

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #141:
DOES JESUS CARE?
By John Temples

“Frank Graeff” is not a name that is immediately recognized by most Christians. But the mention of a song he wrote brings instant recognition: “Does Jesus Care?” Here is the song:

VERSE 1: Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth or song,
As the burdens press, and the cares distress
And the way grows weary and long?

REFRAIN: Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.

VERSE 2: Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,
Does He care enough to be near? (Refrain)

VERSE 3: Does Jesus care when I’ve tried and failed
To resist some temptation strong;
When for my deep grief there is no relief,
Though my tears flow all the night long? (Refrain)

VERSE 4: Does Jesus care when I’ve said goodbye
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,
Is it aught to Him? Does He see? (Refrain)

Frank Graeff wrote this song in 1901 following a long period of intense personal suffering. Graeff was a denominational minister in Philadelphia. He was known for his cheery disposition. In fact, his nickname was “the Sunshine Minister.” But even the most optimistic and cheerful individuals can fall into depression, anxiety, and uncertainty, and Graeff was no exception. It was during a prolonged period of despondency that he found consolation in 1 Peter 5:7—”Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Upon reading that verse, he wrote “Does Jesus Care?”

The words of this song address four circumstances that can bring any of us down:

- The first verse speaks of ongoing burdens and cares that weary us.
- The second verse deals with doubts and fears.
- The third verse addresses personal failures, especially the failure to resist some temptation.
- The fourth verse talks about an especially hard challenge--the death of a loved one.

The chorus of “Does Jesus Care?” says,

“Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.”

Reflecting Peter’s inspired words, this refrain assures us that Jesus does care--His heart is touched with our grief. Scripture abundantly confirms the sentiments of this refrain. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Borrowing from another song, we can have “blessed assurance.” And what is the basis for this assurance? It is our knowledge of God’s word and the experiences of countless others who have struggled and won the victory over life’s burdens.

“DOES JESUS CARE?” IN SCRIPTURE

It's interesting to note that twice in Jesus's earthly life, He was challenged with this question: “Lord, do You care?”

The first time was when He was on the Sea of Galilee with His disciples. Here is Mark's record: “And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke him, and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ Then he arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm’” (Mark 4:37-39).

This disciples mistook Jesus's utter confidence in God (which enabled Him to sleep during a storm) for a lack of care for their wellbeing. Many times we also interpret a seeming lack of response to our prayers to mean that God does not care. But Scripture assures us that God does care, even when it seems He is not doing anything about our situation.

Here are some perceptive comments on this incident by David Hamrick: “Never doubt that God cares for you, no matter how difficult a situation is to understand. In Mark chapter 4, when the disciples were caught in yet another storm on Galilee, they woke up Jesus from His rest in the stern of the boat and said with some apparent exasperation, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ (Mark 4:38). They were certain that if Jesus cared about the situation, He would have done something already. But what would ‘doing something’ look like? They could not understand that His presence on board that boat made it the safest place on earth in that moment. In fact He resolved the situation in an instant with the words, ‘Peace! Be still!’ May we all listen for that voice of calm in the midst of life's troubles, and remember that ‘He cares for you.’”

(<http://drhamrick.blogspot.com/2013/06/does-jesus-care.html>)

The second occasion when the Lord's concern was questioned is found in Luke 10. Jesus was in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Martha was busy making supper for Jesus and His disciples, but Mary was not helping--she was listening to Jesus's teaching. The Bible says, “But Martha was distracted with

much serving, and she approached him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:40-42).

We can all identify with this scene: unexpected guests show up, and we are frantically trying to prepare food for them, and nobody is helping! In Martha's favor, she was only trying to make Jesus welcome and provide a meal worthy of His presence in her home. But there's something not right when we are in the presence of the Lord, and yet all frazzled and distraught! Jesus gently rebuked her troubled frame of mind, saying, "You are worried and troubled about [too many] things, but only one thing is really needed."

What was the "one thing" Jesus meant? There are two possible explanations:

- *Jesus meant, you are preparing a great many dishes, but we really only need one simple dish.* Perhaps Jesus was saying, "Don't try to put a five-course meal on the table--just a good pot of beans and cornbread will suit Me fine!"
- *Or He meant, "one thing"--hearing the word of God--is more important than any earthly enjoyments or activities, even eating.* Sitting at the feet of Jesus is more important than sitting at a dinner table!

So what can we learn from this beautiful song and these Scriptures? That yes, there are many burdens, cares, and troubles in our lives. Some are external, like heavy physical or financial burdens, or an unclear path in life. Others are internal, like the sense of failure when we succumb to temptation. Still others may even be life-threatening, like a storm at sea, when our "boat" seems to be sinking. And some are trivial (but important to us), like a botched social occasion. But Jesus cares about all these things, and He cares for us. We have His word on that. --John Temples

