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AMBASSADORS OF LOVE

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The Drunk at My Window

Christianity gets a wake-up call



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

I had read that passage from the Bible I don't know how many times. I memorized it years ago, and it has often appeared on these pages. "Come to Me [Jesus], all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke

upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."¹ Then I read something that helped me see those verses in a new light.

Philip Yancey writes, "I used to believe that Christianity solved problems and made life easier. Increasingly, I believe that my faith complicates life, in ways it should be complicated. As a Christian, I cannot *not* care about the environment, about homelessness and poverty, about racism and religious persecution, about injustice and violence. God does not give me that option."

Yancey goes on to quote that old familiar passage, which he explains this way: "Jesus offers comfort, but the comfort consists of taking on a new burden, His own burden. Jesus offers a peace that involves new turmoil, a rest that involves new tasks."²

What new tasks? Jesus summed them up when He summed up the Christian faith: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"³—our "neighbor" being anyone we are in a position to help. Loving others as much as we love ourselves doesn't come naturally and seldom is easy, but it's one of the keys to happiness, fulfillment, and success in life.

Take Jesus' yoke. Give Him yours. It's the best trade you'll ever make.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

1. Matthew 11:28–30

2. Philip Yancey, *Reaching for the Invisible God* (Zondervan, 2000), 93–94

3. Matthew 22:37–39

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being neighborly

A CERTAIN MAN WENT DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite [temple assistant], when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan [a member of an ethnic and religious group shunned by Jews of that time], as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.”

So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?

—Jesus, *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*, Luke 10:30–36.

WITH THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN, Jesus taught that our neighbor is anyone who needs our help, regardless of race, creed, color, nationality, condition, or location. If we have love, we can't just pass by someone in need; we'll take action, like the Samaritan did. That's the difference between pity and compassion. Pity just feels sorry; compassion does something about it. The compassionate put feet to their prayers and kind deeds to their kind words.

Love is making a connection between God and somebody who needs His love, and we do that by showing others His real love and manifesting it by genuine proving action. “The love of Christ compels us.”¹—*David Brandt Berg*

WHAT DOES LOVE LOOK LIKE?

It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. It has hands to help others. It has feet to hasten to help the poor and needy. That is what love looks like.

—*Saint Augustine*

IF YOU'D STOP TO THINK ABOUT IT, you'd probably be surprised at how many thoughtful little things you could find to do for others that would cost almost nothing and take almost no time. Become a master of the five-minute favor.—*Shannon Shayler* ■

1. 2 Corinthians 5:14





BECAUSE

YOU CAN

BY MARIANNE ROSS

THE GOOD YOU DO TODAY, PEOPLE WILL OFTEN FORGET TOMORROW; DO GOOD ANYWAY.

The first time I read these words, I remember thinking they didn't make sense. That was going to change.

My mom and I had gotten on a bus, and as we walked down the aisle looking for two empty seats together, I noticed a young mother with a toddler and a baby. The toddler was obviously bored, and his mother was struggling to keep him seated while also trying to make her baby more comfortable.

We took seats directly behind them, and I selected a playlist on my MP3 player, hoping to tune out the distraction and enjoy the ride. But soon the baby's whimpers turned to loud crying. I was getting annoyed.

The young mother looked stressed and embarrassed, but was that any of my business? No one else on the bus seemed to think it was any of theirs—except for my mom, who went and sat next to the struggling mother.

They had been talking for a few minutes when the woman turned in her seat. Tears were streaming down her cheek. I turned off my MP3 player and leaned in closer to hear what she was saying.

She was making the three-hour bus ride with her children in order to visit her husband, who was in jail.

She was out of money and hadn't been able to buy milk for the baby or lunch for herself and her son. I wondered if Mom believed her. Some people will say anything for a handout.

Mom reached into her purse and produced an apple, which she handed to the little boy. Then she pressed some money into the woman's hand.

"Marianne," she said, turning to me, "these people are changing buses at the same station as we are. Can you help the little boy?"

