

The Procrastinating Servant

14 years old - "I've just become a Christian, I don't know enough and I'm still too young to be involved in the work of the church."

16 years old "I've just got my driver's license. I have to work to take care of my driving expenses. And of course this is the time in my life when I am very busy with friends, and you wouldn't believe all the school activities I have! I'll get involved a little later."

18 years old - "I just graduated from high school! Now I need a little time for myself before I enter the 'real world.' I'll have more time for the work of the church later."

20 years old - "I never knew college took so much time! When I get out and on my own I'll have time for church work then."

22 years old "Boy, did you have any idea how hard it was to get started in the work place? It takes all my energy to get my career on line. And on top of that I just got married... I have to spend time to mold my new family life, too. In a couple of years I'll be ready to really dig into the work of the church."

24 years old - "Children! I never believed my parents when they told me how much time and money it took to raise them. I sure don't have time for the work of the church now ... but when my kids get older I'll be able to do my share of the work then."

36 years old - "It seems the older he kids get the more they are involved in! Home from work, then to the school functions, then sports ... I'll be glad when the kids get older so I can really be involved in the work of the church."

46 years old - "I've never had so much fun! Grandchildren! I should have had them first (Ha!). I can't deprive them ... when they get older I'll be able to really be involved in the church."

56 years old "I'm on my last push at work now. I've got to really bear down for a few years now so I can be ready for retirement. And of course we have our place at the lake we're fixing up. In a few years I'll be able to quit the 'rat race' and really get involved in the church."

66 years old - "Retirement at last! I've worked hard so many years and now I can enjoy the fruit of my efforts. It's time now for the young ones here at church to carry on and let us 'veterans' rest a little."

Instead of such a person as described above, isn't it great to see people who can use their abilities in God's service **NOW?** Which are **YOU?**

- by Jack Williams

Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

There are two very opposite attitudes that characterize children of God -- some are givers and some are takers.

Some are always concerned about other people. You never hear these folks complain about their own problems. This is not because they have no problems, but because they are focused on helping others.

These people illustrate the fruit of the Spirit known as "goodness." This refers to spiritual excellence of every description. In Paul's list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, the word probably refers especially to generosity of heart and action. The person who is filled with goodness is always ready to help the needy who are worthy of benevolence.

Other passages use the word in a similar way - "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14). The person who is filled with goodness is always trying to edify his brothers in Christ.

The word is used in the Old Testament of Nehemiah who showed an excellent example of goodness and self-sacrifice for the benefit of Jerusalem (Neh.13:31). Most of us have known brethren who could be classified as modern Nehemiahs. They are always building up the church, oftentimes at great cost and sacrifice to themselves. May their number increase!

"For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph.5:9). The person

who is filled with goodness is always trying to set a good example in this world of sin and darkness (see verses 6-14).

"To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power..." (2 Thes.1:11). The person who is filled with goodness is always preparing to meet the Lord.

There are others who think only of themselves. They are always ready and eager to receive help, but never seem to find the time or to have the resources to help anyone else. The opposite of goodness is stinginess. Like the rich young ruler, their focus is on themselves, not on God.

- by Rick Duggin

What Is Wrong With Mixed Swimming?

I can't speak for the ladies, but I can speak for the men. There's not an ordinary man who can look at a woman clad in nothing but a bathing suit for any period of time without entertaining evil thoughts. 'But,' some will say, 'it does not bother me.' One who says that may be so young that his passions have not arisen, or he may be so old they have subsided, or he may be so ignorant he doesn't know what is going on, or he may not be normal, or he may be lying. He fits into one of these five categories, or he may be a spiritual giant; but spiritual giants don't spend time at mixed swimming parties.

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Does "The Present Distress" Justify Ignoring Scriptural Commands?

During the current coronavirus pandemic, there has been frequent reference to 1 Corinthians 7:26 where Paul mentions certain considerations that might be appropriate for "the present distress". This expression has been used to justify forgoing obligations placed upon us by God's Word. Specifically, the argument has been made that it is acceptable to cancel all worship assemblies because of "the present distress".

While we understand that many factors can/must be taken into consideration in the making of such difficult decisions, the use of 1 Corinthians 7:26 is not one of them. In the context Paul was discussing marriage, the privilege of marriage, and the extra concerns that being married could potentially bring during times of persecution. In those dire circumstances he argues that a married person has an extra layer of concerns for his/her spouse (vs, 33,34). Thus, although marriage is generally a wonderful blessing, it might be better under "the present distress" to decide against exercising that option and remain unmarried.

Therefore, this text is NOT saying you can neglect to do something you are commanded to do. Rather it IS saying that you might choose not to do something that you have the liberty to do. There is no authorization here for failing to fulfill an ordinance of God simply because of difficult or trying times.

The early Christians faced fiery trials that we can hardly imagine. Threats, imprisonments, tortures and death were a reality to them. Yet they faithfully followed God's instructions. Inspired accounts as well as uninspired ones tell of their unyielding commitment to the Lord. Let us learn from their devotion and remain true to our Master, even during difficult times. Think!

- by Greg Gwin