

## ***He Has Not Left That Open To Us***

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

- by **C.S. Lewis**, *Mere Christianity*

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## ***"Let There Be No Strife"***

When contention arose between the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abram, "Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren'" (Genesis 13:8). God's friend Abraham knew that brotherhood demands the cessation of strife. I fear that some brethren today believe that brotherhood demands incessant strife.

Some practical measures for keeping peace include the following:

1. DO NOT START A QUARREL! Proverbs 17:14 says, "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts." While it is true that there are principles of truth that must be defended, argued and contended for (Jude 3, Philippians 1:17), MANY quarrels among brethren are over things that have not even been revealed in Scripture. Others involve judging hearts and motives by appearance, instead of judging with righteous judgment (as Jesus instructed in John 7:24). This kind of strife should be nipped in the bud! We must simply "avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Timothy 2:23).

2. DO NOT SPREAD TALES! Nothing fans the flames of strife more effectively than gossip. Conversation that is seemingly well meant can provide fuel to a fire that would otherwise die out. When a brother begins a conversation (or e-mail message) by asking, "Do you know what brother so-and-so said about you?" he may mean well, but what follows is usually combustible! "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases" (Proverbs 26:20).

3. LOVE YOUR BROTHER. "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins." (Proverbs 10:12). It is amazing how easy it is for folks to tolerate the faults of their loved ones, family, longtime friends, etc., while at the same time refusing to tolerate similar or lesser faults in those outside their circle of friends. If we could learn to show love, without prejudice or partiality, we might find a lot less to pick at in others (cf. 1 Timothy 5:21).

4. FORBEAR . The instructions given in Ephesians 4:1-3 for "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace " include "forbearing one another in love" (KJV). According to Strong's Dictionary "forbearing" means to "put up with, bear with, endure.suffer". Some have the idea that they "don't have to put up with" anything from a brother in Christ. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even if you are being unjustly mistreated, "putting up with it" and taking it patiently is one of the truest marks of a follower of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:20-21). Suffering real or imagined injustice from a brother is a sad excuse for causing strife. It's an excuse Abram would not use, and neither should we. We might learn to be more forbearing if we would stop and realize how much we need others to "put up with" us! "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." (Matthew 7:12).

- by **Steve Klein**

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## ***Giving Our Best To God***

Some people seem to be content to give God their leftovers. They give Him their leftover time, their leftover money, their leftover talents. When their own wants and wishes have been fully and completely gratified, anything left (if it is convenient), is presented to our heavenly Father.

How would you like it if you never had anything served on the table but leftovers? How would you like it if your boss paid you only if he had any profits left after taking all he wanted from the company? How would you like it if your children gave you what little affection they had left over from their friends, pursuits, etc.?

David refused to offer in sacrifice to God "that which cost me nothing." And this should be our attitude. We should give to God a service that is meaningful and sacrificial. Romans 12:1 states it in clear terms: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice..."

In our singing, giving, praying, study, all worship and living, we should give to God the best we can offer. Nothing but the best should be offered. Remember, the nature of the gift reflects the attitude you have toward the one given the gift. Does your service to God reflect that you love and appreciate Him?

**- by Tom Roberts**

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## ***True Humility***

The story is told of a fella who was a model of humility. All the folks who knew him marveled at what a humble man they thought he was – so much so that they decided to give him an award for his humility. The problem was – or so the story goes – that he accepted the award and, of course, they had to take it away from him – for his obvious lack of humility!

We were recently reminded of this joke when reading a person's online description of himself. This person touted his humility as one of his greatest assets. Imagine this – boasting about your humility! Amazing!! Especially since our past encounters with this guy left us with the firm impression that he is one of the most arrogant people we've ever met! Humility, indeed!

Modern media, especially social media, provide a tempting platform for pride, boasting, and self-promotion. And, lots of folks are engaging in this electronic form of narcissism. Daily posts by these individuals contain large quantities of egotistical bragging about their skills, accomplishments, their 'wonderful and talented' offspring, flattering pictures of themselves, etc. And then there is the clear expectation that others will throw additional praise their way by responding favorably to their posts: 'you're wonderful', 'so beautiful', etc.

True humility is a virtue to be nurtured in the heart of every Christian, "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). Ample warnings against pride tell us that it "goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

The person we mentioned previously needs to heed this important instruction: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" (Proverbs 27:2). Actually, we all need to work to develop true humility. Think!

**- by Greg Gwin**