I looked at his dirty hair and stained clothes. Couldn't he just follow on his own? Then another line from that poem came to me.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

The bus stopped, and I bent down and scooped the little boy into my arms. It might not mean anything to him, but I could still choose to do good. I could show love anyway.

"Thanks," the little fellow said, laying his head on my shoulder. We saw them to their next bus and waved as they pulled out.

Now I understand. Love gives because it can.

MARIANNE ROSS IS AN 18-YEAR-OLD MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDONESIA. ■



PARADOXICAL COMMANDMENTS

BY KENT M. KEITH

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered;
 Forgive them anyway.
 If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;
 Be kind anyway.
 If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;
 Succeed anyway.
 If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;
 Be honest and frank anyway.
 What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight;
 Build anyway.
 If you find serenity and happiness, others may be jealous;
 Be happy anyway.
 The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;
 Do good anyway.
 Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;
 Give the world the best you've got anyway.
 You see, in the final analysis, it is all between you and God;
 It was never between you and them anyway. ■

“Paradoxical Commandments” is often attributed to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, as a copy hung on her wall, but it was written by Kent when he was 19, and first published by the Harvard Student Agencies in 1968.

1. See Matthew 22:39.

WHILE WE CAN

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I
 awoke and saw that life was service. I
 acted and behold, service was joy.
 —*Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)*

Only during the few years of this life
 are we given the privilege of serving
 each other and Christ. We will have
 heaven forever, but have only a short
 time for service here, and therefore
 must not waste the opportunity.
 —*Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889–1933)*

Even if I knew that tomorrow the
 world would go to pieces, I would
 still plant my apple tree.
 —*Martin Luther (1483–1546)* ■

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD IN ONE SIMPLE STEP

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone
 would simply do what Jesus said to
 do—love our neighbors as our-
 selves?¹ But when people don't treat
 others with much love, they're going
 to have problems—and they do! It
 can safely be said that all of the evils
 in the world today have their root
 cause in people's lack of love for God
 and one another. Nevertheless, the
 simple love of God and one another
 is still God's solution, even in such a
 complex, confused, and highly com-
 plicated society as that of the world
 today. If we love God, we can love
 and respect others too. We can then
 follow His rules of life, liberty, and
 the possession of happiness, and all
 will be well and happy in Him.
 —*David Brandt Berg (1919–1994)* ■

Ambassadors of Love

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

THROUGH HIS CHILDREN, GOD IS TRYING TO SHOW THE WORLD WHAT HE IS LIKE. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”¹ Jesus came to love the world, and He calls us to do likewise in every facet of life. The only way that others will ever find His joy and peace and love and happiness and heaven is through us.

No matter where we are from, if we have Jesus, we are now His ambassadors and represent the King of kings, the One who runs the universe.

What was Jesus’ last message to His disciples at the Last Supper, just before He was arrested, taken to jail, beaten, and killed? “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”² He talked about love, that love was the most important thing.

Those first Christians turned the world upside down with the love of God. The way they lived convinced others that their faith was real. Even their Roman persecutors marveled. “Look at how these Christians love one another!” “Who is this Christ?” they asked the Christians. “And how does He make you so happy? Even though you have nothing, you’ve got everything! How can I find this kind of happiness too?” And within two hundred years, one out of five people in the Western world were professing Christians.

Today, nearly two thousand years later, the heart of man is still the same. So many people are searching for love, but seldom, if ever, finding it. People everywhere are looking around for some little ray of hope, some salvation, some bright spot somewhere, a little love, a little mercy, someplace where they can find some relief. We who

have found God and His love have what others have been searching for all their lives and need desperately, and if we can show them that love exists, then they can believe that God exists, because God is love.

Even the little things you do can mean a lot. The light of your smile, the kindness of your face, the influence of your life can shed light on many and have an amazing effect on some of the people you think might be the least likely to be impressed. When they feel your love and you tell them it’s God’s love, they think, *Maybe Somebody up there really does love me!* It can change their whole outlook on life and give them a new start.

May we always be known by our love.

DAVID BRANDT BERG (1919–1994) WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. ■

1. John 20:21

2. John 13:35

POINTS TO PONDER

The human family is very diverse. Many conflicts in our world are caused when people are intolerant of the ways that others see the world. Learning tolerance is an important cornerstone to creating a better world.—*Robert Alan*

Respect your fellow human beings, treat them fairly, disagree with them honestly, enjoy their friendship, explore your thoughts about one another candidly, work together for a common goal and help one another achieve it. No destructive lies. No ridiculous fears. No debilitating anger.—*Bill Bradley (b. 1943)*

Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one's own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others.—*John F. Kennedy (1917–1963)*

When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others.—*Peace Pilgrim (1908–1981)*

If you judge people you have no time to love them.—*Mother Teresa (1910–1997)*

We need to promote greater tolerance and understanding among the peoples of the world. Nothing can be more dangerous to our efforts to build peace and development than a world divided along religious, ethnic or cultural lines. In each nation, and among all nations, we must work to promote unity based on our shared humanity.—*Kofi Annan (b. 1938)*

T O L E R A N C E

Our inner strengths, experiences, and truths cannot be lost, destroyed, or taken away. Every person has an inborn worth and can contribute to the human community. We all can treat one another with dignity and respect, provide opportunities to grow toward our fullest lives and help one another discover and develop our unique gifts. We each deserve this and we all can extend it to others.—*Author Unknown*

The best thing to give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity.—*Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)*

In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.—*Jesus, Matthew 7:12 NIV*

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.—*Paul the Apostle, Philippians 2:3* ■

THE PEACE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon:
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy. ■*

“ DO NOT BE OVERCOME ”

BY MARIE PÉLOQUIN

DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.—*ROMANS 12:21*

It's interesting that the apostle Paul wrote that to the Christians in Rome, because there are some obvious similarities between the social climate of first-century Rome and that of much of the world of today.

Evil was rampant in Rome, and its pull was strong. The Roman Empire hadn't become the undisputed ruler of the Western world through compassion, kindness, or humility. Wealth was in the hands of a few, and they used it to control the rest. The rich and powerful lived extravagantly while the masses struggled to survive. Perversions and debauchery were practiced by some and ignored by others.

Christianity was just one religion and Christ just one more deity. Considering the pantheon of gods that the Romans worshipped, it must have been difficult to convince anyone that Jesus was “the way, the truth, and the life.”¹

Starting to sound familiar?

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the evil in the world. Every day we hear about another horrible crime being committed. Meanwhile, the popular

media searches for new and more horrific ways to portray violence, perversion, and all manner of evil. Whether it's a case of art imitating life or vice versa, life has lost its sanctity in the minds of many.

What can we do about a world so overcome with evil? This was the same dilemma that the Christians in Rome faced, and Paul's counsel to them rings true today. “Overcome evil with good.”

If a dish is dirty, being angry about the situation does nothing to fix it. Neither does trying to ignore it. The only solution is to expose that dirty dish to the power of a little soap and water.

If a room is dark, you can curse the darkness or whine over how unpleasant it is—or you can flip the light switch or open the curtains and let some light in.

It's the same with society's evils. We can get discouraged, angry, or depressed—“overcome by evil”—or we can be a force for good, even if only through personal example. Not every dirty dish will be cleaned, and not every darkened heart will be enlightened, but we can each do our part day by day, person by person, decision by decision.

MARIE PÉLOQUIN IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE U.S. ■

1. John 14:6

PEOPLE ARE GOOD

BY RAMONA BAILEY

I'VE KNOWN ALEX FOR FOUR YEARS. HE IS 24 YEARS OLD, HAS CEREBRAL PALSY, AND IS ONE OF OUR WOMEN'S CLUB FOOD DELIVERY RECIPIENTS.

Each time I deliver food, we spend an hour or so talking. "If you could go anywhere in the world," I asked him several times, "where would you go?" His answer was always the same: St. Petersburg, Russia.

Last year he graduated from university with honors. For his extraordinary achievement he received plane tickets for two to St. Petersburg—a gift from a family that had heard about him through the food delivery program.

