



IF YOU WERE A CAT

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

A few minutes ago, I watched my cat as she lay in a shaft of warm sunshine washing herself. It occurred to me how we humans need so much more than cats do. Cats are content with eating and sleeping. They don't even plan where to spend the next hour. How would you like to be a cat?

I don't think I would. We humans require more to be complete. We need a purpose—a reason for living that goes beyond acquiring food and rest. Without purpose life would seem meaningless. Lying in the sun is not enough to keep us happy.

Trouble is when we're down it's hard to motivate ourselves to pursue anything meaningful. Then what?

At a support group meeting two people with depression complained about the lack of energy they were experiencing. A sense of purpose was what they needed more than anything. How they wished for a reason to get up in the morning! How they wished for something that would give them an appetite for life again!

It struck me how this is what we most need help with when we're in a dark mood. We need someone who understands what it feels like, who could gently suggest something that might help us feel better. In the Scripture above, the apostle Paul encourages us to have this kind of sensitivity.

We would be insensitive to reprimand the disheartened, those who need a kind word of encouragement. And we would be hardhearted to lecture the weak who need help getting back on their feet. Paul says that we need to have patience with those who are having a hard time.

One morning, in the throes of a black mood, I had breakfast with a friend. She ended our time together asking what I would do the rest of the day. Would I be able to commit myself to filling the dishwasher and getting it going? And could I empty the clothes dryer which had been waiting for my attention for a number of days? She suggested these two little jobs to give some purpose to my day. Something manageable.

It wasn't much, but it was something I was capable of trying. No more was required of me for this one day. I now had a purpose.

Later that day, I did fill the dishwasher. The laundry didn't get done till the next day.

But it was a start.

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