

Women & More

Approachable and Available

October 25, 2012

Inspector Barnaby spoke the following lines from *The Little Man Who Wasn't There*, to his deputy in an episode of *Midsummer Murders*:

“I met a man who wasn't there
I met him later on the stair;
And then much later on today—
I wish, I wish he'd stay away.”

Although author Hughes Meams was writing about a ‘ghost’, it appeared so appropriate for this lesson that I attached the whole thing to our worksheet. Often people are there, and we don't see them because we're just not looking: we're too busy. We might be concerned that if we caught their eye, or they ours, we'd be in for a long uncomfortable visit that we simply do not have time for. And our Lord would tell us that we need to get a handle on our too-busyness if we truly want to be used of Him to bless, and to be His fragrance—He'd tell us—in words and example that our attitudes will need to change. Philippians 2:5-6 *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ¶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*

Approachable describes Jesus on earth: You could touch Him, follow Him, ask Him, and even lean on Him! What if we got rid of that look on our faces and the body language that seems to say, *I'm in a big hurry, so don't do one thing to slow me down?* What if we did what was best for the other person? What if we made ourselves available for God to use—at His will—according to His plan?

I'm sure that we've all heard this passage—especially verse two—in Hebrews 13:1-2—*“Keep on loving each other as brothers (the church). ¶Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”* KJV says *angels unaware*. Do not forget to do it Scripture says! Haven't we spent many meditating moments musing over this passage's statement about entertaining strangers because they could be angels—without our knowing it? And we will never know if they were or not this side of heaven.

So why is it in God's word? If we'll never know—strangers, or angels—then what possible reason could the Lord have for including it, and for admonishing us not to forget to *entertain* them? We are so used to the word *entertainment* and all it includes, that we've fairly forgotten what its root means. Webster defines *entertain*: *vb* 1 : **to treat or receive as a guest** 2 : AMUSE, DIVERT 3 : **to hold in mind** *syn* harbor, shelter, lodge, house, billet.

More often than not, we do not see people because we have marginalized them. They may be people we do not normally associate with; perhaps we feel above them in some sinful way—woe! Our Lord wants us to give that ‘stuff’ up, so in Hebrews 13:3 He goes on to remind us of some people to remember specifically, and how (*as if*)—especially if we’re not inclined—“*Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*”

Yes, we are to go to some people—those who maybe can’t come to us: They may be detained; or physically, or emotionally, or financially or even socially unable. But we’re to make ourselves approachable and available as we go about our daily duties. Isaiah 40:31 says, “*They that wait upon the LORD....*” Can we conclude that this *waiting on* includes any of the people He died for? We have no idea how many people would approach us, if they knew we were approachable. And if and when we do stop long enough to be approached, how available are we then to wait...to listen or to share?

Isaiah 40:31 (KJV) “*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*” Those who are willing to wait on the Lord will—

1. **renew** their strength
2. **mount up** with wings like eagles
3. **run**, and not be weary
4. **walk**, and not faint.

When we see someone approach, and then ask: *Do you have a moment? Can you tell me? I have a question? Do you know where...?* Are we guilty of responding with something akin to, “Gotta go”! And do we then make it so much worse by adding, “Wish I could visit but I just don’t have time”. When we say “we don’t have time”, we are implying that God failed to give us as much time as the next person. And because we believe we’ve not been given as much time, or enough, then we do not have any to give or to spend. The truth is that we choose where and with whom we spend our time—the same time God gave us all. Hebrews 4:13 “*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*” We will give an account of our time—this is why God may pop in with an angel! Instead of being an interruption, we should see people as an invitation to entertain angels, yes, but more importantly to entertain God’s eyes on us!

Busyness overtakes us every one—every believer. Since the devil knows how important being approachable and available to lost people and hurting people and dying people could be, he will absolutely try to keep every Christian busier

than a “one-armed paper-hanger”. Remember that Scripture tells us in 1 Peter 3:15-17—“*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*” And hear this: verse 17 reinforces that it’s better to suffer for doing good—to give an answer as God wills—than to fail to do it, calling that evil.

We cannot *always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that we have*, and then not make ourselves available to do it—remember it said, *always be prepared to give!* The human nature agrees to be prepared to do it when we want to, or when it is convenient for us, or when the person wanting *the reason for the hope that we have* is a contemporary—a friend, etc. Do we really want to ‘live’ the gospel in front of everyone? **Ephesians 4:22-24** “*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Being truly approachable is like a welcome sign with ‘curb’ appeal—time that’s managed by our Lord. It’s when we actually see people; think of them, prefer them and are ready! We need to pray that the Lord would cause us to be excited about the approachable, available, adventure He has for us and to cause us to trust Him for the outcome. When we are driving, can we pray for those next to us in traffic? When we’re waiting in a doctor’s office, or any office, can we pray silently for every one seated around us? Can we smile when someone catches us looking at them? Can we speak a kind word if the look lingers?

