



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

April 9, 2017

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Elders:

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Kenneth Carter
Don Chandler

Deacons:

Kendall Bear
Larry Brackett
Roger Carter
Steve McCreary

Minister:

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Secretary:

Susan Chandler

Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:30 pm

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OPTIMISM IN STRANGE PLACES

The stranger approached an elderly lady wearing a faded old dress and sitting under a dimly lit archway. All he knew was that he needed to buy a corsage, and the locals all called her “the flower lady.” While purchasing the flowers he commented, “My, you look happy today.” Her reply was “I certainly am.” The stranger boldly asked, “Don’t you have some problems in life?” Her reply was classic: “Nobody gets to my age without some problems, but it is a lot like Jesus on Good Friday. Things looked kind of bad, but Sunday was coming.”

Part of a Christian’s optimism lies in the reality that most problems are going to pass away. The cold and its cough will finally end. The layoff will end in a call back. Losing streaks do not last forever, and the crying baby will learn to sleep through the night. However, Christians have also learned that the negatives that come to our lives may actually be blessings themselves. Illness opens eyes to see the value of life. The untimely death of a friend motivates us to live our lives more fully. Even sin deepens our appreciation for God’s grace and the power of forgiveness. Tragedies name tag may actually read “Blessing.”

A wise poet wrote, “When sorrows come, and they will, it seems life’s roads are all uphill. The winter sky is gray, but spring is only weeks away. When all the trees you thought were dead shall wear new leaves and buds of red. When sorrows come, and they will. Have faith my friend, and peace be still.”

The optimist’s pocket is filled with patience and faith.

Don Loftis

ARE WE A FRIENDLY CONGREGATION?

While we must be concerned with doing what we do in worship according to Christ's expressed will, we must also be sure to reflect His love to strangers, newcomers, outsiders, and otherwise unfamiliar faces. To improve upon our friendliness, we should consider the following principles:

We must stop expecting that others will represent us in friendliness. Maybe we look at those few members of the congregation that "go after" our visitors and conclude that they are covering the bases for the rest of us. They cannot reach everybody, but even if they can their friendliness does not let us off the hook. Dear reader, the chances are great that I am challenging you!

We must not use our introverted nature as an excuse. Introverts may mistakenly conclude that extroverts are merely doing what comes natural to them. As a representative of the extrovert clan, may I suggest that connecting with visitors requires effort. Everyone must make an effort!

We must avoid the thinking that the visitors bear responsibility to be friendly. We're the hosts and they're the guests. It's hard to come into an unfamiliar place where you know no one and reach out to them. This is our "home turf," and we must always take the initiative!

We must practice the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). Again, put yourself in their shoes. Treat them how you'd want to be treated if in their place.

We must see ourselves as direct representatives of Jesus. II **Corinthians 5:20** calls us just that. Treat visitors exactly like Jesus would. Seek them out and do everything within your power to let them know how glad you are they are here.

We must understand the eternal implications of being friendly to visitors. Wouldn't it be awful if we contributed to someone being discouraged, even to the point of walking away from Christ? We cannot minimize the eternal impact, for good or ill, we make by how we do in this matter.

We must break out of our ruts and routines. What creatures of comfort we are! We must get uncomfortable and change our current habits. Avoiding eye contact, walking past unfamiliar faces, withdrawing into ourselves, talking only to those who talk to us or those we feel comfortable with may be the niche we've carved for ourselves over a long period of time. Confront those well-established patterns and insist on breaking them.

Neal Pollard