

“the power of appreciation”

February 2010

Hymn “Jesus, United by Your Grace” VU 591

Jesus, united by your grace, and each to each endeared,
with confidence we seek your face, and know our prayer is heard.

Help us to see in each a friend, each other’s cross to bear,
let all their friendly aid extend, and feel the other’s care.

Up unto you, our living head, let us in all things grow,
till you have made us free indeed and faithful here below.

Drawn by the lodestone of your love, let all our hearts unite,
let us toward each other move, and move toward the light.

Scripture (*Ephesians 4:1-3 and 30-32 from The Message*)

“In light of all this, here’s what I want you to do. While I’m locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk – better yet, run! – on the road God called you to travel. I don’t want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don’t want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline – not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

Don’t grieve God. Don’t break his heart. His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you, is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for himself. Don’t take such a gift for granted. Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, and profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.”

Prayer Let us pray – God, like a baker, you bring the leaven which causes our hopes to rise. With your strong and gentle hands, shape our lives. Warm us with your love. Take our common lives and touch them with your grace, that we may nourish hope among humanity. We pray trusting in your name, through Jesus our Christ. Amen.

Lesson In her book “Keep on Kicking as Long as You’re Ticking”, Nell Mohny has collected a group of brief stories she has written. Each story is about an inspiring person who is either battling cancer, depression, or a failed marriage, and who has found the Christian faith to be the answer. Nell’s love for Christ and for people crosses all denominational barriers.

One of her stories is titled “The Doctor’s Office”. It concerns an experience she had in a doctor’s waiting room while she was waiting for her appointment. An excerpt follows:

As I hesitated for a moment in my writing, I heard a female voice say, “When you take time for a deep breath, I’d like to tell you something.”

Glancing to my left, I looked into the warm and friendly face of a woman I'd never seen before. She introduced herself as Shirley from Georgia. She thanked me for my Sunday articles and told me that she had a scrapbook full of them. She also told me that her husband died after a ten-year struggle with cancer. The disease was in various parts of his body, but it was brain cancer that finally took his life.

Then she became specific about the articles that meant the most to her during that time. She mentioned the ones I had written about attitudes, encouragement, faith, and particularly the ones in which I shared my own struggle with this devious disease called cancer. The funny thing was that I had come into the doctor's office feeling fatigued and not too well. By the time I was called back to the examining room, I was already feeling better. The medicine had been a sincere dose of appreciation.

Suddenly it occurred to me that the things I had always believed about appreciation were absolutely true. Sincere appreciation lifts the spirit, motivates, provides hope, and allows the recipient to renew his or her belief in themselves. Then I thought of the persons who have influenced my life for good. They were people who obviously saw my faults, but believed in me anyway and helped me to believe in myself. This didn't mean that they didn't correct me or offer constructive suggestions. But they did these things without anger and in an ambiance of appreciation.

When we get together with others, such as our fellow AOTS men, we have an opportunity to express as well as to receive appreciation. Even just listening to one another we show respect and sincere appreciation of that person as an individual. I find that careful listening makes me feel as good as being heard.

Over the many years I have been involved in men's groups, both in Presbyterian Men and in AOTS, I have come to appreciate the many spirit-lifting gifts that are freely shared with the group. I have learned a great deal from many great men. I am sure I have not expressed my appreciation as well as I might.

The funny thing is that we each have the power to lift the spirits of others. We have the power, through sincere appreciation, to motivate and enable others to believe in themselves. Let's use the power.

Discussion What are some of the opportunities you have to show appreciation? What are some of the ways you can show appreciation? What can we do for people in desperate need – such as in Haiti? - Or in some of our First Nations communities? - Or on some of our street corners?

Prayer Let us pray – O God, we thank you for your gift of grace, that we are acceptable and loved by you whatever our state of obedience to your word, our level of understanding and our following of your guidance. We would be workers for your kingdom. We would be followers of your great commandments. You have given us the power to appreciate and to love. Give us the courage to use that power wherever we are. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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