

DONT BE NICE BE HONEST

1. Introduction (Two Examples of meeting Jim)

Yesterday when I was on my way to class I met Jim and I said to him:

Hi, How are you Jim?

And he said "Fine thank you and how are you?"

I: I am fine too.

Jim: It was nice talking to you see you soon.

I: I see you later.

And he rushed by on his way home. We exchange these greetings around the campus frequently and I am now very accustomed to this. When I first came here I was wondering very much about this way of greeting another and I tried to bring a slight variation into it. One day I saw Jim coming and I said:

I: Hi, Jim

Jim: Hi, Christoph, How are you ?

I: Bad. I feel sick.

Jim: Thats fine. Nice talking to you see you later.

And he walked off. The Words did not seem to matter in this rite. I thought a lot about these ways of meeting each other. I tried to build a good relationship with Jim, but there was never time. The relationship is dead in "How are you" and everybody being friendly. If we talk at all we never talk about personal things.

2. Hypocrisy of Greetings

I found many relationships to be in this manner. Is this how it is supposed to be? Our words signal that we are concerned about each other, but we never really are involved so much as to really understand one another and build a deep relationship. Is this not hypocrisy? Just being "NICE" without real involvement in each others life? I have encountered this frequently and I am deeply concerned that being "NICE" this way is a deadly danger to our relationships. We need truth, honesty and openness in relationships not Niceties like this. Christian love is not being nice but being honest.

The Apostles John says:

1 John 3:18 Little Children, let us love, not in word or speech but in truth and action.

Therefore DONT BE NICE BUT BE HONEST

3. Isolation through Niceties. Avoiding Criticism.

Have you ever talked with somebody after Church about the sermon and heard how nice the sermon was, how encouraging, how mightily the Lord used the Pastor to speak to the congregation. It was sooo great.

But that person never mentions anything concrete. There is never any evaluation about what that person did not like in the sermon and what was not correct. The question of how to apply the message to their lives is never answered.

Empty talk again. This person is shutting himself off by using Nice Words to avoid dealing with the contents of the sermon.

I have experienced the same in personal relationships. I tried to ask somebody how they really feel and how they are but all I could get from them is how everything is so well and fine and pleasant. This makes it impossible to develop a relationship with them, everything is so well there is nothing to be talked about, nothing difficult, nothing to be criticized.

Being Nice is a way for many to isolate themselves from others.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes said:

Eccl 7:5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

Therefore we have to say again: DONT BE NICE, BE HONEST!

4. Benefits of Honesty

Who dares to say: What you are doing is wrong! among us today? Almost no one. We all believe that it is necessary to be nice to each other. Dont Criticize! Dont say something negative! Everybody must feel nice at all times. Yet the word of God says:

Proverbs 28:23 Whoever rebukes a person will afterward find more favor than one who flatters with the tongue. It is impossible to built good relationships among us without being truthful and talking about what we do not like even with the other person. This is very much evident in the "Gang"-lifestyle. The members are usually very open to each other and this leads to a very tight relationship. The preacher in Proverbs warns us that:

Proverbs 29:5 Whoever flatteres a neighbour is spreading a net for the neighbor's feet.

5. Deceptions through Niceties.

Your being nice may lead to deception in another ones life! Being Nice even convinces us often to ignore sins in the life of our fellow believers. Who dares to approach a fellow Christian when he sees him doing something wrong? He might not know it, except when you tell him!

He might even have a good biblical explanation for what he is doing. I had a boy and girl of my youth group living together one time and they had a perfect biblical explanation! For years had we never talked much with them except the usual "Niceties" and we were very astonished to find out what was going on. Had we cared more about them, lived with them and talked with openness and honesty before, then this situation would have never arisen.

We have a duty to correct one another:

Luke 17:3 Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance you must forgive.

Do you want to leave people in their dreamlands? If not DONT BE NICE BE HONEST!

6. Dangers of Honesty

Of course you have also to be careful when being honest and open to a person. If you are criticizing (what a dreadful word) somebody else be sure that what you say is correct and good before talking to the person. Your intent MUST be to help and not to destroy that person. The person might not understand - like my two youth group members - because he has constructed some explanation for it which you need to deal with first. Be considerate but get your message across!

7. The Salesman Niceties

Being Nice can be something professional. Salesmen use it to built a good relationship fast with somebody to earn their trust and sell them their goods. Everything is fine again. But what if it is not? The salesmen usually pretends that they are fine anyway. This becomes very interesting to observe when you can clearly see that something is wrong. But they still stick to it: Everything is fine.

The same happens with Christians. I have talked with people of whom I knew by a look into their face that something was wrong. Yet still everything was fine and they did not lose a word concerning their troubles. It is a way to avoid dealing with trouble. And a way to avoid sharing the load with others.

8. The Advanced Stage: Self-Deception

Most people are still aware of their troubles but there are some People who are much more advanced. They actually believe that everything is fine although it is not. They live in self-deception. Like one woman at my home church. She seemed to be a tower of faith, everything was so great. Yet she had big trouble with her son whom she tried to control totally while blaming him to be demonized and terrorizing him with all sorts of things. She never could accept that there was something wrong in her in the relationship to her son. Even when the Pastor and me had a private session with her she could not see what she was doing. She had trained herself for 20 years in "everything is fine" and we could not convince her that something needs to be changed. When we talked with her we found that she had destroyed her marriage through the same methods. Everything is fine and her son has still the greatest troubles with her.

If you want to avoid it

DONT BE NICE BE HONEST even to yourself!

9. End. The Surest Way to Destory Fellowship.

Do you want to know the surest way to destroy good fellowship? Just be Nice. Avoid being honest stick to tell the other how well he is doing and how well you are doing, how nice the preacher is in Church and so on. Do not care about him and tell about your difficulties or tell him something that is wrong with him. How could you dare to intrude on his privacy and help him? Everybody has his own life after all doesnt he?

Why should you bother with your brother?

But if you care about him remember:

DONT BE NICE, BE HONEST.