



April 8, 2018

A Prescription for Living

READ: 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 (Common English Bible)

“Love is patient, love is kind, it isn’t jealous, it doesn’t brag, it isn’t arrogant, it isn’t rude, it doesn’t seek its own advantage, it isn’t irritable, it doesn’t keep a record of complaints, it isn’t happy with injustice, but is happy with the truth.”

REFLECT:

Earl Nightingale shares some wisdom for living he learned from Dr. Frederick Loomis who published an essay in 1949, “The Best Medicine.”¹ Dr. Loomis wrote, “It’s but little good you’ll do, watering last year’s crops. Yet that is exactly what I have seen hundreds of my patients doing in the past 25 years – watering with freely flowing tears things of the irrevocable past. Not the bittersweet memories of loved ones, which I could understand, but things done which should not have been done, and things left undone which should have been done.” Dr. Loomis went on to write that one cannot live adequately in the present, nor effectively face the future, when one’s thoughts are buried in the past. What must be done, insists Dr. Loomis, is to stop thinking about yourself – and how you have been hurt – and start thinking about other people.

This is precisely the teaching of the apostle Paul in these words he shares with the Christian community in Corinth, “(love) doesn’t keep a record of complaints.” We habitually think of love as a feeling or as an emotion. Yet, Paul shows no indication in 1 Corinthians 13 that love is to be understood in this fashion. For Paul, love is cognitive; it is a decision that produces behavior. Love – indeed the love demonstrated by Christ – always moves toward other people positively, seeking their welfare. Such love takes no notice of wrongs received by another. Rather, love sees the possibilities of changing people and moving all humanity toward the Kingdom that Christ embodied in himself.

Dr. Loomis writes that by the simple device of doing an outward, unselfish act today, each person can make the past recede; “The present and future will again take on their true challenge and perspective.” He concludes his essay noting that, as a doctor, he has seen this approach being far more effective in changing lives than any prescription he could have ordered from the drugstore. As Earl Nightingale observes, those were the last words written by Dr. Loomis but they have kept him alive in the minds and actions of thousands, perhaps millions, of people who have chosen to test for themselves their practical value.

We all know people who nurse an injury, a slight or unkindness, perceived or real, they have received from another. Or, perhaps, they have suffered a tragedy in the past and simply cannot move past the hurt. They mull the memory over and over, keeping it fresh. What is done is done, and there is no remedy; no returning to the past to undo what was unpleasant. It is here that Dr. Loomis is very wise. The past cannot be changed but the present can. The course that is available, if one chooses, is to cease thinking about oneself and start thinking about others. Indeed, if we wish to destroy the envy, the anger and the evil that lurks in the world – and in our hearts – we refuse to react emotionally to the slights or harm done to us by others and respond with love. It is a prescription for living that we learn at the foot of the cross.

¹ Earl Nightingale, “A Prescription for Living,” **Insight: A Time-Saving Source of New Ideas for Busy People** (Chicago: Nightingale-Conant Corporation, 1988) 5.

RESPOND:

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?

2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?

3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayers to pray?

PRAY:

Turn my eyes from my own past to opportunities to be of service to others today. Amen.