Alex was beside himself with happiness—so much so that he couldn't sleep at night. Neither could his mother, who worried about where the money for all of the other trip expenses would come from. Four days in St. Petersburg could cost as much as several months at home, and she didn't have that kind of savings.

They were looking into shared-accommodation possibilities when the manager of the St. Petersburg Marriott Hotel heard about Alex and offered them a complimentary room for their entire stay, breakfast included, as well as transfers to and from the airport.

A director at my husband's company organized and paid for a private tour of the city, as well as visits to the Hermitage Museum, one of the finest art museums in the world, and Peterhof, the summer palace of Peter the Great. Memories for a lifetime!

People are good. People want to do good. If a few individuals who didn't even know each other could make such a difference to Alex, how much more can we do when we unite with the clear purpose of changing lives for the better?

RAMONA BAILEY IS A STUDENT WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN UKRAINE. ■



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A man was walking near a beach when he saw a boy bend over, pick something up, and throw it into the ocean. Over and over the boy did this. The man went to see what was going on, and found that countless starfish had been washed onto the beach by the tide. Struck by the apparent futility of the task the boy had taken on, the man said, "You must be crazy! There are hundreds and hundreds of starfish here. You can't possibly make a difference." But the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back in the ocean. "I made a difference to that one," he replied.

—Retold by Keith Phillips

“All things to all people”

BY UDAY KUMAR

THE BIBLE TELLS US, “DO NOT BE SHAPED BY THIS WORLD.”¹ IT ALSO TELLS US TO “BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE.”² At first glance these instructions may seem contradictory, but they can actually complement each other. God does not want us to conform to ungodly attitudes, no matter how prevalent they may be, but He does want us to be attuned to society in ways that allow us to better show His love to others, that we might bring them closer to Him.

The apostle Paul was a good example of this kind of flexibility as he related to and reached a great variety of people. When addressing a predominantly Jewish audience in Antioch, for example, he reminded them of the history of Israel from the time of Moses to the time of David, and then he showed how Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah.³ But when Paul spoke to the Areopagus council in Athens, sophisticated Greeks who would not have been interested in hearing a history of the Jewish people, he began by referring to an altar he had seen in the city, which bore the inscription “To an Unknown God.” Then he quoted Greek poets to show that the attributes of this god—creation, providence, and judgment—were fulfilled in Jesus.⁴

Francis Xavier (1506–1552) also lived the “all things to all men” principle. In order to relate to the Indian people who considered humility a virtue, he wore shabby

