
Conference Care

Facilities Newsletter

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“And went to him, and bound up his wounds...and took care of him” Luke 10:34
“But that the members should have the same care one for another” 1 Corinthians 12:25

Editorial

Somebody told me one time that to really start growing and making progress in one’s life, you have to step out of your comfort zone. To practice genuine caring, you may also have to leave your comfort zone. Too often we stay in a place where we only think of ourselves, look after ourselves, and pursue our own interests. This place becomes very comfortable to us. Various writers have made the statement that ships are safest in port, but that’s not what ships are built for. We are not made by our Creator to remain constantly in our comfort zone. God created us to go out and serve others; that is what helps us grow and brings us fulfillment.

Sometimes when we notice somebody having a problem or going through some particular trial or struggle, we are judgemental. We think he shouldn’t have done that, or what in the world is his problem? How much better if we would step out of our area where we are so comfortable (which is often confined to thinking the thoughts mentioned above or talking about it to someone else), put a hand on his shoulder, and walk with him for a little while. It may take some effort to draw his burden out of him as we encourage him to share his heart. It takes effort to listen to what his heart is saying, not just to his words, especially if he finds it difficult to express his innermost feelings. And it may take some time. This effort is what makes it hard for us to get out of our comfort zone. It takes self-denial. Consider Matthew 16:24, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Jesus is our supreme example. One time in His travels, Jesus came upon Zacchaeus, a rich man, a troubled man, up in a tree. Jesus didn’t ask him what he was doing there or what the matter was with him. He didn’t tell him that a tree was an odd place for a man like him to be. He didn’t make him feel inferior or silly. He just said, “Zacchaeus, make

haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5). Take note also from the scripture, that the people around murmured against Jesus for going to spend time with Zacchaeus at his house. To abide with someone is to take more than just a little time. As Jesus spent this time with Zacchaeus, he repented of his sins and was converted. Salvation came to his house. Salvation coming to his house indicates that he and some or all of his family were saved from an eternity of death and destruction. And it was all because somebody cared, took some time, listened, and dared to go against the status quo of the time and show His love.

In Luke 24 we have the account of the two brethren walking to Emmaus after Jesus was crucified. They were troubled and sad. They had been putting all their hopes in Jesus and now he had been killed. There were reports that he had risen again from the dead, but they didn’t understand it. They didn’t know if that could even be true.

Suddenly a man they didn’t know stepped up and *walked beside them*. He walked with them. He drew it out of them. He comforted them. He shared with them His own insight and experiences. He walked with them all the way to their destination. He took time and put forth an effort. They felt His love flowing freely to them.

When the two brethren, together with the stranger, reached their destination, He stayed with them and accepted their invitation to eat with them. It was only then that they recognized Him that He was Jesus. In verse 32 we read, “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

As we take the time and effort, and practice the self-denial it takes to listen and share heart to heart with our elders, with other troubled people, with our youth, or with those who have fallen or have lost a loved one, we find them saying the same words as the brethren in the account above. “Didn’t it do our hearts good to talk with him? He seemed

to really listen. He really cared. My heart just burned inside me as we shared together.”

And then our own hearts will burn. They will be warm with blessing, reward, and fulfillment. And it will be all because we were willing to get out of our comfort zone.

Does Anyone Care?

“The members should have the same care one for another” (1 Corinthians 12:25).

The above passage came to mind as I have been considering the needs of people around us. Some are lonely, some are sad, and some are lacking their daily necessities. Every person has some needs in one aspect of life or another.

There are elderly people who are lonely. Do we practice the Golden Rule by spending time with them to ease the burden of their loneliness? “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31). There are also the sick who struggle with their afflictions. Do we take time to cheer them with words of encouragement or offer a prayer with them for their comfort and consolation?

There are people in a struggle with the evil forces of darkness, or with their old natures that want to dominate their thoughts, actions, or attitudes. Does anyone care enough to offer an understanding and compassionate ear? Many discouraged souls find help in having a friendly, open, and non-judgmental ear bent toward them. Will you, or I, offer one of ours?

There are troubled souls, people with strained relationships, who are running here and there to find help or wisdom for their dilemmas. The Word of God has answers; will we share it with them? Who is there who will care? If God’s children won’t, who will? “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10). The scripture says that we will always have the poor among us. “For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always” (Mark 14:7). The early Christian church sent an offering to those in need. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea” (Acts 11:29). This caring and sharing is also done on an individual basis, unannounced, and often unnoticed by many. When we hear of misfortune, may we have the compassion and sympathy to ask, “What may I do to help?”

Some families have the challenge of caring for family members who are unable to provide for themselves. At times this burden becomes almost too much to bear, due to physical, emotional, or time constraints, or other limitations. Who will step forward to offer their time and energies to

grant some respite? Even an evening off or a day off would give the care providers a break and allow them to come back with renewed courage. This may not be everyone’s calling, but surely it is for someone to lend a helping hand. Could this be for me to do, or perhaps, for you?

