

How To Get Along With Others

Mark 9:33-43, 47-50

I. Overcoming the Desire to be First. Mark 9:33-35

Writer Philip Yancey notes that toward the end of his life, Albert Einstein removed the portraits of two scientists -- Newton and Maxwell - from his wall. He replaced those with portraits of Gandhi and Schweitzer. Einstein explained that it was time to replace the image of success with the image of service.

In 1972, NASA launched the exploratory space probe Pioneer 10. According to Leon Jaroff in *Time*, the satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons, and beam data to earth about Jupiter's magnetic field, radiation belts, and atmosphere. Scientists regarded this as a bold plan, for at that time no earth satellite had ever gone beyond Mars, and they feared the asteroid belt would destroy the satellite before it could reach its target. But Pioneer 10 accomplished its mission and much, much more. Swinging past the giant planet in November 1973, Jupiter's immense gravity hurled Pioneer 10 at a higher rate of speed toward the edge of the solar system. At one billion miles from the sun, Pioneer 10 passed Saturn. At some two billion miles, it hurtled past Uranus; Neptune at nearly three billion miles; Pluto at almost four billion miles. By 1997, twenty-five years after its launch, Pioneer 10 was more than six billion miles from the sun.

And despite that immense distance, Pioneer 10 continued to beam back radio signals to scientists on Earth. "Perhaps most remarkable," writes Jaroff, "those signals emanate from an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a bedroom night light, and takes more than nine hours to reach Earth." The Little Satellite That Could was not qualified to do what it did. Engineers designed Pioneer 10 with a useful life of just three years. But it kept going and going. By simple longevity, its tiny 8-watt transmitter radio accomplished more than anyone thought possible.

So it is when we offer ourselves to serve the Lord. God can work even through someone with 8-watt abilities. God cannot work, however, through someone who quits. Philippians 3:12-14 Hebrews 12:1 Mark 10:45

"Servant" in our English New Testament usually represents the Greek *doulos* (bondslave). Sometimes it means *diakonos* (deacon or minister); this is strictly accurate, for *doulos* and *diakonos* are synonyms. Both words denote a man who is not at his own disposal, but is his master's purchased property. Bought to serve his master's needs, to be at his beck and call every moment, the slave's sole business is to do as he is told. Christian service therefore means, first and foremost, living out a slave relationship to one's Savior (1 Corinthians. 6:19-20).

What work does Christ set his servants to do? The way that they serve him, he tells them, is by becoming the slaves of their fellow-servants and being willing to do literally anything, however costly, irksome, or undignified, in order to help them. This is what love means, as he himself showed at the Last supper when he played the slave's part and washed the disciples' feet.

When the New Testament speaks of ministering to the saints, it means not primarily preaching to them but devoting time, trouble, and substance to giving them all the practical help possible. The essence of Christian service is loyalty to the king expressing itself in care for his servants (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Only the Holy Spirit can create in us the kind of love toward our Savior that will overflow in imaginative sympathy and practical helpfulness towards his people. Unless the spirit is training us in love, we are not fit persons to go to college or a training class to learn the know-how or particular branches of Christian work. Gifted leaders who are self-centered and loveless are a blight to the church rather than a blessing.

James Packer, *Your Father Loves You*, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

II. Giving Special Attention to the Defenseless. Mark 9:36-37, 41

People need people. Laurie was about three when one night she requested my aid in getting undressed. I was downstairs and she was upstairs, and ... well. "You know how to undress yourself," I reminded. "Yes," she explained, 'but sometimes people need people anyway, even if they do know how to do things by themselves."

William C. Schultz, *Bits & Pieces*, December 1990.

III. Collaborating with Others instead of Criticizing Them. Mark 9:38-40

For every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.

Harrison's Postulate.

It is much easier to be critical than to be correct.

Disrael

He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help.

A. Lincoln.

Most of us would rather be ruined by praise than helped by criticism. Nobody wants constructive criticism. It's all we can do to put up with constructive praise.

M. McLaughlin.

You can't hold a man down without staying down with him.

Booker T. Washington.

The warning of Leviticus 19:17, "...thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not allow sin upon him," is preceded by warnings against spreading slander and nursing inner hatred. You can easily determine, therefore, when you should criticize and when you shouldn't by asking yourself these three questions: (1) Am I motivated by an earnest desire for the welfare of the person I think needs correcting? (2) Am I going to face him honestly, but gently? (3) Do I find the task thoroughly disagreeable, or am I secretly getting some pleasure out of it?

IV. Being The Salt of the Earth. Mark 9:42-43, 47-50

Sodium is an extremely active element found naturally only in combined form; it always links itself to another element. Chlorine, on the other hand, is the poisonous gas that gives bleach its offensive odor. When sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride--common table salt--the substance we use to preserve meat and bring out its flavor. Love and truth can be like sodium and chlorine. Love without truth is flighty, sometimes blind, willing to combine with various doctrines. On the other hand, truth by itself can be offensive, sometimes even poisonous. Spoken without love, it can turn people away from the gospel. When truth and love are combined in an individual or a church, however, then we have what Jesus called "the salt of the earth," and we're able to preserve and bring out the beauty of our faith.

David H. Johnson.