

Be Careful Little hands...

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 17 September 2017 16:21

“Be careful little hands what you do...” runs a line in an oft-sung children’s hymn/chorus.

When I left school I applied to join the Police Cadets (no longer such a position). If successful I would spend two years learning the job, before finally entering the police-proper. It was an ambition because my father was, at the time, a Special Constable. But, at age 16, I was quarter of an inch too short!! Yep – a quarter of an inch.

Okay then, I’ll go on to my next choice, and follow my Dad into the Parachute Regiment.

But, at that age a mother can have a very strong influence (such as “No you are not!”).

So, that idea was scuppered!

By age 18 I was saved, so many considerations entered my head – any job had to be both useful and consistent with my Christian beliefs and behaviour. For example, I was offered to enter the financial sector as a financial adviser. The pre-choice part was very tough and thorough, but I passed the tests. And, though I passed all the biometric tests as well, by the time I was about to join the company I withdrew... for several weeks my thoughts rejected the job. It involved persuading people to spend their money on all kinds of financial packages and, frankly, I just couldn’t do it, especially if a contract meant people were spending more than they could afford. My heart, then, led, and I had to pull out. I realised that such a job, for a Christian, at least for me, was unacceptable, because it was useless, even though the financial rewards would be considerable. (That is, I was to be driven by ‘results’ and contracts, so my income would depend on getting people to sign up).

So, at that stage I was looking for jobs that were useful, even if not well paid.

I loved being an artist – but after I married I felt I was being rather selfish, and so I looked for something that was useful (or so I thought). This led me to psychiatric nursing... a job that gave me invaluable insight into human beings and which later came into focus when dealing

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with Christians. Yet, all through my training and afterwards, the job earned an income below the living wage, so we began a spiral of poverty that lasted 17 years.

Tonight, I was watching a programme showing how people did their jobs. This time it was how men and women joined the merchant navy as trainee officers. They were expected to join in all the social events, whether with crew or passengers. And that included drinking. For some reason this brought to mind when I finished my first degree. I was waiting for my results from the University of Wales, but was very confident I had passed. So, I went to see the Armed Forces office in my home city. I chatted to a recruiter, and made out my application to join the RAF as an officer. Things were going well as I progressed towards Cranwell, the RAF college.

But, then along came another 'niggle'... My Dad was still alive and he told me that he rejected a field commission offered to him by his commanding officer during one of his many jumps behind German lines. His Captain was shot badly and wanted my father to take over the unit. But, my father said, he knew what first lieutenant's had to go through! Dad preferred his relative freedom, so declined the offer! He gave me an insight into the precarious role of a junior officer, saying that they were at the beck and call of both the 'other ranks' as well as the higher ranks.

As I was progressing in my application I chatted to someone else about the role (one of my cousins was in the RAF, too), and was dismayed by the demand by higher officers for officers to attend social events, which often included a lot of drinking, and the use of bad language. For me, that was the end of my application, and I withdrew. As a Christian I couldn't follow that custom. The job, pay and pension, would have been fabulous – but the cost, for me, was too high. God came first. If that sounds pious, it isn't – it is how I see my earthly life and it is what God expects of us.

In all my jobs I never partook in drinking and bad language. As a nurse I was often asked to join my colleagues in the pub at the end of the road after a shift. We worked well together, but I decided as soon as I entered my job never to do what they did on my time off. So, I never drank with them (I am not keen on alcohol anyway), because it would not be a suitable image of my Christianity. I never attended their parties for the same reason, and maintained this attitude in all my other jobs. My image as a Christian was too important to spoil by hanging out with my work colleagues. They soon gave up asking. And, by telling everyone I was a Christian as soon as I joined an employer, I already had the advantage. Sometimes I had to be blunt – and say that being in the company of colleagues who got drunk and did silly things at functions was simply not 'me'... I had no interest whatever in being with a bunch of guys who drank too much, used bad language, and sometimes resorted to sexual talk. They thought I was a bit odd, but

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they accepted it, because I was honest. But, I know a lot of others who were Christians were not so honest.

I know that many people are dragged into functions and after-work drinks by colleagues or bosses. This is always sad. But, when Christians do it, there is real cause for concern.

They are just joining with the world, instead of showing a difference, a difference required by God. And I have many "Ah, but" 'explanations' from Christians who do it! For example, they think it is ungracious to decline... but so what? Better to show God how we are, than be manipulated into situations we don't like, or which show Christians in a bad light. It is not our place to join in with godless or wrong activities, just to get on, or to make sure we keep our job, or because we think we won't get promotion. WHO CARES? What these fearful Christians do is destroy any witness they may have had.

Unfortunately many Christians do NOT care. They have secret moments of shame, but they continue doing what everyone else does anyway! Trouble is, the more they play along the more they begin to enjoy it, and soon they are as unruffled by their sin as are their colleagues. Thus, they show no difference in their lives, and their Christian witness is quickly lost. That's if they ever showed it in the first place... many don't admit to their Christian status for fear of not getting along. That is their bad moment! By staying silent they omit being saved, and so don't bother to show salvation in their ways, words and things they do. They go along with their colleagues' functions and after-work activities, and so easily integrate into their world, instead of staying aloof from it, which God expects.

When this happens their Christian lives are split schizophrenically, and they show their salvation in a church setting, but don't show it when at work! This means they become hypocrites, and this often means doing what everyone else does, such as lying, cheating, and I have even heard some swearing, just to blend in! Slowly, though they use the same religious language in church, their spiritual state degenerates, even if others don't notice it.

There is a lot to think about on this matter, eh? That is, if you have fallen into the same traps shown above! If you have already slipped down that path you will probably ignore what I have said, or think I am being 'too strict'. After all, they want their income, and their later pension, and their savings, and promotions, and so on. Why prejudice them by 'coming out' as a Christian... I mean a genuine Christian?

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It is true that my working life was always blighted by my Christian witness, because others hated it. It always held me back. And, when I lost my final job it was because of that same Christian witness. Yes, I lost many opportunities, and I had to forego many, too, because I wanted to please God first. Everything else came second. Also, because of it, I came out of work without a pension, and with no savings. All I had were massive debts!

But, even so, God helped me in all that, and I never regret showing a Christian witness in my workplaces. Frankly, I would rather have lost everything (I nearly did anyway) than come to the end of my working life with all the 'trimmings' open to those who cannot be bothered to be a Christian witness in their jobs! Indeed, I DID lose everything, except for my witness.

If this all sounds stupid to you, then I'm afraid you have already entered the murky world of unsaved men and women, and probably prefer their company to that of genuine believers, and God.

Funny how a brief encounter with a TV programme can bring back so many memories and almost forgotten situations, eh? All I can say is – quit yourselves as men (and women) by being open about your Christian beliefs. Otherwise God might turn you upside down to ensure you get the message... and lose everything you worked for.

Remember – one day you will die. You don't even know when that moment will come. That time, if swift and unexpected, may even rob you of everything you held dear, from income to house and everything you hoped for. So, what's the point? Live for God, not yourself!