The Word of God identifies gifts with which God has endowed His children. Among these is the gift of helps (1 Corinthians 12:28). This is a broad field, and could include many of the aspects lifted out in this article. Let us not belittle any gift, but make the best use of them for the benefit of others and for the honor and glory of God. He will bless us.

We are Christ’s servants. He came to “bind up the bruised reed” and to “fan the smoking flax” (Matthew 12:20). He has commissioned the work into our hands. Will we rise to the challenge?

While meditating on this subject, a song came to my mind, the first stanza and chorus of which follow:

Jesus calls for one and all,
To the vineyard great and small,
Help the needy, help some soul,
Sharing makes the hearts aglow.

Oh—who’ll offer friendship,
Who’ll offer kindness,
Who has some love to share?
Who’ll lend a hand to help one another,
Who’ll have a heart to care?
Who’ll have a mansion built up in glory,
Who’ll be a millionaire?
When life is over,
Who’ll have a Saviour,
Who’ll have someone to care?

(Song number 130, *Wildwood School Melodies*, copyright 1982 by PrairieView Press in *Wildwood School Melodies*. Words by Dorothy Good. Used here by permission.)

Norman Baize, Ballico, California

Dear Readers,

Several months ago I was working cheerfully at my job at a bakery in town and enjoying the work. Our churches here were working hard at getting a care home built. We have a group of men that had already put several years into making this a possibility. We have a wonderful nurse here who spent months working on this before our home even opened. Then there is the administrator who spent hours, days, and months on his school and training. There were girls who were going through CNA classes. Everyone was getting enthused; even I was. But for some reason I had no interest in working there. People would ask me if I was applying for a job, and I would just say, “No, I’m happy where I am.” Then one of the board members asked me to

pray about it. I still didn't feel any inclination to take a job there. It was getting closer to opening time and there still weren't enough people to staff the kitchen.

Then one Sunday morning one of our board members got up during announcements at church and made another plea for workers. If things didn't change they were going to have to look further afield to staff our facility completely. I still was quite unmoved. Then during the message that morning (I can't remember now what the message was), God took any choices out of my hands. It was almost like someone physically turned my mind around and from that time on there was no question where I would be working. I went to work the next morning and gave them notice of my resignation. It was hard because I loved my job there. But I love my new job more!

Now I'm head cook here at Sunset Home. The job has come with a lot more responsibility and more hours than what I had before. But it has also come with so many blessings. I now have time here at work to have heart to heart talks with my co-workers. I get to listen to the school children singing, to the young mothers who take time out of their busy days to come and sing here, and to the devotions that some of the brothers bring. And the love in my heart for these dear residents has grown. My life has been enriched more in the last three months than it has been for years. And when I think of our "care home" I feel like in one sense I am being cared for, too. I thank God for this wonderful opportunity.

Sherri Mastre, Bonners Ferry, Idaho

Quality of Life

My thoughts have been drawn to the subject of quality of life lately. This article provides an opportunity to explore this concept more deeply and hopefully shares some insight into care giving for the reader. The foremost thing that I have learned regarding quality of life is that it is totally an individual and personal experience that cannot be dictated by others, including the healthcare worker.

In reflecting on this subject for myself, I have to contemplate and examine the myriad of experiences that have influenced my own personal view on quality of life. Many of my experiences have been influenced by a secular education and the humanistic view of the medical field around me. As a Christian working in this world, the Holy Spirit has been faithful to teach and to guide throughout this whole process.

Quality of life is often referenced in discussions surrounding end of life care. The way the medical field throws options and questions at the layperson suggests that we really have a say in the matter and can dictate our end to our Maker. I have to admit that without realizing it, I have sometimes been taken in by this mentality. Suddenly I find myself looking at some of the suffering around me and thinking, "What can I do to avoid this?" I sometimes get the

vain thought that with my medical knowledge, I can make just the right choices so that when sufficient recovery is no longer possible I can choose the appropriate comfort care and skip out on the suffering associated with death.

Is this the proper thought? Sickness, suffering, and death are a part of life brought about initially by the fall of man and sin. Job went through extreme sickness and suffering, yet concluded that God was just. I have often been encouraged by the following saying: "If God brought you to it, He will bring you through it."

As a nurse, I have been an observer and an active participant in the many sufferings that both disease and the restoration of health can bring. Through this suffering, I have observed both bitterness and cheerful acceptance and resignation. The latter is much more desirable and brings the greater quality of life. This quality comes from knowing and trusting the Giver of Life. Do we have a drive to cling to life? Or can we recognize when God is calling us to our long home?

