

St. Peter's MILTON. VISION. 1. CARE.

At the NEC, Birmingham in 1986, I remember seeing a Musical called '**Visions**' with music composed by Paul Field. It was a brief tour from Creation to New Creation, Genesis to Revelation with music and spectacular visuals to portray the awesome, holy, might presence of the glory of God down through biblical history.

For the last 35 years, Christians worldwide have been praying for the Muslim world during the 30 days of Ramadan and on the Night of Power (day 26), they pray especially that Muslims will have Visions of Jesus. Many MBBs today can trace their faith in Jesus to an encounter with Him in a vision, rather like John did on the Island of Patmos as recorded in Revelation Chapter 1. Many Iranians have come to faith that way and most recently a Palestinian son of an Imam also. Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors, has worked in the Middle East for many years and explains ISLAM = I Sincerely Love All Muslims.

Peter's Vision and Call to go to the enemy Roman invader Cornelius was also severely shocking, yet eventually he obeyed the vision and the Gospel came to non-Jews and hence eventually to us in Weston Super Mare!

So, Vision is important and you at St. Peter's already have a written Vision – **CARE, SHARE, GROW AND SHOW....** And I hope to have a look at this from the Scriptures on the first Sunday of each month from now till December, God willing.

CARE. What is the true foundation for our Christian lives? Jesus was once asked about the greatest commandment and he replied. Matthew 22v36-40

'Love the Lord your God.... And love your neighbour as yourself'. In Luke 10v25-37, he gives this reply to a lawyer who is testing him about what to do to inherit eternal life. And then Jesus gives the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

So the Greatest Commandment is to LOVE – God, others and ourselves.

This echoes the Shema from Deuteronomy 6v4,5

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

And the Command in Leviticus 19v8

'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.'

But how can we do that? Jesus gives a visual demonstration by washing his disciples feet and then gives them a New Commandment

'Love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another' John 13v34,35

In addition to the Greatest Commandment, we also have the **Great Commission**, which were Jesus' parting words to His disciples as He ascended to heaven.

‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising, teaching... and I will be with you always, to the end of the age.’ Matthew 28v19,20

So, Jesus’ instructions for His followers can be summed up in two words.

LOVE – God, our neighbours and ourselves, as He loves us.

GO – make disciples of all nations, local and to the ends of the earth.

BUT, we cannot do either of these things UNLESS we have first received God’s love into our hearts and the power of the Holy Spirit to equip us to be witnesses for Him. Receive God’s love so that we can LOVE OURSELVES as He loves us, then we can indeed LOVE our Neighbour as Ourselves. J. O. Y. Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last. ??

So, where does CARE come in God’s priorities for our life and purpose for living on earth? How does this apply personally and also together in our families, our church, our community and our nation?

Scripture Memory Verse: ‘Casting all your care on him, because He cares for you’ 1 Peter 5v7 (NKJV) or ‘Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.’

Song: Cast your burdens onto Jesus, for He cares for you.... XX

Higher, higher.. lift up Jesus higher... XX

The context is a life of humility and watchfulness in our walk with God, recognising that there is an enemy around who

seeks to undermine and even ‘devour’ us, like a roaring lion! The early church then and in so many places today was under pressure.

How often do we say the words ‘Take Care’ or ‘Be careful’. When driving and you are the passenger or maybe when you say goodbye to a friend or family member. Or maybe you have said ‘Don’t you care?’ or ‘She doesn’t care anymore’ to someone, perhaps in desperation or concern.

The **dictionary definition for Care** is: *watchful and protective attention, caution, concern, prudence or regard usually towards an action, person or situation.* The opposite, of course, is neglect or negligence and we are all aware of the legislation about Safe Guarding and taking Due Care in situations which might be harmful.

However, does that mean that we never take any risks, because we might put ourselves in danger? Conversation with two of my relatives last week. When they were young, they played ‘Russian Roulette’ on their bikes at age 10, hurtling across a busy main road and another road down Park Street in Bristol with no hands on the handlebars of his bike (during Lockdown recently when few cars around!).

Care is the Synonym of Love, not according to the English language but **according to feeling.**

As a **noun**, the word CARE could also mean ‘*Safe Keep, super vision, custody, charge, protection, keeping, control, management, guidance.*

As a **verb**, it can mean ‘*bother, mind, be concerned, worried, be interested or take care, tend, take charge, nurse, provide, foster, protect, watch, guard.*

We use the words ‘Taken into Care’ meaning often taking charge of a needy youth or child without parental support.

Be careful may mean ‘*avoiding damage or risk, being thoughtful, attentive, vigilant, watchful, cautious, conscientious, mindful, precise, accurate.*

The opposite is carelessness – neglect, disregard or a feeling or occasion for anxiety!

So, how do we get the balance between loving care and risk taking? I believe that this may well be about our personality and gifting as some people are given the faith to take risks more than others but love must always be supreme. Paul took great risks for the Gospel, yet he affirmed the primacy of Love. The faith, hope and love remain but the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor. 13v13)

So, WHO or WHAT should we care ABOUT? I would like to suggest FOUR main areas for us to direct our CARE and LOVE, as follows:

1. **CARE FOR GOD FIRST.** Love Him with all our heart, soul (which includes our mind, will and emotions), strength. Care for the honour of His name and His reputation, His kingdom, His truth, His Son Jesus and

His Spirit. Love His Word, the Bible which is the main (but not the only way) that God has revealed Himself to us.

