

# High Maintenance Christians

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

A. I am asking for a double portion of the spirit of love for the truth that characterizes this congregation from two groups here:

1. Those who are already very active in the Lord's work, please understand that this lesson is not directed at you. If you are already working at your limits, you should not feel guilty about having limits
2. Those who are high maintenance, please understand that this lesson is not designed to run you out of the church, but lift you to the next level. I believe you have the potential to excel and to fly. If I didn't believe that about you, I would preach about something else today.

B. What are high maintenance Christians?

1. "High-maintenance Christians are those that require a lot of attention and energy from others. Like a 'lemon' car, they constantly need fixing and prodding to run. High-maintenance Christians, always seeking to have things done to and for them, drain the vitality of the church and other believers who are gracious and generous in providing encouragement and support. While it is a privilege to receive help from our fellow Christians, when excessive garnering of support becomes a manner of life, that person is not walking according to the Spirit of God." (Vic Edwards, Are You a High Maintenance Christian?)

2. "There are impossible people who beef, bite, and bellyache. They give you the cold shoulder, require special attention, play the victim, dominate, or trample other people's feelings. The Scriptures are clear that as believers, we are to 'carry one another's burdens.' But the same Scriptures teach just as clearly that 'each one is to carry his own load.' The high-maintenance Christian is not carrying his own load. Unless constantly nurtured, patty-caked, and encouraged by others, these people will quickly fall away from faithful duty to Christ." (Dr. Les Parrott, How to Handle Difficult Relationships)

C. What is the issue?

1. High-maintenance Christians can have a draining effect on church work and fellowship. When extra energy, encouragement, and resources are constantly expended on a few members, unwilling to grow, the whole church suffers loss.

a. 1Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:12-13

D. How do we change the high-maintenance lifestyle?

1. There are no easy answers to this question. The change will occur as we grow in our faith and understanding of God's will - Rom. 14:19
2. Stop thinking about and demanding what you believe you are entitled to, and start looking for someone to help or something to do.
3. Do not expect return or reward for your gracious services. That is not the motivation of Christians; our work is "as unto the Lord." Stop expecting others to praise you for your service. This is commendable Christian service, and not high-maintenance Christianity.

4. Be diligent in what God has already given you and find a way to be self-sufficient. Think about how you can do it and not about how others can do it for you.
  5. Stop thinking about getting your way and start thinking about what is best for others; give consideration to their feelings and not just your own
- E. How do we bear with those who insist on remaining high maintenance?
1. Are we simply left to bear with the difficulties they create? - Rom. 12:18
  2. Don't let a difficult person determine your mood and behavior. "How can you keep being kind to such a person?" "Why should I let him dictate to me how I'm going to feel and act?"
  3. Set your boundaries. Decide what you are willing to tolerate, and let the person know the rules. When he steps across the line, offer him an opportunity to apologize, and walk away leaving him to his own company if he refuses.
  4. Guard against infection. When we are around a negative person, we tend to become negative, too. Once infected, it becomes a way of relating to others.
  5. Rather than focusing on trying to change other people, decide to change the dynamics of how you interact with them.
  6. Realize that all people are valuable and loved in God's eyes, even with all their faults, and that He wants us to live at peace with everyone as much as possible.
  7. Consider the grace God has extended toward you, and try to extend grace to others you encounter.
  8. "But that will allow them to continue taking advantage of others!"
    - a. You will be judged based on how you treat them. God will judge and condemn them if they take advantage of you.

## **I. FELLOWSHIP SHOULD BE A BLESSING, NOT A BURDEN**

- A. One of the blessings enjoyed in Christ is help from brethren in times of spiritual crisis - Gal. 6:1-2
- B. At the same time, every Christian has a responsibility to grow beyond being helped to being capable and willing to be of help, not only to themselves, but also to others.
  1. Each Christian must shoulder responsibility - Gal. 6:4-5; Heb. 12:12-13
  2. We will be held accountable for our own actions; we will be unable to shift any amount of that accountability to others we believe should have helped us, or we blame for discouraging us - Rom. 14:12
- C. Not all high maintenance Christians are alike
  1. Babes in Christ just starting their new spiritual life need help and nurturing just like an infant, and require constant attention and positive feedback just like a toddler
    - a. It is unreasonable to expect more that their development allows
  2. Burdened or grieving Christians who need others to seek them out and lift them up

3. Lethargic Christians who attend and work only when constantly admonished and pressed
  - a. It is unreasonable them to expect already overworked Christians to have to keep doing so in perpetuity
4. Self-centered members that expect others to cater to their moods or they will leave in a tantrum. The best thing that can happen for the congregation is for them to leave in a tantrum
5. Some churches can be high maintenance
  - a. Corinth was - 1Cor 3:1-4
  - b. Philippi was not - Phil. 1:3-7
- D. Some high maintenance members can be good and healthy for a local church
  1. A great deal of attention is crucial for the newborn Christian's survival. It also gives other disciples opportunities to learn nurturing. Note the difference in a couple before they have children and after they have been parents for a while - Rom. 15:1
  2. Extra attention is essential for hurting Christians - 1Thes. 5:14
- E. But high maintenance Christians can hurt a local congregation
  1. When it hinders the growth of the church by siphoning away the efforts, energy, and resources of busy workers
  2. Paul desired to preach where Christ was not named, but he had to continually refocus his attention to the high maintenance Christians at Corinth - Rom. 15:20; 2Cor. 12:14-15
  3. When more serious needs go unmet
    - a. Babes in Christ overlooked because others expect coddling
    - b. The spiritually sick and dying neglected and lost, because others demand attention - Prov. 18:9

## **II. MAKING OUR FELLOWSHIP A BLESSING TO OTHERS**

- A. There are times in our spiritual lives when we all need some maintenance. But to avoid keeping it from those who really need it, we should give serious effort toward improving ourselves
- B. We must choose to grow; and, it is a choice every Christian can make and follow through with action - Heb. 5:12 - 6:1
- C. We must learn to find strength within ourselves and learn to subsist on the strength God gives us
  1. When we are growing and developing as babes in Christ, we often "borrow" the courage, faith, and strength of disciples around us. But we cannot do that throughout our entire lives
  2. We need to learn to be self-strengthening and resolve to survive on the strength God gives us - Phil. 4:11-13; 2Cor 1:3-6