

If You Ever Borrow Anything

by Bill Crews

My parents taught me some things about borrowing from others — borrowing tools, books, equipment or whatever. I was made to understand that others were not obligated to loan me any possession of theirs. It was out of the goodness of their hearts that they did so; therefore, I understood that I could not go through life expecting others to loan me any possessions of theirs that I might desire to borrow. I was also made to understand that I should not borrow anything without the knowledge and consent of the owner. And I was made to understand that I should take special care of any item that I borrowed (more so than I would if the item belonged to me), that I should be sure to return it as soon as I had promised or had finished using it, that I should replace it if I lost it or repair it if I damaged it — with an explanation and an apology. Mind you, I am not talking about “old-fashioned values.” I am talking about principles of right and wrong, principles that can be found in the Bible. Please read Matthew 7:12; Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21; Philemon 14; Exodus 22:7-15.

In 2 Kings 6:1-5 we read of “*the sons of the prophets*” declaring to Elisha the prophet their need for a larger place to dwell. With his consent they undertook construction of such a place near the Jordan river. An accident occurred. While one man was wielding an axe, the axe-head came loose from its handle and fell into the water. The inspired record tells us that he exclaimed to Elisha, “*Alas, my master!*,” and explains, “*for it was borrowed.*” Evidently that man had also been taught some things about borrowing from others.

But it is not always so. I and nearly all preachers that I have known have lost books and valuable papers that were loaned to others, usually to brethren, that were never returned. And sometimes the borrower is a fellow-preacher. More than forty years ago I was told about a preacher who had some very bad habits in regard to borrowing. He borrowed an ice-cream freezer, allowed the can to sit for days in the salty water, and finally returned the freezer — with holes in the can! The same preacher had enough gall to ask a brother if he could borrow his trailer, boat and boating equipment to take on a vacation. When he and his family came home from the vacation, boat, trailer and all were returned, except for a few items that had been lost out of the boat! The same preacher had also asked another brother for the loan of his new automobile for their 4,000 mile vacation, but had been turned down.

I have known of brethren borrowing books, dropping them into water, and returning them in their permanently damaged condition; of brethren borrowing items that were never returned — either lost or forgotten; of brethren borrowing money (in one case, in excess of \$2,000) that was never repaid; of brethren borrowing tools that were broken and returned without a word. As James said of a certain misuse of the tongue: “*My brethren, these things ought not so to be*” (James 3:10). On the positive side, most brethren that I have known, because they are Christians, are too honorable to conduct their lives in this fashion. If we have children or grandchildren, let’s take time to teach them some things about borrowing. It too must be faced in the judgment.

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