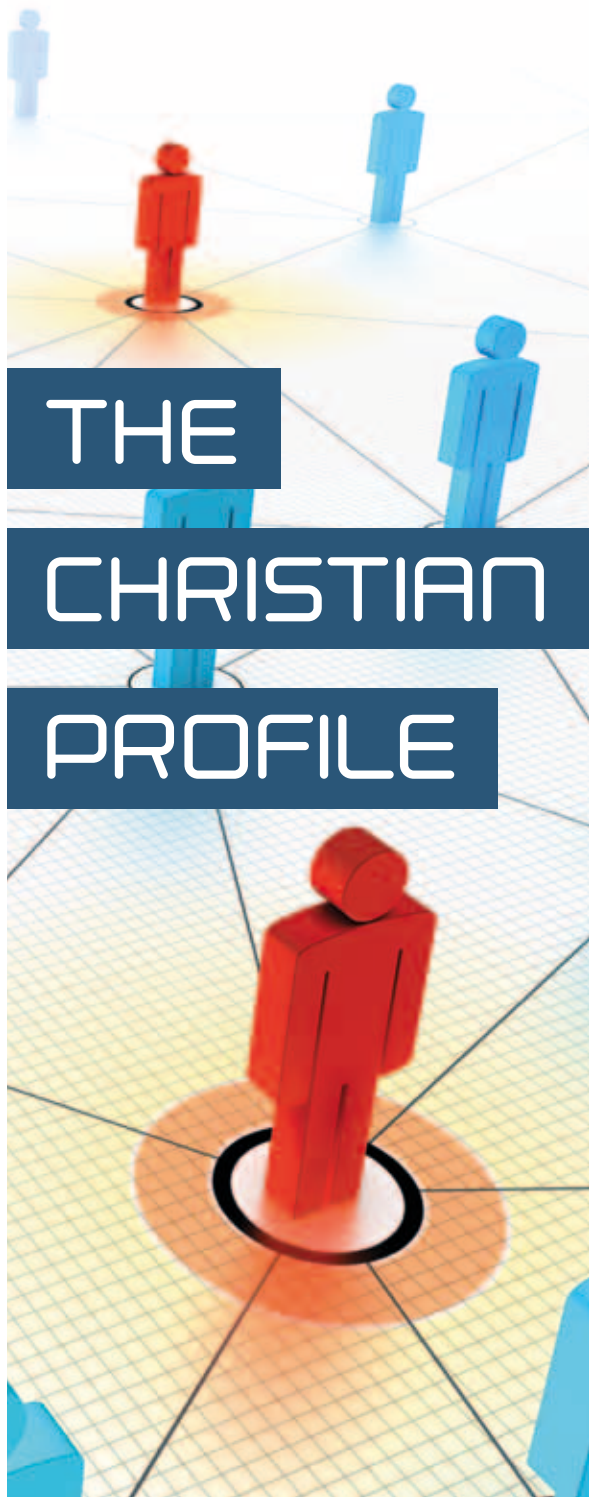


attire and traveled on foot. When he later visited Japan, however, he found that humility was not considered a virtue and that poverty was despised. So Xavier dressed in fine clothing, brought expensive gifts to the emperor, and traveled at all times with an impressive entourage. He did whatever it took to present Jesus in the best possible light to the people he wanted to reach.

Jesus Himself “became all things to all people” when He left the grand halls of heaven and the intimate fellowship that He shared with His heavenly Father to come to earth in human form.⁵ He did this so that He could better relate to us, better understand our problems and weaknesses, and better intercede for us before the throne of God.⁶ Jesus wants us to follow His example.⁷ He wants us to manifest our love for others by reaching people on their level.

UDAY KUMAR IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN INDIA. ■

1. Romans 12:2 NCV
2. 1 Corinthians 9:22 ESV
3. Acts 13:14–49
4. Acts 17:22–31
5. Philippians 2:5–7
6. Hebrews 2:17
7. 1 John 2:6



THE *EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS* WAS WRITTEN BY AN UNNAMED CHRISTIAN TO A HIGH-RANKING PAGAN, PROBABLY IN THE LATE SECOND CENTURY. Perhaps the earliest preserved explanation and defense of the Christian faith to a nonbeliever, it provides insight as to how early Christians viewed the world and their place in it. The attributes the author lists in chapter 5, "The Manners of Christians," provide food for thought for us today. Excerpts from the J.B. Lightfoot translation:

Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country, language, or custom. For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric lifestyle. ... While they live in both Greek and barbarian cities, as each one's lot was cast, and follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, at the same time they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own spiritual citizenship.

They live in their own countries, but only as aliens; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. ... They are "in the flesh," but do not live "according to the flesh." They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws; indeed in their private lives they transcend the laws.

They love everyone. ... They are put to death, yet they are brought to life. ... They are in need of everything, yet they abound in everything. ... They are dishonored, yet they are glorified in their dishonor. They are slandered, yet they are vindicated. They are cursed, yet they bless. They are insulted, yet they offer respect. ... When they are punished, they rejoice as though brought to life. ... Those who hate them are unable to give a reason for their hostility.

In a word, what the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians throughout the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but is not of the body; likewise Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. The soul, which is invisible, is confined in the body, which is visible; in the same way, Christians are recognized as being in the world, and yet their religion remains invisible. ■



THE DRUNK AT MY WINDOW

BY ANGELA SOUZA

IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT AND I WAS BRUSHING MY TEETH, ALREADY HALF ASLEEP, WHEN I HEARD HIM. He was shouting and mumbling at the same time. Probably a drunk calling to his drinking buddy, I decided.

