

Somebody Cares about Me

Romans 12:9-16; Luke 8:35

It has been my experience that children can be brutally honest and in their honesty they can challenge us to consider how we live our lives. I will never forget when I was a single parent raising four children how the lesson of children's honesty hit close to home for me. My son has always been candid and articulate from a very early age; one day a woman stopped by my house to as she said "see how I was doing." I never allowed women to come to my house because I didn't want my children exposed to people that could potentially confuse them of what were their father's intent. But this day I agreed to let her in the house; I remember asking her to have a seat while I took care of something that I was doing. While I was gone she began to engage the children in small talk, I was just in the other room so I could hear what was being said. All of a sudden I heard my very precocious son blurt out "Dang you got a big old nose." I ran back into the room and tried to ease the pain of his words but I could see that the damage was done; while she didn't act like anything was wrong I could see that she was hurt by his words. I created an excuse for her to escape the situation and once she was gone I scolded my son because I was embarrassed but the truth of the matter is he didn't lie he just hadn't learned how to avoid hurting other people's feelings. The lesson in this story is that while some things may be true it does not always have to be said.

If we are going to be successful at caring for others we must learn some important lessons from scripture that will insure that we have a chance to reach lost and hurting people with the love of Jesus. Most of us have learned how to pretend to love others—how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them. We may even be skilled in pretending to feel moved with compassion when we hear of others' needs, or to become indignant when we learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretense and politeness.

- I. Sincere love has requirements (Romans 12:9-14)
 - A. Hate Evil—wrongs perpetrated on all humanity (v 9)
 - B. Hold Good—embrace, become intimately acquainted with good things (v 9)
 - C. Honor others—in one of two ways: (v 10b)
 1. Ulterior motives—we honor bosses so they will reward us, employees so they will work harder, the wealthy so they will contribute to our cause, the powerful so they will not use their power against us.
 2. Love's motive—we honor people because they are made in God's image, because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and because they have a unique contribution to make to Christ's church.
 - D. Be devoted—all in with our brothers and sisters, 100% invested. (v 10-11)
 1. Never lacking in enthusiasm
 2. Always possess passion
 - E. Be joyful in hope—happy while waiting
 - F. Patient in affliction—easy going in disorder
 - G. Practice Hospitality—Christian hospitality is different than social entertaining
 1. Entertaining focuses on the host—home spotless, food well prepared, host must be cool and collected.
 2. Hospitality focuses on the guest—their needs, whether a place to stay, nourishing food, a listening ear, or acceptance are primary concerns

Don't hesitate to offer hospitality just because you are too tired, too busy or not wealthy enough to entertain.

H. Be around people in order to make a difference. (v 14)

1. Exalt the people who torture you
2. Be glad for people who are celebrating
3. Grieve with people who can't get over loss

If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God's grace, we will want to pass it on to others. And remember grace is undeserved favor. By giving an enemy a drink, we're not excusing his misdeeds. We're recognizing him, forgiving him and loving him in spite of his sins—just as Christ did for us. All of us need to know that somebody loves me!