

Words of Truth

On The Other Hand... We're Not Mind Readers

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Last week's article was a study about being considerate of others. In that study we discussed being selfless in our work of serving one another. This week we are going to examine a topic that directly fits into being able to be considerate of others. What we are going to discuss is a roadblock that often is set up, sometimes unintentionally, that prevents brethren from considering the needs of others. That roadblock is a lack of communication. It seems that some, who proclaim to be Christians, have missed that they're part of a body of believers (I Corinthians 12:27). These individuals cannot see that we are "members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

Let me give you an example of what we're going to be studying. Some time ago there was an older sister in Christ who was feeling as though the brethren did not care for her. She was often asked how she was doing and she always indicated she was doing fine. Then, out of the blue, this older sister became really upset with the brethren. Her complaint was that no one came to visit her or checked in on her. It was not true that no one checked in on her. However, her idea was that she needed someone to actually come and physically visit her. She never said she wanted brethren to come to her home (as far as I know). She never invited brethren into her home. She spent time, outside of services, with some brethren. However, she really was irritated because no one came to her home. Now, how was someone supposed to know that if she never expressed that she wanted someone to come to her home? There is a breakdown in communication in this situation. The brethren who conversed with her on the phone or checked with her when they saw her never got the "hints" she dropped that she wanted someone to come to her home.

Listen, problems like this exist because brethren do not communicate with each other very clearly at times. Not to downplay the visitation story above, but more serious problems exist among saints at times because of failed communication. Is this how brethren are supposed to be with each other (Romans 12:10)? Are we supposed to be "hint droppers" and people of solitude? The answer to those questions is answered in several ways. One manner in which to answer that question is by doing a quick study of the word "fellowship".

Real Fellowship Prevents Communication Problems Among Brethren

Christians are supposed to have fellowship one with another (Acts 2:42). The word "fellowship" (as is used in Acts 2:42) is translated from the Greek word "koinonia" (Strong's # 2842). That word means, partnership, joint participation, distribution, communication, communion, etc. (Strong's Greek Dictionary). You do not have to be a Greek scholar to understand what fellowship is. You can find the same Greek word used when brethren helped other brethren (Romans 15:26, II Corinthians 8:14, and II Corinthians 9:13), when brethren partake of the Lord's Supper together (I Corinthians 10:16), when discussing COMMUNICATION

(Hebrews 13:16), etc. Simply put, fellowship is about sharing in each other's lives. From the Scriptures we just looked at, you can see that fellowship is more than just meeting in the same building on the first day of the week. Therefore, how can brethren claim to have fellowship with each other if that is the only thing we share in? We have to know more about each other than just what we see in "worship services" and "Bible studies".

We've learned that fellowship requires communication. How can I help a brother or sister in Christ by bearing their burdens (Galatians 6:2) if I do not know they have burdens they need help with? How can we help a brother or sister in Christ with sin in their lives if they do not communicate about that sin in their life? Are we not commanded to confess our faults to each other (James 5:16)?

Last week we discussed helping brethren with true financial burdens. We know that this is a responsibility that Christians have for each other (I Corinthians 16:1-4). Sometimes, we can see that our brethren need help. On the other hand, fellowship breaks down, and we cannot share in helping needy saints because they do not express a need. Christians are not mind readers. If you are facing difficult times financially and your living faithful, brethren will want to help (Acts 4:34-37). Yet, they can't help if you will not share your burdens with them.

Sometimes one Christian will have a problem with another Christian. Rather than following the Scriptures by going to that Christian (Matthew 18:15-17), they'll just wonder why that brother or sister in Christ doesn't "figure out" there is a problem. Sometimes brethren will drop hints about this stuff too. Listen, dropping a hint is not going to get the job done. I have known more than a few so-called "brethren" that do nothing but drop subtle hints. Christians should be more up front with each other (i.e. Galatians 2:11-15). We cannot expect our brethren to play interrogator with us. Let's discuss this subject for a moment.

Do We Have To Be CIA Or FBI Trained To Communicate With Each Other?

Don't you just hate it when you have to drag things out of brethren? You know something is wrong with them, but they act like it is the world's biggest secret. How can we share in each other's joys and sorrows if we don't tell our brethren about them (Romans 12:15 and I Corinthians 12:25-26)? These types give the shallowest answers to deep questions. They never share information about themselves. We're not secret agents living covert lives (Matthew 5:14-16 and Philipians 2:14-16; cf. John 18:20).

In addition to some acting like they're hiding something all of the time, you have your subtle hint droppers. Listen, subtlety is how Satan communicates (II Corinthians 11:3). Christians are people who communicate with plain speech (II Corinthians 3:12). There is no need for Christians to conceal their thoughts through round about speech. We're one in Christ (John 17:20-23), let's communicate as such.

Conclusion

Let's not make each other have to guess at what is going on in each other's lives. Let's share our lives with each other in accordance with the examples that have been set forth in the Scriptures (Philipians 2:19 and Colossians 4:7-9). Christians are supposed to "*consider one another to provoke unto love and good works*" (Hebrews 10:24). You cannot consider someone that you do not know. This requires clear communication. Don't wait for someone to read your mind, it CAN'T happen!