Half an hour later, I could still hear the man shouting, though I couldn't make out anything he was saying. Enough was enough! I decided to call the police.

As I passed a window, I saw that the man was standing under a streetlight. He was older than I had imagined, bare-chested in the cold, and yelling right in my direction.

A young man stopped to talk with him. A moment later he took off his jacket and put it on the old man. I was astonished. The two hugged, and I could tell that the young man was praying for the drunk. A couple passed and did a double take, but the young man didn't seem to care what they were thinking.

Eventually the modern-day Good Samaritan put his arm around the old man, as if to say "I'll get you home," and with that the two were gone.

I stood at the window awhile longer, thinking about my own Christianity. I had to admit that my reaction to the annoying drunk had fallen far short of what Jesus' would have been. Jesus wouldn't have called the police. He would have stopped. He would have talked with the man. He would have given him His coat. He would have listened to him, comforted him, and prayed for him. And it might have changed the old man's life.

When I eventually went back to bed, I thanked God for sending that young man to help both the drunk and me. And I prayed to do better next time God sends a needy person my way.

ANGELA SOUZA IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN BRAZIL. ■

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. ... Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."—*Jesus, Matthew 25:34–36, 40*

ANSWERS
TO YOUR
QUESTIONS

Q & A

winning friends

Q: *I want to get along well with others and be liked, but often I don't know where to begin. How can I build strong connections with people?*

A: Here are some tips to get you started. The point is not to pretend to be something you're not, but to make a conscious effort to cultivate qualities that will make people feel at ease and be happy to be around you.

BE POLITE AND COURTEOUS. As St. Basil observed, "He who sows courtesy, reaps friendship, and he who plants kindness, gathers love."

SMILE. A sincere smile disarms the guarded, soothes the argumentative, calms the angry, and encourages the downhearted. It sets a positive tone.

BE OPTIMISTIC. Everyone has enough problems already. People are drawn to upbeat, solution-oriented people.

BE SOCIABLE. If you're shy or withdrawn, focusing on making the other person feel accepted and at ease will help you be less self-conscious.

BE RESPECTFUL. It's easy to respect people who you have a lot in common with, but respecting others' right to think and be different is even more important, as well as more endearing.

LOOK FOR THE GOOD IN OTHERS. Everyone has at least a few admirable qualities. Focus on finding those, not finding fault.

BE VOCAL ABOUT OTHERS' GOOD QUALITIES. Everyone needs to know that his or her good qualities



are noticed and appreciated. Be generous, sincere, and specific with your compliments.

LIGHTEN UP. A person with a good sense of humor is fun to be around. Just be sure your humor doesn't come at someone else's expense.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND. Everyone has a right to an opinion. Few arguments are worth winning at the cost of a friendship.

BE HUMBLE. Proud, self-promoting people are a pain to be around. Humility is winsome; pride is woeful.

BE A GOOD LISTENER. One of the best ways to show people you care about them is by taking an interest in what they have to say and making an effort to understand and empathize.

BE GRACIOUS WHEN OTHERS MAKE MISTAKES. Everybody messes up sometimes. Remember the Golden Rule.¹ What goes around comes around. ■

"THANKS FOR LAST TIME!"

In Iceland, "*Takk fyrir síðast*" is a common greeting. It means "Thank you for last time," and people say it in the same breath as "Hello." Even if there wasn't a particularly meaningful exchange the last time the two met, saying this puts the current conversation within the larger framework of their long-term interactions and starts it on a positive note.—*Samuel Keating*

1. Matthew 7:12

WORKING with GOD

BY MARTIN McTEG

THE WORKPLACE IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY NASTY AND COMPETITIVE ARENA. Too often, honesty and hard work seem to lose out to the pursuit of a quick buck and me-first politicking. But there *is* another way. The idea that the Bible contains specific guidance for the modern work life is not as incongruous as it might seem. As Joseph¹ and Daniel² proved, integrity and diligence can help us succeed and stand out from the crowd.

HAVE A STRONG WORK ETHIC.

Give it your best shot. Instead of doing the minimum, put your all into your responsibilities. “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6). “The soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (Proverbs 13:4).

