

Look For the Best in People



Christopher News Notes

LET'S BE HONEST: IT CAN BE HARD TO SEE THE BEST IN PEOPLE. On our most difficult days, when our patience is tested and our tolerance is low, finding ways to see the positive side of others can feel like more trouble than it's worth. However, each of us has our faults, so we should make the effort to seek out the best in those around us because we hope that they will look for the good in us despite our mistakes or differences.

How Jesus Sees the Best in People

"Beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
—Philippians 4:8

If you need examples of how to find the best in others, Jesus is the way to go. His followers wrote the book (literally!) on how Jesus could love others despite their sins—and that's not always easy. Think of Matthew, one of Jesus' own disciples, who was a tax collector. Throughout the Gospels, the Bible depicts tax collectors again and again as sinful and untrustworthy folk. But do you know why?

In those days, the job carried no salary, so collectors were expected to make their profits by cheating the people from whom they were collecting taxes. In addition, many patriotic Jews hated tax collectors for being agents of the Roman empire (the conquerors) and saw any Jewish collectors (like Matthew) as double-betrayers, who cheated their own people for the enemy's gain.

Yet when Jesus saw Matthew at his collection post, He said to him, "Follow Me." And Matthew stood up and followed Him (Matthew 9:9). Jesus saw Matthew could be better if given the chance. Sure enough, Matthew proved Jesus right.

This also happens between Jesus and Peter after he denied Jesus three times (Matthew 26:74). Despite his remorse, Peter was racked with guilt. Still, after Jesus suffers, dies, and rises from the dead, He has another encounter with Peter. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, three times. Each question is Jesus forgiving Peter for his three denials. He shows him empathy, and subsequently, a way for Peter to start anew. If Jesus can forgive hurtful words and actions, can we try to do the same?

A Kitchen Where You Belong

"Good people see the good and bring out the best in other people."
—Roy T. Bennett

Once, there was a father with two sons. The eldest son was a devout child and a loyal worker. He obeyed his father's word and took care of the family's field and flock. The youngest son was not as faithful as his older brother; he asked his father for his inheritance only to move away and spend it recklessly on a life of indulgence.

Sound familiar? This, of course, is the beginning of the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son, which Jesus tells us in the gospel of Luke. After the youngest son blows his fortune, he begins work as a pig farmer in terrible conditions. Starved and exhausted, he returns home to beg his father for forgiveness. The son expects to be reprimanded, so what a surprise it was when his father ran to greet him, embraced him in a hug and called for his staff to "bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:23-24)

The father maintained his belief that the goodness in his son still existed. So, when the young man returned, sorry for what he had done, the father took him in with open arms, showing him that with love and forgiveness, he could start anew.

Kim Brown has the same hopes that all parents have: that her kids will be loved and that they'll feel like they belong. A mother of three girls in Houston, Texas, Kim hoped this most for her middle child, Ellie, who was diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) as a baby. In 2020, when Ellie was a junior in high school, Kim began to wonder what the future would hold for her daughter, noting that "nobody was hiring someone like Ellie."

Kim realized that if she wanted the world to see the talent and potential that Ellie possessed, she would have to show them. "I just decided if we wanted a fun, safe environment for her to work in, we were going to have to create it," Kim told *ABC News*.

In 2021, the Brown family launched *Belong Kitchen*, a small food business run by local young adults with IDD who also struggled to find work. The job gives them the chance to build life skills in a fun, social setting.

Initially run out of Kim's home, *Belong Kitchen* recently expanded into a brick-and-mortar location inside *Village Towers Plaza*, where patrons can personally witness the capabilities of special needs adults. The staff includes Ellie and six others, along with friends and family who volunteer to help prepare the meals.

Dinners come in pans and feed up to six people, while dishes range anywhere from chicken enchiladas and lasagna, to pumpkin rolls and Nutella pop tarts.

Kim always saw the best in her daughter, while much of the world saw only Ellie's struggles. "[Ellie] is capable of a lot," Kim said to *The Buzz Magazine*, "and we wanted her to have a full, meaningful adult life...God had a plan and put the right people in our path. We had to be patient, which is not my strong point, but it was well worth the wait."

Bringing Hope to Inmates

"We should not judge people by their peak of excellence; but by the distance they have traveled from the point where they started." —Henry Ward Beecher

From the baseball field to the jail yard, Darryl Strawberry is spreading God's love. The former Mets and Yankees right fielder is visiting inmates across the Northeast bringing hope to the lives of those who need it most. "That was something that was lacking in their lives growing up—being loved," Strawberry said in an interview with *MLB.com*.

Strawberry is no stranger to success. A four-time World Series Champion, he was one of the top

players for the Mets in the 1980s, and a valuable player for the Yankees in the 1990s. But Strawberry is also no stranger to hardships. After a life plagued with addiction, abuse, divorce, cancer, and jail time, he found redemption in Jesus Christ. And Strawberry realized that if God could see the best in him despite his mistakes, he wanted to help others do the same.

In November 2022, Strawberry visited two New Jersey penitentiaries and came to the conclusion that what the inmates needed most was love. People in prison “know I don’t have to [visit them],” he said. “The people, the wardens, that run and control the facility realize I’m not coming in there for a show.”

Strawberry also knows what it’s like to be behind bars. While incarcerated, he thought about his mother and his teammates, but most of all, how he knew he was created for something better.

At the same time, the love Strawberry received from other people while in prison was important to him. His siblings and Mets historian Jay Horwitz provided the love he needed while incarcerated.

Inmates “need to hear from someone like me about the importance of life not being a mistake,” he said. “I just feel compelled to go back behind the gates and...speak life with those guys.”

“I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.”
—St. Teresa of Calcutta



**“It’s better to light one candle
than to curse the darkness.”**

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Strangers to Their Own Goodness

“When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves.”

—William Arthur Ward

Father Greg Boyle is known for creating Homeboy Bakery in Los Angeles as a solution to the gang violence which was taking so many lives there in the 1980s. The priest put gang rivals to work side-by-side in the bakery, and they soon came to know each other as human beings instead of enemies. He also understood that many of these gang members stemmed from broken or abusive homes where they were never truly loved.

“Traumatized people are going to be more inclined to cause trauma,” Father Greg said in an interview with The Christophers, “but it’s equally true here at Homeboy that cherished people will be able to find their way to the joy there is in cherishing themselves and others.”

His efforts snowballed into the program he is renowned for to this day: Homeboy Industries, the largest gang intervention, rehabilitation, and re-entry program in the world. Boyle hopes that everybody in Homeboy Industries takes away the simple but powerful notion to love all people, because all people—despite what they’ve done—can be good.

“People aren’t wicked,” he said. “They’re just strangers to their own goodness...I hope that people will embrace loving as their practice, as their intention, as the thing that they work at.”

Perhaps we are all strangers to our own goodness to some degree. Let’s try to find that goodness in others, thereby bringing it out in ourselves as well.

*“If you treat an individual as he is,
he will remain how he is. But if you
treat him as if he were what he ought
to be and could be, he will become
what he ought to be and could be.”*

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe