

Messenger of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16)

January 17, 2017

Issue No. 281 Mark Aites, Editor

Empathy

"Nothing is more important than empathy for another human being's suffering. Not a career. Not wealth. Not intelligence. Certainly not status. We have to feel for one another if we're going to survive with dignity." – Audrey Hepburn

"In a world full of people who couldn't care less, be someone who couldn't care more." – unknown

"Empathy is walking a mile in somebody else's moccasins. Sympathy is being sorry their feet hurt." – Rebecca O'Donnell

"Before you say something, think how you'd feel if someone said it to you." – unknown

"Our days are happier when we give people a bit of our heart rather than a piece of our mind." – unknown

People often confuse the concepts of sympathy and empathy. Sympathy is defined, "feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune." Whereas empathy is, "the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions; the ability to share." (Webster) And yet another source, "the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling." (Berkley.edu)

We may find ourselves watching a news cast, and seeing people who are victims of some sort of tragedy. We feel sorry for them. Perhaps we go to a funeral visitation, and express our condolences to the family in their loss. There is certainly nothing wrong with that. But empathy carries it much further.

With empathy you began to envision yourself in the position of the one who is hurting. With empathy, you feel the hurt and pain as though you yourself have been the victim.

Too often, even in the Lord's church, we find people who are good at sympathy, but lack in empathy. This is one of the fundamental reasons that relationships within the church are not stronger. Sympathy is a kindness, but empathy draws people together.

When Joseph Swain wrote the words to the hymn, "How Sweet, How Heavenly," in the second verse of the song he hit on the very concept of empathy: "When each can feel his brother's sigh, and with him bear a part; when sorrow flows from eye to eye, and joy from heart to heart."

Listen to the beauty of the words, "...there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

You likely have heard the old adage, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."