Be a self-starter. “Go to the ant, you slug-gard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6–8).

Be honest. Bending the rules doesn’t pay in the long run. “Honesty guides good people; dishonesty destroys treacherous people” (Proverbs 11:3 NLT).

DON’T DWELL ON NEGATIVES.

No job is perfect. “If there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

As for that hard-to-get-along-with coworker, the Bible admonishes, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Contentions? “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Proverbs 29:11).

Feeling restless and bored? God will refresh your spirit. “The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning” (Lamentations 3:22–23 NLT).

Feeling stressed and spent? “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

BE PATIENT.

God blesses those who do things His way, but not always immediately and not only in dollars and cents. Bible figures Joseph and Daniel both rose to top positions, but neither was an overnight success.³ “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich” (Proverbs 10:22). “Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4).

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1. See Genesis chapters 39 and 41.

2. See Daniel 1:19–20.

3. See Genesis chapters 37,39–41;

Daniel chapters 1–2.

Who needs prayer?

A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

WHO NEEDS YOUR PRAYERS?

LOTS OF PEOPLE DO. Among those closest to you, there are probably at least a few who aren't in good health, or have suffered some personal loss, or are depressed or stressed. And then there are those you hear about in the news and those you pass on the road of life.

It's easy to get so wrapped up in our own concerns that we neglect to look around at the needs of others. This exercise is a remedy to such self-involvement, but it's more than that; it's a vehicle for you to reach out and help others.

It starts with a simple premise: God answers prayers.

There are many accounts in the Bible of prayer bringing outstanding results—when Elisha prayed for a sun-stricken child and the boy revived,¹ for example. And Jesus told us, “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”² The prophet Samuel recognized that neglecting to pray for others is a sin,³ and Paul set an example by praying often for his coworkers.⁴

Begin this exercise by picturing yourself in the center of a set of concentric circles. You're in the center, but the focus isn't on you. Within the first circle are your family and closest friends. It's probably easy to identify the needs of at least two or three. Make a note. Now picture the next circle, your colleagues and acquaintances. Make a note of their names and needs. Now picture the widest circle, people whom you don't know personally, but whose needs you are aware of—the woman in a wheelchair who you passed on the street, the homeless family you read about. Make a note.

At this point you probably have a list of about ten people. Pray for these people throughout the coming week. Keep the list where you will notice it, perhaps next to your bed or over the kitchen sink or on your desk.

Take five or ten minutes every day to pray for them. Even a few moments of meaningful, heartfelt prayer can make a big difference in someone's life. “When a believing person prays, great things happen.”⁵ ■



START HERE

You can make a difference in others' lives, but Jesus in you can make a bigger difference. If you haven't done so yet, you can receive Jesus right now by praying a short prayer like this one:

Jesus, I believe in You and invite You into my life as my Savior and constant companion.

1. 2 Kings 4:18–36

2. Mark 11:24

3. 1 Samuel 12:23

4. 1 Thessalonians 1:2

5. James 5:16 NCV

A key to understanding others is putting yourself in their place. When I came to earth, I did that for you. I experienced firsthand the difficulties of life. I got tired, hungry, sick, lonely, discouraged, and went through everything else you experience. And having done that, I can now truly feel for you, help, and comfort you the way you need Me to.

That's also the key to relating well to others. You can't totally change your circumstances like I did, but you don't need to. Just project yourself mentally into their circumstances.

For example, before you ask someone to do something that may seem simple and straightforward to you, consider first whether that person will feel the

same. Or if someone is out of sorts, think about what might be causing that person to act that way. This is a much safer way to operate than assuming everyone else sees and feels the same way about things as you.

Walk a mile in another's shoes, as the saying goes, and you will be much more inclined to be understanding and supportive when the situation calls for that. Then adjust your expectations or presentation accordingly. Others will sense that you've anticipated their needs or concerns and taken their limitations into account, and this will help you live and work together better. Empathy helps create unity of minds and goals, and that's a wonderful thing!

Learning to Relate

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

