

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

NEHEMIAH CARED

By R. J. Evans

It has been said that “The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them; that’s the essence of inhumanity.” That statement is the lesson Jesus taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37).

Have you ever felt as though no one seemed to care? Have you ever been sick, and no one ever called to see how you were feeling? Have you ever been down and lonely, and hardly anyone ever glanced in your direction? Have you ever been discouraged to the point of missing the services of the church, and no one called to tell you they had been missing you, and wanted to know what they could do to help?

I’m sure that most of us have wondered at times – “does anybody really care?” A friend once told me of his attending a local church for three months before one particular elder of the congregation ever made an effort to introduce himself. I know of a person who repeatedly requested of a preacher that he visit her dying mother in the hospital, but he refused because that was not a part of his “job” as an evangelist.

As Christians, we need to constantly examine our hearts to see if we really care for people. We need to ask ourselves if we are doing the things necessary to let others know that we care about them. Or, do we care about certain ones, while being indifferent toward others? We all must be careful, lest we become so “wrapped up” in our own lives, we become totally insensitive and oblivious to the needs and concerns of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

Nehemiah was the kind of person who cared. Let’s notice four ways in which he cared:

Nehemiah cared enough to ask (Neh. 1:1-3). He was the cupbearer to the Persian king, Artaxerxes. He was concerned for the struggling remnant of Jews who lived hundreds of miles away. He asked about Jerusalem and the ones living there because he had a caring heart. When we truly care about people, we want the facts, no matter how painful they may be. Three words summarize the bad news Nehemiah received: survivors, distress, and reproach. Are we like Nehemiah, anxious to know the truth even about the worst situations? Are we the kind of people who care enough to ask?

Nehemiah cared enough to weep (Neh. 1:4). What makes people laugh or weep is often an indication of their character. People who laugh at another's mistakes or misfortunes, or who weep over trivial, insignificant personal disappointments are lacking in character. Sometimes weeping is a sign of weakness; but with Nehemiah, it was a sign of strength and deep concern, as it was with Jeremiah, “the weeping prophet” (Jer. 9:1). The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul wept over sad situations (Lk. 19:41; Acts 20:19).

Nehemiah cared enough to pray (Neh. 1:5-10). This prayer is the first of twelve recorded prayers in the book of Nehemiah. In fact, the book opens and closes with prayer. It is obvious that Nehemiah was a man of faith who depended wholly upon the Lord to help him accomplish his work. Nehemiah succeeded because he depended upon God. The same holds true for us today.

Nehemiah cared enough to volunteer (Neh. 1:11). It has well been said that “prayer is not getting man’s will done in heaven, but getting God’s will done on earth.” But for God’s will to be done on earth, He needs people who are readily available for Him to use them in His service. What about the times when volunteers are needed to teach a class, prepare the communion trays, prepare a meal, make a visit, write a letter, send a card, make a phone call, etc.? Do we make ourselves available?

God is still looking for people who care, people like Nehemiah, who cared enough to ask for the facts, weep over the needs, pray for God's help, and then volunteer to get the job done. Nehemiah cared! Or, as another prophet once said to the Lord, "***Here am I, send me***" (Isa. 6:8)! ■

THE DRAWING POWER OF GOD'S WORD

(Edited)

By Joe R. Price

Let's face it; people do not always come to a Bible classes or worship services to hear the word of God. Some come to please someone else. Others come with an expectation of being entertained. Still others come looking for a chance to object to whatever is said or done. These are ungodly traits. Others do have ears to hear, and come in order to "sit at the feet of Jesus" and intently hear, learn and live the gospel of the Savior (Lk. 8:8; 10:38-42).

God's inspired word is designed to draw sinners to God and to the salvation in His Son. It is sufficient to the task (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Jesus said, "***No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me***" (Jn. 6:44-45). To deny the power of the word of God to draw sinners to Christ is to deny the power of God.

Brethren must trust the word of God to draw the lost and to preserve the saved. It is the message that must draw the lost to salvation (1 Pet. 1:22-25). For example, why is it some brethren prefer to use recreational activities to advertise and encourage young people to attend special services intended for their spiritual benefit? Are young people only interested in hearing the gospel when it is associated with wiener roasts, volleyball and overnight lock-in games and activities? I do not believe so, and those who are interested in feeding their souls will not be lured by offers intended to feed the belly (Jn. 6:26). It is revealing that in the same context in which people thought they could come to Jesus to have their stomachs fed that Jesus said He feeds the soul as the bread of life (Jn. 6:27-38). Jesus did not use food to draw people to Himself; we dare not attempt it today.

Some, while emphasizing faith in Jesus, tell us not to put our faith in the Bible. We cannot do one without the other. Jesus is "***the Word***" we must hear and follow (Jn. 1:1-3, 14-18; 14:6). The inspired Psalmist said, "***I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word***" (Psa. 119:42). He put his faith in God's word. We must, too. Jesus teaches us truth (Eph. 4:20-21). Faith in Jesus is not and cannot be separated from faith in His word, the Bible (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Like the apostles, we must go and "***speak to the people all the words of this life***" (Acts 5:20). We need not add games and gimmicks to the drawing power of God's word. Divine truth is sufficient to draw those with a "***noble and good heart***" to Christ (Lk. 8:14-15; Acts 17:11-12). ■

"38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42, KJV).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250