

WHAT WE FOCUS ON TAKING CARE OF

We purchased a new vehicle a few months ago. Technically it was not new, but it was new for us. When we purchased this vehicle, it was nicely clean after the detailing the dealer had done on it. When we brought the car home, my daughter said to me, "Dad, I hope you keep this car cleaner than the one we just traded in!"

Her words have stuck with me these past five months. I am very conscious to make sure I do not leave any receipts or garbage anywhere in the car. If my coffee happens to spill a drop or two on the gear shift, I make sure I quickly run into the house and get a damp cloth to wipe it clean. I do not think I have put this much effort into keeping a car clean since I bought my first one when I was 18 years old. A week would not go by without me washing it. Even in the dead of winter, I would be in the driveway washing all the salt off the car.

Our new car is not the only thing I have been putting extra effort into taking care of lately. We recently had our bathtub removed and replaced with a walk-in shower complete with sliding glass doors. The installer recommended that after each use we squeegee down the glass doors to cut down on water stains. Because it is new I make sure I do this each time after showering. I also find myself paying more attention to removing any hair that may be building up around the drain. I did not do this on a regular basis with our old tub and shower, but I am showing this level of care when it comes to our new one.

I imagine we all have this tendency when it comes to something new in our lives, but over time we may get away from showing this same level of care. I wonder if we have this same tendency when it comes to our faith? In the opening verses to John's gospel, we are reminded how we experience a "new birth" when we welcome Jesus into our lives. John tells us:

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn - not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. (John 1:12-13)

This new birth we experience changes us from the inside out, rearranging our desires, attitudes, and motives to reflect being children of God. I love seeing the level of care and attention a new believer puts into growing and developing their faith. When faith is so new to them, believers will put a lot of

effort into taking care of it by experiencing worship, being part of a Bible study, developing a strong prayer life, and serving in the Church. As time passes, some believers will get away from caring and nurturing their faith in the ways they did when it was new to them.

This may not seem to be such a big deal at first, but when unexpected circumstances occur, we often wish we had taken better care of our faith along the way. This was the case with John the Baptist. He had a strong faith early on into his public ministry but after he was arrested and placed in prison, he started having doubts whether Jesus was indeed the Savior. In order to help him overcome these doubts and strengthen his faith again Jesus wanted John the Baptist to focus on all the things He had been doing such as helping the blind to see, the lame to walk, and so on. Then Jesus told John the Baptist's disciples to tell him, "**God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.**"

Our faith in Jesus is the most valuable asset and blessing we have. If we do not take proper care of this gift, just like John the Baptist we will experience doubts and undue anxiety whenever life does not go according to how we expect. When faith was new to us, we may have put a lot of effort into caring for it. Let's make sure we don't get away from caring for it as time goes on. If we have not been putting proper care into it, then let's start focusing on everything Jesus has done in Scripture, and in our lives and the lives of other people. By so doing we will ensure our faith is always fresh and strong as it was when we first started believing.

I hope these new purchases I am caring for do not affect me getting a raise next year. After reading this, my church may think they are paying me too much if we can afford a new car and bathroom in the same year.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean