

Reflections with Sharon

Be a gracious receiver

Read James 1:2-18

I have too much pride at times and I acknowledge that it has cost me some real opportunities to be open to the chances to invite others into my circumstances and allow myself to be blessed by their loving support and encouragement. Pride is a funny thing: not only does it keep us from asking for help, but it can also lead us to refuse much needed help that's freely offered.

When I think about it, there are times that being on the receiving end is so much harder than being on the giving end. For one thing, it takes a certain measure of humility and trust and vulnerability to be a gracious receiver. Yet, every one of us needs relationships where we feel safe enough to share our pain and embarrassments, and have friends and family members listen to us and help us through.

Trying to cover our shame while convincing ourselves that we can make it on our own will do us no good: All this does is rob others of the opportunity to be a blessing and rob us of the opportunity to receive a blessing. Some of us are so preoccupied with image and what people may think, that even when things go bad through no fault of ours, we feel mortified. Forgetting that hard times happen to everyone, we begin to magnify our "bad luck" and throw ourselves pity parties. Consequently, we withdraw into our own miserable world and shut others out of our lives.

But I've discovered that, while we all need time alone, isolating ourselves from others will only keep us stuck. Whether it is a painful divorce, prolonged illness, financial hardships, legal problems, the burden of caring for someone, an abusive relationship or whatever, we must leave the door open so that those who care and want to reach out to us can do so freely. Only true friends stick around long enough to see us through our pain and shame, anyway. So, with humility and grace, we might as well accept their help, knowing that no matter how bad things seem, the sun will rise again tomorrow.

If we would only remember that life is made up of giving and taking, good and bad, highs and lows, joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, ups and downs, calms and storms, triumphs and tragedies – not just for us, but for everyone – then we would realize the folly in allowing our pride to keep us from being gracious recipients of God's goodness and favor which comes to us every day through loving, caring people who have themselves experienced life on the receiving end also, and know that it's alright to receive, just as long as we do so graciously.