

Pain, Pain, Go Away

Bubba Garner

I was driving down I-45 when it happened. An unfamiliar, orange-colored light appeared between the oil and temperature gauges. In horror, I read the dreaded words on the dash—"Check Engine." I didn't know what it meant, I just knew it was going to be expensive. The mechanic looked the car over, tested all the systems on his computer, but couldn't find anything. When I got in to drive home, I asked why the "Check Engine" light was off. "I disconnected it," he said. "It's fixed."

A lot of people are "fixing" their problems the same way. When we feel the pains of conscience or some other spiritual discomfort, we would rather eliminate the symptom than find the source. Pain, just the "Check Engine" light, is an indicator that something is not right. And sometimes we think that as long as we cover it up, disposing of the messenger, we have treated the problem. But in fact, all we end up doing is intensifying the pain.

Pay less attention to prayer. How do we think that's going to help? Yet, when we are burdened and feel the signal that something's wrong, we assume that leaving the Lord out of the loop will somehow make things better. Someone who is really struggling, who has not been attending the services will tell you, "well, I've got a lot of things I've got to work on in my life and when I get those settled, I'll come back to the Lord." They've got it backwards. You can't get it straightened out without Him. And when you turn everything over to Him, He's the One who makes the pain manageable because you see that it actually has a purpose in your life. I'm afraid that many of us don't believe in the power of answered prayer because we're not praying. He who kneels before God can withstand any pain.

Don't worry with worship. That's an easy fix, too. Because if you're not praying, what's the point of worshipping? We often neglect the worship service because we don't "get anything out of it." The song leaders never lead any of our favorite songs. The prayers are long and a waste of time because they don't include anyone in our family. The preacher's subject doesn't fit our mood or our schedule for that matter. Where is the concern to give to God what is His? Before we think about what we can get out of it, let's be certain we have put something into it that has been pleasing in His sight. When that is our concentration and focus, we will derive certain benefits from worship that will help prepare us for heaven. A place where there is no longer any pain (Rev. 21:4).

Isolate rather than assimilate. I once heard about a weatherman who was reporting during a heavy snowstorm. He noticed that the trees that were clustered together were not breaking under the weight of the snow. "They lean on each other," he said. You want to know why it's important for us to stay together? Consider the trees. But how can we "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2), when we don't know what each other's

burdens are? Or when we don't use what we've learned about our pain to help someone who is experiencing the same sufferings? We need one another. Don't think it makes you brave and strong to try to face your problems by yourself. All it does is leave you out in the cold.

Someone has said, "Pain makes us think. Thinking makes us wise. Wisdom makes us profitable." Be willing to reach down and help someone up. But be just as willing to reach up when you think you're beyond all help. And keep looking to Jesus who promised rest to all who are weary and heavy-laden (Matt. 11:28-30). There's no better way to spell relief.