Our society has elevated and glorified independence and productivity to the point that old age is a villain to be fought rather than accepted as God's plan. Can we truly "rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man" (Leviticus 19:32) if we are caught up in this thinking. Are we ignorant to the valuable exchange that takes place between our elders and their families and communities? We are dependent on our elders to help keep peace among us, to share wisdom, and to lead us to the "ancient landmarks" of our faith. Do we recognize this value and influence on our lives? Let us recognize it now and show appreciation and support to our elders while they are with us.

Our church care facilities strive to provide for the special needs that our elders require from us. The unique difficulties that face our elders are loneliness, helplessness, and boredom. What can we do to help them through these difficulties and thus improve or maintain their quality of life?

In order to combat these difficulties our staff needs to have both the time and the compassion to provide companionship outside of personal care, and they need to be able to assist our elders in giving care to others. It is amazing to see how our elders thrive when they are given tasks to carry out within the facility. Some of these tasks at Grace Home include maintaining outdoor lighting, gardening, folding laundry, and offering prayer for meals. More impressive are the many spontaneous acts of giving care that I see among residents. These include comforting each other, inquiring about a sick or dying roommate, consoling family members, and calling staff when someone needs help. These acts are encouraged because it helps fulfill some of the deepest needs of our elders.

Our church communities can help in providing quality of life by providing the antidote for boredom: variety and spontaneity. This antidote is more effective from the community because it does not flow from the daily routine of the facility. Visits from children are the most spontaneous of all.

May we always remember that while we often cannot change the effects of disease and suffering, we can always provide those simple expressions of Christ's love to those around us and thus improve their quality of life. It is the many small human interactions throughout every day that bring quality of life and meaning to our elders.

An employee at Grace Home

The Smith family was in the doldrums. Winter seemed to be stretching out. They knew spring was coming but it was not coming quickly. In a way everything was normal. Dad went to work; the youngest three children were in school. The oldest was busy at her job and Mom was wading through the routines of keeping house and trying to keep everyone happy. They had had friends and relatives over socially through the last number of weeks, but it was dull nevertheless.

Mom encouraged everyone to keep focused. Dad just said, "The days are getting longer." Social activity didn't seem to satisfy the two oldest girls and the two youngest boys often used up their energy by arguing and being a pain in a multitude of ways that normally didn't bother anyone. Something was needed.

One afternoon the three children came home from school groaning. Next week they were scheduled to go to the rest home in town. It was a school project in social studies. They were agreed on the fact that an extra hour or two on the playground would be a whole lot smarter. And the teacher was telling them to shake hands with the residents! They were not enthused.

Friday at supper Dad told the children he had a plan for them. Something new was always welcome, so spirits rose a little. He told them he had made arrangements for them to do a program at the rest home in town as a family. Spirits crashed again but only temporarily because he said the program would be only half an hour long and they would not be obligated to shake any hands, just sing. One stipulation though, was to sing enthusiastically. Suddenly it looked like it could be fun. They loved singing and having someone to sing to was always nice.

They decided that Dad and the girls would plan the program. Mom and the boys would look after baking some cookies for a snack after the singing. The girls brought out their newest books and started picking songs. Dad interrupted them with an idea. He told them that they would be singing for people who remembered the old time hymns and gospel songs. At first the girls were a little unwilling, but then they got into it. They actually liked singing "In the Sweet By and By" and "Rock of Ages". So they chose ten songs and decided that Dad would have prayer for closing. They picked two more songs in case they would need something special. The specials would be "Church in the Wildwood" and a spiritual, "Steal Away Home".

Walking into the rest home the evening of the program, they were actually a little nervous. Would the people like it?

What about the nursing staff? Would it be acceptable to them? What were they used to?

Dad walked in purposefully and the family followed. He met the person in charge and did some introductions. The microphone was set up and a nice group of people were sitting and waiting. Mom had a great soprano; the girls were versatile with alto and tenor. Dad sang bass. The boys were happy to sit and stare. They got going and immediately the people perked up. One lady sang along. It seemed as if she knew most of the words. The nursing staff slowly drifted in from various places of their work and soon everyone seemed to be listening; some even had tears in their eyes. The family got into it, the boys came to help Mom, and everyone was getting into the spirit. They simply sang one song after another. They didn't waste time between songs; the attitude seemed to be one of giving them as much as they could in half an hour. Dad had a prayer and the folks gave them a big hand. The nursing staff begged them to sing one more song. The people looked so friendly that the girls had no problem talking to them. A few of the employees came especially to thank them for singing. They stayed for another half hour and shared the cookies with everyone.

On the way home the children were still excited. And they were getting excited about next week's social studies project too. "That lady was really neat." "I think the old man in the wheel chair liked me." Each one had experienced something special. And it was fun to sing for people who really liked it.

Mom and Dad didn't say much. But they were pretty tickled. Sometimes more can be accomplished by doing than by talking. Variety also makes time go faster and lifts the spirits. The oldest girl asked, "Do you think we could go again soon?"

Tim Penner, Kleefeld, Manitoba

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