

Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

Thoughts on Pity Parties

I'm not really a party animal. In fact, usually, if I'm invited to a party of some sort or another, I try to find a good reason to graciously decline the invitation.

It's not that I don't enjoy people, mind you. In general, they're fantastic. Like Will Rogers said, "I've never met a man I didn't like." I am thankful for my good friends.

Yep, I like people a lot -- but I dislike going to parties. (Although, if I get stuck and actually end up attending one, it usually turns out better than I imagined.) In the car, on the way home, I've heard Cathy say more than once, "There now, that wasn't so bad, was it?" I reply with a mumble and grunt, because I know she's right. Still -- I'm not an eager party-goer, and seriously doubt if I will ever become one.

Do you know what kind of party is the most common? Birthday? Graduation? Anniversary?
You'll never guess!

The party held most frequently is. . . The Pity Party! As a minister, I've been invited to pity parties on many occasions. I've never received an "official invitation" on cardstock in the mail, but I've certainly been invited, nevertheless.

Now, helping people with troubled hearts is part of my calling. Any worthwhile minister of God's grace is interested in bringing hope, encouragement and faith to hurting souls. We are called to listen, to love, and to really care.

However, that does not mean that I'm enthused about attending somebody else's pity party.

A pity party is defined as when you are consumed with feeling sorry for yourself and re-hashing your problems over and over again, without any interest in moving towards a positive solution.

Here are the problems with a pity party:

- 1) There's no music. Nobody brings a banjo or accordion. Nobody dances, and nobody sings -- except for maybe a mournful rendition of the blues!
- 2) There are no refreshments. Nobody serves cream puffs or crumpets at a pity party. There's nothing refreshing at all about it. The only thing dished up is stew of re-hashed offenses and complaints.
- 3) There are no joyful guests. If you "crash" a pity party with a bit of positive perspective, you'll be asked to leave. Cheery optimism is inappropriate behavior for a pity party.
- 4) There is no hope. Hopelessness is what fuels the party and keeps it going.

Feeling sorry for someone else (compassion) is a beautiful and godly expression.

Feeling sorry for yourself, however, is not nearly so noble or inspiring. It is an ugly, downhill spiral that takes you further into negative despair.