

Holiday Compassion

Joe Slater

I hope you have the happiest holiday in history! (How's that for alliteration?) Seriously, I want nothing, including this article, to detract from your genuine enjoyment of the whole holiday season.

That being said, please show compassion toward the many for whom holidays are, to say the least, difficult. The anniversary of a loved one's death may come at holiday time. Even if they passed away at some other date, unwelcome feelings of loss and loneliness may flood aching hearts during holidays.

That doesn't mean you should feel guilty for enjoying family, food, and fun. Make those precious memories! As you do so, remember those who feel empty. A loving look, a sympathetic smile, a hug or pat on the arm may accomplish more than you realize.

An understanding word of encouragement could be helpful. That definitely excludes tacky remarks like "get over it!" or "just move on!" Such cruel comments show the opposite of a Christ-like spirit!

Sometimes no words are needed. Your mere presence tells the person you are there for them. Think of Job's three friends when they came to visit him in his profound suffering; the best thing they did was remain silent an entire week. Then they started talking and things went downhill from there!

In no less than a dozen places the Gospels specify that Jesus either showed compassion or taught His disciples to do so. May God help us to be like Jesus not only during this holiday season, but every day!

What Do I Owe The Lord?

Unlike most of our great-great-grandparents, we live a life of financial indebtedness. According to an article on the Ramsey Solutions website, 77% of American households have at least some type of debt at an average of \$58,609 per adult. This includes credit cards, student loans, auto loans, and mortgages.

Debt in its simplest terms means owing someone payment for any reason. Without the present financial system, most of us could not buy a house, car, or many of the other possessions we have.

When it comes to things spiritual, we serve God with an unpayable indebtedness. The price paid for our sin by Jesus when He was crucified, can never be repaid by human merit (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5). Nevertheless, we owe the Lord a life of worship and service because He forgave us and saved us from everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Unfortunately, we sometimes give greater loyalty to the people in our lives than we do to God; when we do, we're no longer worthy of Jesus (Matthew 10:37). We must constantly remind ourselves that:

- We owe Him more than we owe our parents
- We owe Him more than we owe our children
- We owe Him more than we owe our friends
- We owe Him more than we owe our employer
- We owe Him more than we owe ourselves

We sing the old song, "He paid a debt He did not owe; Christ Jesus paid the debt that I can never pay." And for that, we owe Him everything!

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

Jesus Loves The Little Children

In Mark 10:1-16, we see Jesus sitting in a house teaching when people started bringing children to Him. At first His disciples forbade this. But then we see that Jesus became upset and said, "*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*" Then Jesus took the children up in His arms and blessed them.

In this beautiful account, we see Jesus' opinion of children, for here we can see four actions from our Savior that prove His love for them.

1) Jesus made Himself available for children. He was in a position for people to bring the children to Him. He was willing and receptive. When you love someone, you make time for them. Jesus made time for children.

2) Jesus was angry when injustice was done to children. He was indignant that they were not allowed access to Him. They had just as much right as anyone else to be in His presence.

3) Jesus likened the kingdom of God to children. Little children are pure, innocent, humble, and so is the church that belongs to Christ. To be saved, we must become helplessly dependent upon Him – like a little child.

4) Jesus hugged children. He took them up in His arms. He touched them and blessed them. What a beautiful, tender moment that demonstrates how much He loved and cared for them!

Every day we hear of parents and other "trusted" adults abusing children verbally, physically, and sexually. How horrible and tragic that is! But another tragedy occurs when parents do not take their children to Jesus, to His church, and to Bible study where they can learn more about a Savior who cares for them.

Remember that Jesus loves your little children. Take them to Him. He will bless them.

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)