Scripture says that if everything Jesus did was written down, that the world could not contain the volumes of words (John 21:25). With only 3 years to do a life time of ministry, Jesus completed it all—He got it done—because on the cross He said: “*It is finished*”! Yes, He was referring to redemption’s work, but He was referring to His life lived, too—it was all the sum of His saving work. Remember that Jesus stopped and stepped; He walked and waited; He listened and lightened; He loved and lifted, and then He dined and then died—all for us!

•The woman with the issue of blood followed the Lord Jesus through the crowded streets, straining to reach out and touch His garment. And she did this not knowing that Jesus was already on His way to heal a very important official’s daughter. She stopped traffic to touch Jehovah Rophi—Healer! She absolutely trusted that the touch would do it—and it did! Jesus not only allowed

her to pursue Him and touch Him, but He waited around, called her out and held conversation with her.

●A rich man found Jesus and inquired of Him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. He went away unbelieving, because he had great wealth. But what if, as some commentators suggest, he came back at some point and received salvation? Suppose the inquisitor was Lazarus of Bethany! We won't know that until we get to glory. What we do know for sure is that Jesus listened to this rich man explain his righteousness, and then Christ challenged him in the hold-up-area-of-his-riches, encouraging him to sell all he had to gain salvation. Jim Elliott, 1956 martyred missionary to Ecuador, well said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

●A man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus, came to Jesus under cover of night to inquire about how God was with Jesus in John 3. The Lord had a 21 verse discourse with him, and there's evidence that he obeyed Christ's edict to be born again, as, with Joseph of Arimathea, he prepared Jesus' body for burial.

Our biggest obstacle to being approachable and available for the Lord to use is **lack of concern: apathy and detachment** (Psalm 10:17). What do we believe about the lost-ness of people? If we truly understood what it means to be 'lost'; if we bothered to learn from Scripture what is the ultimate cost for the lost; **if we believed in a literal hell** and the fact that God will not acquit sin in anyone apart from His Son's atoning work—that sin must be pardoned or punished—if we grasped the eternal consequences of lost-ness, **then our behavior would become consistent with our belief.**

This convincing is the Holy Spirit's work in us, but we can 'grieve' and 'quench' Him to the point that we are numb to the consequences of lost ones. To be used of God to reach out to people, to wait on them, to listen to them is always aimed—whatever we do for them in between—at **presenting the way of salvation.** We need to ACTUALLY imitate Christ and do what He did:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Actually SEE people, | S |
| 2. Actually ENGAGE people, | E |
| 3. Actually LISTEN to people, and | L |
| 4. Actually LOVE people! | L |

Whatever God calls us to He has already made the reservations and provided the accommodations for. And wherever he sends us He's already there! He is prepared to do it—preparing, protecting, preserving and providing for us—but there's something that we must do: **submit** to Him—be kept in Him through *sanctification* (made holy by the Holy Spirit), so that we will be made usable.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-25 describes what the woman that the Holy Spirit is making approachable and available will practice. It is a process, but we will...

16 *Be joyful always;*

1. Happy in our faith, thereby avoiding longing glances at the world. An unsatisfied, unhappy soul should never be ignored!

17 *pray continually;*

2. Increasing in prayer—communicating, communing with God.

18 *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

3. Thankful; giving thanks for everything, in everything.

19 *Do not put out the Spirit's fire;*

4. Careful not to quench the Holy Spirit—His work, His passion, His effectiveness.

20 *do not treat prophecies with contempt.*

5. Not despise instruction, exhortation, warning or rebuke: **sensitivity to the aforementioned is the surest sign we needed it!** We are not contemptuous toward the messengers of God (even if they are an unbeliever or a believer we do not esteem).

21 *Test everything. Hold on to the good.*

6. Test and prove all things until we recognize what is good.

22 *Avoid every kind of evil.*

7. Abstain from evil. We do not cooperate with the devil, because we are cooperating with God and His word.

23 *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit (includes your capacity to know, to hear and have a relationship with God), soul (includes your heart and mind) and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

8. Allow God himself to sanctify us through and through—let the Holy Spirit make us ‘wholly’ holy.

9. Develop a blameless life (Proverbs 28:18). Psalm 19:12-13 says: “Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.” We cannot be sinless, but we can be blameless—not sinning willfully or letting sin rule or have dominion over us.

24 **The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.** (One of my life-verses!)

10. Know that the *One* who calls us is faithful and He will do the ‘call’ and He will do the ‘walk’—the work of the call.

25 *Brothers (sisters), pray for us.*

11. Know we need prayer.

Let's pray!