

HOW TO HELP HEAVY HEARTS

TEXT:

Proverbs 25:20: As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy [sad] heart.

INTRODUCTION

There are certain practical rules which we need to follow in ministering to those who are depressed and heavy-hearted. In this text, we are told what not to do, for the temptation to cheer up someone who is despondent seems to be the making of merriment. The sentiment of this verse of scriptures is directed against the use of frivolity or superficial means of cheering up the sad. It would only have the same effect as being rude, or indifferent, or uncharitable.

This is the reason: Those who are sad feel that being merry about them is a show of little concern. So, we take a wrong course with the grieved when we think to relieve them we must be humorous and light hearted. This only adds to their grief.

Those in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathy and compassion.

In **Job 16:5** Job said:

Job 16:5: I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Just like taking away garments from a person in cold weather only makes them colder, so laughter in the presence of sorrow only worsens it. This is how the Holy Spirit instructs us in **Romans 12:15**;

Romans 12:15: Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

In **Proverbs 25:20** we are told:

Proverbs 25:20: As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.

Vinegar on nitre may be an unfamiliar term to many of us. Nitre is known among



chemists as the NATRON or sodium carbonate, or in our land as an alkali used in washing clothes. The market brand name is called SAL-SODA. It is what is referred to here. Doubtless, the best scripture reference is in **Jeremiah 2:22**, where we read:

Jeremiah 2:22: For though thou wash thee in nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me," saith the Lord GOD.

We have learned that nitre, when mixed with oil, produces soap. But, vinegar, when coming into contact with nitre, produces a very offensive odor, as well as fermentation.



How descriptive this is to one making merry in the presence of one with a bowed down heart mixed with grief, sorrow, and sadness. It only makes the person who is trying to cheer up the heavy-hearted to become offensive and nauseating to them. Even though our intentions may be good, poor judgment by us may do more harm than good.

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We are so used to tickling a small child that has a long face to make him laugh or telling something humorous or cute to brighten up his long face that it's only natural to try this on adults, too, when they are disheartened. But, it will only have the opposite effect.

So, wisdom must be given to us from the Lord in helping those who have depression and inner hurts.

IN CONCLUSION:

One more insight into the use of nitre: we discover that it is found to be native to Syria and India, and occurs as an effervescence on the soil. It is grayish white in color, or a light brown.

The Hebrew word is NATHAR and carries this meaning: *to dissolve or loosen* (our word for detergent) because nitre, when mixed with oil and placed in water, takes out spots. If it is mixed with vinegar, however, the strength is gone, and the remedy is rendered ineffective.

Thus, in our text, the right way to lift up the spirit of the heavy-hearted is by showing concern, compassion, and care in order to be effective. On the other hand, to use jesting, frivolity, and merriment will only take away the strength of our efforts and render our purposes for naught.