

How to Give Comfort to Others

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The Lord Christ, during the period of His incarnation on earth, wandered about doing good, giving relief to the weary, curing sick people and driving out devils from the paralytic. He was a loving heart, compassionate to all. In His crucifixion, He relieved us from our sins, and from the sentence of death. After resurrection He relieved His disciples. He relieved Peter, who was heavily burdened by his conscience because of his previous denial of God; He relieved Thomas from his doubts; He relieved the whole Church by handing over the rules of faith to the apostles.

As for you, what are you doing to relieve others?

To relieve other people, there are two ways: one is positive and the other is negative. The positive way is to offer them your love and assistance, and the negative way is to keep away from all that troubles them. What are the matters that we should keep away from so as to relieve others?

You may relieve others by obedience, and yielding and abstaining from disagreement and dissension. This can be applied by children in relation to their parents, the subordinate in relation to his chief, the wife in relation to her husband, by all people in relation to one another. The gentle person is loved by all. As for the dissenting partner, he is a thorn in the throat of his colleague.

Therefore, you should not be obstinate or always fighting for your own opinion, but you should be gentle in your dealings with others. You should not get in the habit of saying `no', in small matters as well as in grave ones. You should stick to your opinion in matters that trouble your conscience, since God has to be obeyed more than people.

There are some people who accept an opinion only after dissension, dispute and discussion in which they tire the nerves of those with whom they are carrying out the discussions. This is why the Scriptures say "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." (Philippians 2:14) Therefore, if you want to relieve other people, you should deal with them smoothly, without any complications. You should not make all their acts a subject of debate, in a difficult style which makes them feel that they are in front of a coroner who is making an inquest, not in front of a friend.

There is a difference between your request for some explanation for the sake of understanding and the lengthy discussions about a simple matter that does not need so much time for analysis and evaluation.

This is why the persistent person who is accustomed to making discussions usually has few friends. People do not like his company, nor do they let him join their groups, lest he should cause them to lose their quietness, peace and union with his ample discussions and debates. They find him troublesome and not the type that they can be at ease with.

Moreover, if you wish to relieve people and make them love you, you should be affable and should keep away from anger, bad temper and frowning.

Try not to become annoyed and sad, or to be influenced by the slightest provocation. You should not be excessively sensitive as regards your dignity and the way you ought to be treated. A person should not be quick to anger and taking vengeance. People cannot deal with the person who becomes angry for the slightest reason. They avoid talking to him or dealing with him, for the fear of clashes, struggles or the creation of a troublesome atmosphere.

You should not 'make a mountain out of the mole-hill'; and should not imagine that people want to do you harm, as this troubles you psychologically and makes people tired of you.

In your dealings with people, do not always be reproachful. To be exceedingly reproachful indicates that there is something in your heart against people, and that your heart is not pure towards them. Reproach has often led to the worsening of relations among people. The most troublesome kind of reproach of people is that which is groundless, that which arises from mere annoyance, suspicions, doubts, imagination, or from rumours.

In order to comfort people, you should be affable and should not have doubts about their love for you. Even if they do something wrong to you, you should find excuses for them and let them blame themselves, without rebuking them. You should remember their old love for you. In this way, you will comfort them and be comforted yourself. And if you rebuke them, let this be with love, affection and gentleness.

You should know that people love a smiling face and find relief in looking at it, more than they do in case of reproach. You should also know that too

much reproach loses its effectiveness, and causes love to be lost between friends.

There may be a person sitting with you, and you wish that the meeting may continue, however long it may be; and there may be another from whose company you would like to run away, however short the meeting with him may be. This is because the former relieves you, whereas the latter troubles you. And there may be someone who reproaches you while you do not get tired of him, because you sense love, sincerity and truth in his speech, and find that his reproach is in your interest.

What is important then, is the method, the way of talking and the exposition of the idea. Thus was Christ; He spoke to the Samaritan woman without hurting her feelings, in spite of His reference to her sins. The result was that she accepted His speech and went to preach about the Lord Christ and call people to come to Him, because His way of conversation was quiet, purposeful and not hurting.

The Lord also rebuked Peter for his denial, without saying to him, 'you have denied, or you have cursed,' in a manner full of love and appreciation. Reproach was appended with the statement, "take care of my sheep; tend my lambs. "

Reproach hurts and annoys if its manner is rigorous, and if the person who is reproached is in a state of annoyance and incapable of endurance. An example for this is what happened to Job, the righteous, from his three friends.

Therefore, you have to choose the appropriate time at which people can endure your speech. You should perceive that everybody you talk to is a human being who has emotions that can be hurt, or at least affected and fatigued. You should regard the sensitiveness of people and should not use an iron hammer where a significant hint would be sufficient. You should be kind and compassionate so as to relieve others. You should also keep away from oppressive judgment.

If you want to relieve people, you should keep away from pressure and insistence. You should know that too much talk about one point troubles people, and too much pressure does not give people the opportunity for thinking, planning and getting themselves to be willing of their own accord to respond to your request.

Your desire that people should hasten to grant your request, without taking any consideration of their circumstances, may lead to a contradictory result. People may avoid meeting with you for fear of your insistence. Try to let your talk be directed towards the hearts and minds of people, not to their nerves.

If you are gentle with them, you will relieve them and relieve yourself too. There are some people who pass by others like the gentle breeze; and there are others who pass like a storm. There are some who pass by them like an earthquake or a volcano that throws out molten rocks. Are you a gentle breeze, a storm, a hurricane, an earthquake or a volcano?

You may be quiet in your speech, and at the same time tempestuous in your acts. If you cannot comfort the weary, as the Lord Christ used to do, at least you should not tire those who are at rest. Do not trouble others by bad treatment or too many requests, like the spouse, the children or the relative who exhaust the father of the family with demands beyond his capacity, and like the teacher who exhausts his pupils with lessons and programs beyond their abilities, and like those who give the commands that cannot be executed.

This is why God made his commandments light for people in the Old Testament, and the apostles "did not trouble those who were turning to God from among the Gentiles. "(Acts 15:19) Saint Paul made rules light for the Corinthians by saying, "I gave you milk to drink not solid food, for you were yet able to receive it. " (Corinthians 13:2)

The reasonable teacher does not give hard tasks to his pupils, and the good engaged girl does not make exorbitant demands or ask for very expensive presents from her fiancé. There are also some people who ask for exceptional demands from influential people, and these may exert pressure upon their conscience.

Some people exhaust others psychologically and some exhaust them physically, both types are troublesome. There is the chief who exhausts his subordinates with work and there is the person who exhausts his employees with work. There are also the members of the family who exhaust the mother by leaving the house without any order or cleanliness, overlooking the various other responsibilities which she must carry out.

Some people exhaust others by mastery, pride and by giving too many commands about things to be done and things not to be done, by negligence, abandonment and heedlessness.

There are people who do not appreciate the circumstances of others like the family that fills the atmosphere of the home with speech and noise, disregarding the students who are studying for examinations, and sick people. There are people who trouble others mentally by telling them incessant troublesome news or insisting on them to reveal their own secrets or the secrets of others.