

Deliberately Avoiding The Limelight

Joe Slater

Today at formal banquets the host and hostess are expected to indicate where each guest is to be seated. Certain seats are for those deemed more important or honored than others. In first-century Palestine, guests seem to have seated themselves wherever they pleased with the understanding that the host might ask them to move. Jesus, having been invited to eat at the home of a ruler of the Pharisees, took advantage of this custom to teach about humility.

“So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best seats . . .” (Luke 14:7). Sitting with the important people might make you look important, at least for a while; but, as Jesus said, the host might very well *“say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place”* (14:9).

Why not purposely take the lowest place? Then the host might *“say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”* (14:10-11).

Jesus never sought to draw attention to Himself. In fact, He took pains to avoid it. He let His teaching and His works speak for themselves as He did the Father’s will. He modeled the humility commended by Solomon: *“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips”* (Proverbs 27:2).

Even if no other mortal notices or honors you, be assured that God takes note. *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”* (1 Peter 5:6).

Buried With A Bible

Years ago, when the tomb of the emperor Constantine was discovered, archaeologists found his remains situated in a most unusual manner. Apparently, he had been positioned sitting on his throne with a crown on his head, a scepter in his right hand, and a Bible on his lap. What they discovered was that his crown had fallen from its place, his scepter from its bony clasp, but the Bible was still in his lap opened to Matthew 16:26: *“For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

God’s word deserves our utmost respect and devotion. David prayed, *“Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You”* (Psalm 119:11). Jeremiah spoke of a time when God’s people would have His teachings written on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33). When God’s word is written on our hearts, His teaching will be put into practice in our lives. Only an open Bible can accomplish this purpose. What good is owning a genuine, hand-sewn leather edition of the Bible if it is never opened and read? Many Bibles, opened on Sunday, are unused the rest of the week. They might as well be left on the pew until the next Sunday. Too many have buried their Bibles in a grave of misplaced priorities. One day, when their tomb is uncovered, their beautiful, seldom-used Bibles might as well be opened to Matthew 7:23: *“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”*

It will be too late to open the Bible when we have been laid to rest. Hebrews 9:27 reminds us *“it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment....”* Diligent study and faithful application of God’s word in this life are necessary for His approval in the next (2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:25). It may be a fitting gesture for a faithful Christian to be buried with his Bible; but the thing which must first be buried is the old man of complacency and neglect. That must happen in this life as we open our hearts to the power of God’s word, remembering that it is not a Bible enclosed in our coffin, but a transformed life that reminds others that our hope was grounded in Jesus and His word.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

Sleep Well

“I will both lie down in peace and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8).

Lack of sleep is a major issue in our culture. It is a growing concern for corporations and industry. Millions of dollars are lost yearly because of low productivity due to a lack of rest. I can attest to poor performance in the classroom because of sleep deprivation.

Psalm 4 is a lament. Many are surprised to learn that laments are the most common type of psalm, but life is pretty messy and disappointing at times. While not all laments end in praise or resolution, many do.

Here, David is distressed by his present circumstances, yet he recognizes that God will bless him eventually. Therefore, he can lie down and sleep peacefully. His trust is in God. That is why this psalm is sometimes called “the evening prayer.” Coupled with the fifth psalm (known as the morning prayer), it provides a comforting rhythm of life. Trust in the Lord at night, seek the Lord’s guidance by day.

Peaceful and adequate sleep is a spiritual discipline – especially in times of trial. It is a choice. Trust that God will provide. Trust that God will grant you the peace you seek.

Sleep well, my friend. God is near.

--Earl Lavender (via *Power For Today*)

It’s hard to hear God’s voice when you’ve already decided what you want Him to say.

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A bad attitude is like a flat tire; you can’t go anywhere until you change it.