came, and I discovered some less beautiful truths about my feathered friends. You see, geese love to eat grass, and they don't really care if it ruins the look of the lawn. Worse, what they leave behind makes a stroll across the yard a messy adventure.

I think of these geese, when I am dealing with difficult people. Sometimes I wish I could simply shoo them out of my life. It's then that God usually reminds me that there is beauty in even the most difficult person, if we can get close enough to discover it, and the pain they're giving out may be reflective of the pain they are feeling. The apostle Paul says in Romans, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone"* (Romans 12:18). So I ask God to help me be patient with the "hard side" of others. This doesn't always produce a happy outcome, but it is remarkable how often God redeems these relationships.

As we encounter difficult people, by God's grace we can see and love them through His eyes.

--Randy Kilgore (via Athens, AL)

Let Me Tell You About My Friend

I have a good friend. He doesn't drink alcohol, thus has never been involved in any alcohol-related crimes or embarrassments. He doesn't destroy his mind through the use of illicit drugs. I've never once heard my friend gossip or tell a single lie. He never wastes his time in night clubs, casinos, or disreputable establishments. I can't recall ever hearing him use profanity or vulgarity. And he has never cheated a soul.

Many would call my friend a "good Christian." Yet you need to know that I have just described my dog, Patches!

We need to learn what being a Christian is all about – that being a Christian involves more than merely not doing evil. It concerns actually doing good, fully submitting to Christ and living by faith.

Christ taught, *"If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23). Complete and total submission to Christ is essential if we would be called by His name. Like the brethren in Smyrna, we are to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

The world holds many good and honest souls who are not maliciously engaged in the blackest of evils. Many of these good moral citizens are our neighbors, friends, or relatives. They may, in some cases, be better morally than some nominal church members. But they should not, by virtue of their upstanding lifestyle, be confused with "good Christians." They may refrain from wrong; they may even be involved in promoting much that is right. But outside of Christ they cannot be considered Christians.

Not until one comes to Christ and obeys the gospel is he a Christian. No one can live a pure enough life to save himself; and there is still no other name under heaven that can save us but the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

Remember, there is a world of difference between my dog and a "good Christian"!

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*