How? UP.. Worship and adore Him. Trust Him with our lives. Receive His love into our hearts through Jesus by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Read and Listen to and Obey God’s Word daily. One help is LECTIO 365 app available . Prayer matters.

Sparkbrook Church. Weekly prayer group with 7 people. Began 2X2 outreach also.

2. **CARE FOR GOD’S WORLD.** Honour and respect God’s Creation and His Creatures, animals, fish, birds and especially all human kind. Look after the world that God has made and everything in it. Remember, Adam’s first jobs were to take care of Eden and Eve. Being a Gardner and a Husband were two essential areas to care for. Of course Adam and Eve were both equally created in the image of God.

How? ARocha , Farming God’s Way, Marriage and family life according to Scripture
CARE for the Family – Cardiff. Rob Parsons...

3. **CARE FOR GOD’S PEOPLE.** Of course, God wants us to love and care for each other within the Family of God. He is concerned about the Unity and Health of His body in every way. We shall look at this more in further studies.

How? IN For example – this Plaque with the ONE ANOTHERS is so important....(read)
A Healthy Church will be a Growing Church. So, ‘speak the truth in love, pastoral care, fellowship and encouragement.

Weekly Zoom, small groups or even phone calls. Eg. Dorestine phoned and prayed for people even when in a Care Home.

4. **CARE FOR GOD'S MISSION.** God wants to bring restoration and healing of a broken world and people. Our current world pandemic is not the first in human history. It is a reminder that we live in a Fallen, Broken world that needs the healing and forgiving power of Jesus. Our call is to Care for His World and the People by sharing the Good News – Jesus Saves.

How? What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pains we bear

All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.

How? OUT An overflow of joyful, loving people of God who love, honour, serve and tell the good news in the power of the Holy Spirit and demonstrate it by loving one another as Jesus has loved them.

Cast all your care (worries and anxieties) upon Him, for He cares for (loves, believes in and honours) you.

ST. PETER'S MILTON. VISION. 1. CARE. SUMMARY

Acts 10. Peter & Cornelius Vision; John 13v34,35

1.Importance of Vision. Questions about Identity and Purpose....SAH story. Isa.55v6,7 MBBs Visions of Jesus. Prov.29v18

2.CARE. - Greatest Commandment and Great Commission. LOVE & GO. The Shuma of Deut.6 and Lev.19. Matt 28v19,20. A New Commandment Jn. 13,34,35. 1 Pet.5v7 MV & Song.

'Cast your burdens onto Jesus, cos He cares for you...

Higher, higher, lift up Jesus higher.'

3.UP, IN & OUT.... Get the order right!!

4.CARE = LOVE. Definitions. Compare RISK!

WHO & HOW TO CARE?

- A. **GOD FIRST.** His Name, Reputation, Word...
How: Adoration, Worship, Prayer, Thanks, Obey God's Word
- B. **GOD'S WORLD.** Creation and Creatures. Eden and Eve to take care of by Adam.
How: ARocha, Care for the Family... Marriage and Family life.
- C. **GOD'S PEOPLE.** Family and People of God, New Commandment – love one another (others – plaque). How: Small groups, pray, encourage, practical help, listen....
- D. **GOD'S MISSION.** Share the Good News. God loves the world. Vision for Healing, restoration etc.
How: Loving, joyful overflow of God's People sharing in word and deed.

LECTIO 365 closing prayer daily:

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You in every way. Jesus help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet. Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. AMEN.

Questions for Application and Further Reflection.

1. Who or what is the most important person that I care for in my life at present? How do I express that Care? In what ways could I do that better?

2. In what ways do I need to receive Care and Love from others at present? What could I be doing about this?
3. How am I doing in Caring for God's Name and Reputation? How could I improve and what help do I need?
4. What is the Vision or Purpose for my life at present? Whatever age and stage of life, do we know why we are here and what we should be doing and how to live?
5. Are there specific worries or concerns I have for myself or others that I could be praying about or sharing with others? Could I need to do some 'self-care'?
6. How can I Care for God's Creation better?
7. How can I Care for God's People better?
8. How can I Care for God's Mission better? What help do I need?

Some Bible Readings about Vision,

Genesis 15. Abraham's Vision. Genesis 46. Jacob's Vision
1 Samuel 3. Samuel's Vision and Call: 1 Kings 3.Solomon's Vision
Isaiah 6. Isaiah's Vision and Call
Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel's Vision of Dry bones
Luke 1. Zechariah and Mary's Vision
Luke 3. Jesus' Vision at his Baptism
Luke 9. The Transfiguration of Jesus
Luke 23, 24 Cross and Resurrection of Jesus
Acts 1,2. Ascension & Pentecost: Acts 9,10 Visions of Saul & Peter ; Revelation 1. Vision of Jesus
Revelation 21,22. Vision of the Holy Jerusalem

In each passages ask yourself Three Questions:

1. *What does it tell me about God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?*
2. *What does it tell me about human nature?*
3. *What command, promise, warning or encouragement can I find here?*

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