

The Face Value of a Smile!

Nehemiah 2:2 reads, *"Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?"* The Psalmist said, *"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance"* (Psalm 89:15). The Hebrew word for countenance is *paniym*, which means face, presence, surface of ground. As the ground that is well watered and the surface muddy, so is it hard and cracked when the ground is dry. Although we cannot always judge what's beneath the ground from the surface, it commonly is most reflective. The face of a man or woman often, like the bucket of an old well, shows us in a measure what's in the well. This is where we get the saying, "what's in the well comes up in the bucket." A great example of this is when Moses spent time alone in the presence of God. The Bible tells us, *"And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."* (Exodus 33:11). Now compare that verse to this: *"And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him"* (Exodus 34:35). Moses' face was affected by exposure to the presence of the Lord. What is our face saying about us?

Yesterday was a great day; Barbara and I have been talking about getting away to Galveston for a bicycle ride for several years now. Well, we finally made a day of it and my body is talking back to me about our adventure, but it was worth it. As the day wore on, I decided to greet the men passing us on the other side of the seawall. I was riding beside my wife until we passed people, and then I dropped behind Barbara and when bicycling, walking or running men came by, I looked at them and smiled. After awhile, Barbara asked me, "What are you doing? Everybody is smiling as we go by." I then decided to have some fun as I dropped behind my wife; I'd give the guys thumbs up or similar greeting with an even more affirming smile. The majority of the men responded very favorably. After awhile I had to calm down because I was embarrassing my dear wife, who was not enjoying all the attention I was drawing for us. The water was beautiful yesterday and the sunset looked like a picture. As the sun was setting on our day and I was tying up the bikes on the back of our car, I thought of the value of our face. Do we give out a glad, sad, angry, or encouraging countenance? "Face" value is priceless. Let's talk about it:

1. We all need a smile sometimes.

Listen to this definition of a smile: In physiology, a smile is a facial expression formed by flexing muscles most notably near both ends of the mouth, but also around the eyes. Among humans, it is customarily an expression of pleasure or amusement. Beyond the physicality of this definition, a smile is so much more.

A smile can even be read by children and animals. Try it, if you don't believe it. A smile says, I believe in you, it's going to be okay. A smile is contagious, others begin to do it if you greet them smiling. Isn't it amazing that God has given everyone of us this universal language of a smile. It is an affirmation understood in every culture. *"Let brotherly love continue"* (Hebrews 13:1). *"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"* (Luke 6:31).

2. A smile will help you.

Besides transferring a positive message to others, a smile reaps benefits for yourself. Encyclopedia resources say: "Smiling not only changes a facial expression, but can also make the brain produce endorphins which reduce physical and emotional pain, and give a greater sense of well-being." *"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones"* (Proverbs 17:22). We are doing more than just cheerleading when we say, "keep on smiling." It is an admonition to bring into obedience our very thoughts. As the Scripture says, *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (II Corinthians 10:5).

3. A smile can be a tool of evangelism and discipleship.

Yes, it is true: honey attracts more bees than vinegar. Have you ever considered the people who were attracted to Jesus? Look in the Scriptures of how the children flocked to our Lord. Children are not magnetized to grouches. I have heard some Bible teachers try to base doctrine upon what the Bible does not say. Since our Lord was called a man of sorrows and acquainted with our grief (Isaiah 53:3) and since the Bible does not record that Jesus ever smiled, therefore, some have presumed He did not ever smile. Can you imagine our Lord saying "*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me...*" (Matthew 19:14), with a frown on His face? An artist recently painted a picture of Jesus and called it, "The Laughing Jesus." And why not? Not long ago, in one of the recent films it showed Christ splashing water and laughing. Some of the critics objected to that deeming it foolishness. If we object to someone's depiction of Christ, let us do so over doctrine or true irreverence. An honest look at Jesus outside stained glass windows and stone walls would do us all good. The truth is that Jesus became on the cross the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with our grief so we could have full joy! "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*" (John 15:11). He did not come to make us sourpusses. The woman at the well, lepers, Gentiles as well as Jews, were attracted to Jesus. I submit to you, He was incredibly positive people and I believe His custom was meeting people with a smile.

The Bible says, "*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Proverbs 18:24). Christ is the epitome of the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Therefore, let us as His followers show ourselves friendly to prospective believers. It is a matter of evangelism and discipleship to smile and be friendly!

So please, go ahead and smile - it will do others and you a world of good, "*...for the joy of the LORD is your strength*" (Nehemiah 8:10).

- Pastor Pope -

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