

*The Heart of the Matter (June)*

“Yes, we get to...”

Brad Harrub, Ph.D.

*Having looked into the tearful eyes of parents whose children have abandoned the Faith, I have learned there are a million miles between our children “going through the motions” in reference to their spiritual lives versus our children possessing hearts that dictate their actions. In this column, I plan to share with you what I hope to instill in the hearts of my own children and those whom I love.*

We’ve all said it before, sometimes without ever considering the underlying message: “Get ready, we have to go to...” The words “have to” oftentimes send a message to our children that this may not be something we “want to” (or get to) do. Not too many children would ever say “we ‘have to’ go to an amusement park.” Their joy and desire would change their demeanor and language to exclaim, “We get to go to an amusement park!” Our attitude and vocabulary are extremely influential in how young people view things. So what is the verbiage we use when we discuss the Church, prayer, worship, mission works, giving, singing, and even Heaven? Is it something we “have to” do, or do we remind our children that these are things we “get to” do?

**Here’s what I intend on teaching my children about “having to” vs. “getting to” and the power of attitude.**

Unfortunately, there will always be things in life that we don’t look forward to but we still “have to” do them. For instance, I have to clean out the garage, or my car won’t fit! I have to take out the garbage on Sunday nights, because our pickup day is Monday. But when it comes to Christianity and serving our God, these are things we should want to do—things we look forward to. That’s why on Sunday morning you hear your mom and I say, “Get ready, we get to go to Church today.” Or why before we eat we will often remind you “we get to pray” instead of “we have to pray”.

Anytime you begin to approach your Christianity with a feeling of “have to,” I want you to stop and remind yourself who you are and Who God is (Psalm 46:10). Spend a few minutes in

the Psalms to help refresh your memory of the power of our Creator (e.g., Psalm 19). David wrote, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, **what is man that You are mindful of him**, and the son of man that You visit him?” (Psalm 8:3-4, emp. added). When we approach the Church with an attitude of “have to” then it tells me we have forgotten Who God is, how powerful He is, and ultimately what He did for us. How can anyone read John 3:16 and consider attending worship something we “have to” do?

The temptation may arise during your life in which you view your life as important or too busy--and thus church is one more thing you have to fit into your schedule. But remember, without God you would have no life or schedule to fill. Never view worship or spiritual matters with “have to” attitude. Joyfully make the time to praise His name and thank Him for all your blessings.

Throughout God’s Word, we see people with both the “have to” and “get to” attitudes. Consider the difference in Jonah’s life if he had viewed God’s initial request to go to Nineveh as a “get to” opportunity (Jonah 1:1-17). Do you think Paul viewed going to Macedonia as something he “had to” do? The text says, “Now after he saw the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:9-10). Do you think those who were convicted in their hearts on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41) were thinking, “Oh man, now I have to get baptized to have my sins washed away?” Or rather, did they gladly receive the Word and were baptized?

Before you were born, your mother and I had the opportunity to do some mission work overseas. On one occasion, the building that we were supposed to hold a meeting in had been chained and locked by local authorities and local orthodox priests. But that didn’t stop those in the area who wanted to hear the Truth. These people possessed a deep “want to/get to” attitude toward God and His Word. Do not let the cares of this world affect your attitude toward God and His Church. When it comes to giving, mission work, worship, singing, praying, and ultimately getting to Heaven, these should be things we look forward to—things we want to do.

Lionel Richie sings a song titled “Easy Like Sunday Morning.” In a few years you may have children running around the house and you will realize the falsehood (and utter ridiculousness!) of this song. Many Sunday mornings are downright hectic and crazy as we search for the right socks or bows. But I pray if you ever find yourself telling your own children,

“Come on, we have to go to church,” that you will stop and remember this simple lesson on the power of your attitude.

Love,

Dad