

To all the living Saints at Manatee Life Church,

**SCRIPTURE:**

Proverbs 4:23 (MSG) – Larger reading: Proverbs 4:20-27

*Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts.*

**STORY:**

When the frail Mary Bachelor of Hasseltine House was told, “You do well to smile,” she responded: “I believe if I furnish the smile on the face, God will provide the mood in the heart.”

**OBSERVATION:**

Art Linkletter had a show, “People Are Funny” and then set out to prove his point. Rodney Dangerfield was famous at making fun of himself because he felt “no one gave him respect.” Just ahead of me was a van whose back two doors and bumper were plastered with sarcastic, aggressive, in-your-face, negative bumper stickers.

As I was contemplating those three realities, I was also listening to Dr. Dean Edell, on the radio, who was addressing something that he had read about in a magazine dedicated to psychological issues speaking about the “Placebo Effect.” A doctor could hand you a baby aspirin and tell you that this was the strongest medicine that he could give and it would “ ... “ (you fill in the blank such as make you smarter, stronger, faster, healthier, etc.) and it would have that effect on your behavior. On the other hand the same doctor could hand you the same aspirin and tell you that he “really isn’t sure if this little pill can have any real lasting effect on you” and, guess what, it won’t. That is the “Placebo Effect.”

While listening to Dr. Edell explain this effect to his listeners I remembered an old illustration that I’ve used on a number of occasions. The story goes that The Rev. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale would like to walk the streets of the various cities and metropolitan areas in which he was asked to speak. While visiting in China he found himself in a seedier part of the town than he would have normally visited. As he walked, he passed a tattoo parlor where American sailors would get tattoos. He noticed one tattoo in the window display that he couldn’t believe anyone would really get. It said, “Born to Lose”. He walked inside to ask the tattoo artist if people really got that tattoo. In broken English the old

tattoo artist, with great ancient wisdom, said, “Before tattooed on body, tattooed on mind.” Actually, because I see things with a theological minds-eye I would re-arrange the wise old man’s statement to: Before tattooed on body, tattooed on mind and tattooed on heart ... as in the biblical understanding as the heart being the seat of a persons entire being ... the heart dictates the very essence of a person.

Coupled with all of this was a small article written in the August 9, 2010 issue of TIME magazine titled, “How Routine Can Help Kids Stave Off Anxiety” which talks about a study done by Timothy Monk at the University of Pittsburgh. “Monk found that babies who had more dependable routines at 1 month were less likely to be anxious at age 10. He thinks the reason may have to do with both physiological factors – like the levels of the hormones cortisol and melatonin, which help regulate sleep and eating – and environmentally influenced ones like sociability, which is encouraged in children who feel secure in their daily routines and interactions with their parents.” ... “Before tattooed on body, tattooed on mind.”

Back to the person driving the van ... I often wonder what kind of early childhood a person like that had that would result in such a depressing attitude that he or she would want to insult the world ... or at least that part of the world that would drive up behind them? The Placebo Effect would indicate that as our minds think so we are affected and our minds are shaped by the interactions we have in our early years with the significant individuals, i.e. parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings ... tattooing the mind and heart.

Mr. Linkletter was correct, people are funny, but sometimes in a sad way. And while Dangerfield’s, “I don’t get any respect,” was just an act for the comedy stage, nevertheless the world seems to be filled with people that honestly feel that no one respects them ... cares about them ... loves and appreciates them ... and so, in anger, they turn outward in defense or defiance as in “Keep honking I’m reloading.”

In was during the Vietnam protest era when someone asked, “If you shoot all the lights out can you shoot them back on again?” Great question, especially in this divided, hate filled world in which we are

living. Actually, our response to the world's situation depends on what is "tattooed on our minds" and in our hearts.

**QUOTE:**

*People become really quite remarkable when they start thinking that they can do things. When they believe in themselves they have the first secret of success. - Norman Vincent Peale*

**PRAYER:**

God of grace and God of mercy, pour out your love upon my heart that it will shine forth in all that I do today! Amen

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