

The Other Guys

"Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy." - Proverbs 14:10

Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief. - Proverbs 14:13

Look out the window. You may see someone walking along the street there who is probably a total stranger to you. What can you know about this person without even meeting them. (Age, gender, race, income / social class, health, occupation, etc.) Do we tend to form opinions and have feelings about a person before we know them?

Hopefully we also realize that God loves that person, no matter how unapproachable they may seem to be in our sight. There is something else we must know about others as well.

What do I know about every person I see?

1. **Each person experiences** sorrows, heartaches, and disappointments.

I was talking with a Nazarene pastor who had previously spent several years in counseling as a clinical psychologist. He said that deep inside every person is a hurting child. But I had a good childhood, I don't remember any terrible problems. How can you say that every person is hurting inside. His answer: sin.

The Bible's answer? *"Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward."* - Job 5:7 and *"Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble."* - Job 14:1. Don't think that you have been singled out (Why me, God?) when you experience trouble. *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* - John 16:33.

2. **Each person experiences** hopes, dreams, joys, and pleasures.

Life is not all pain and bitterness. In the hard times it helps to remember times of joy.

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. - Psalm 137:1-6.

When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. - Psalm 126:1-6.

3. Each person is not / just like me.

Has anyone ever said to you "I know just how you feel"? And you probably thought "Oh no you don't!" We all experience pain and joy in our own unique ways. We may have similar experiences but never deny anyone the reality of their own experience.

Celebrate our distinctiveness as individuals, don't let it become a barrier to spreading the love of Christ to the world around us. When we look at others through the eyes of Jesus we can do nothing but love them. While birds of a feather may flock together, we can only make a difference if we reach beyond our comfort zone and our preconceptions about others. Stop classifying people as good guys or bad guys - and start reaching out to the other guys, those who are not of the same kind of feathers that we are.

How can we maximize our joy and minimize our troubles?

"But as for you who forsake the LORD and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword, and you will all bend down for the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me."

Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit. - Isaiah 65:11-14.

Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. - Psalm 97:10-11.

Jesus said that He came so that our joy could be full, complete, and overflowing. How is that accomplished?

"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch, and dries up; and such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and are burned up. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples.

"Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love. If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's

*commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. My commandment is this – to **love one another** just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this – that one lays down his life for his friends. - John 15:5-13.*