

# Editorial: There's only so much we can care about

February 8, 2024

There's only so much we can care about, but that's not a reason not to care.

It sounds coldhearted at a time when we need warm hearts. The simple fact is, however, we don't have the capacity to care about everything. Our bodies, minds and emotions don't have the ability. And this causes so much friction between and within us.

As strange as it may sound, I came to this realization while driving this morning.

## A driving lesson

A white Tesla raced up behind me, zipped into the next lane with what felt like inches to spare, sped past me, zipped back over, then—in the middle of the intersection and with even less room to spare—zipped back over in front of another car, accelerated past the vehicle in front of me, veered back over into our lane and sped up again.

My initial thought was not friendly, though still within the bounds of Christianity. My next thought was: "Maybe they're late. Or maybe there's an emergency." The second thought led to a third.

I remembered when my wife was in labor with our daughter, and the hospital was almost too far away. I tested the speed and handling of our car that night, leaving others to wonder what was wrong with that idiot driver. There was no time for me to slow down to explain.

None of us around that white Tesla this morning knew why the person

drove so recklessly. And because we didn't know, maybe we didn't care and felt justified in our judgments.

Had we known the reason, would we have cared? Probably not as much as the person driving that Tesla.

## **All the world's cares**

For those of us who follow the news, these days can feel like a freeway full of reckless drivers during rush hour.

The war between Russia and Ukraine, the war between Israel and Hamas, the global immigration and refugee crisis, genocide in Myanmar, religious violence in India and Nigeria, sexual abuse cases in the Southern Baptist Convention, this election year, the ongoing aftermath of the COVID pandemic and effects of high inflation, plus our own daily concerns—the news makes sure we know about all of it.

But we don't have the capacity to care about all of that, much less to care in equal measure about it all. By this point, it's Friday after a long week at work, and we just want to get home.

After a long day at work—with all the stress and worry a full workday can load on a person—we don't have the capacity to care as much about the other drivers getting home as we care about getting home ourselves.

And yet, the law and insurance and what happens when two cars collide at speed provides at least some incentive to care at least a little bit more about other drivers—if only because they affect what matters most to us.

That last part: Often, our concern for those we don't know is proportionate to how much their actions might affect our own lives. That's what economists call "self-interest."

# Caring like Jesus

We never can get completely away from self-interest, but we who follow Jesus must grow beyond it. We must—in Paul’s words—“have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who ... made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant [and] humbled himself” (Philippians 2:5-8).

As we develop the same mindset as Jesus, we also must remember Jesus did not give himself equally to everyone. There were people he didn’t heal or teach. At least once, he sent his disciples to do his work.

I don’t know how Jesus decided who and what to give himself to. I assume he relied on God the Father’s direction, not self-interest, since Jesus said he came to do his Father’s will and not his own (John 6:38). Even so, Jesus often seemed to give himself to those who brought themselves to his attention—the woman who bled, the Syro-Phoenician woman, the centurion at Capernaum, Jairus and others.

Being fully God, surely Jesus cared deeply for all people. Being fully human, it didn’t look like he did. He grew tired, was irritated and even angry with some people, and couldn’t be in more than one place at a time. Living on Earth for such a short time, he physically could do only so much. Jesus had to make choices. Lazarus did die, after all, and not just once.

Our human limitations prevent us from caring about everything, but that’s not a reason not to care about some things. So, what things should we care about? That’s the struggle, isn’t it?

# Caring for fellow Christians

Let’s consider Ukraine, which featured prominently in the *Baptist Standard* this week. Managing Editor Ken Camp and I attended the [Plano event](#) in which a delegation from Ukraine made requests for religious, financial and

political assistance.

Ken and I demonstrated our concern for our Ukrainian brothers and sisters by attending the event, covering it, and publishing a news story about it and an [op-ed by Igor Bandura](#). We care about what is happening in Ukraine because it involves people—our brothers and sisters in Christ—and a cherished principle—religious freedom.

Ukraine isn't the only place we care about, but we can only be in one place at a time. And it's not every day a delegation from Ukraine comes here to visit us.

Life is busy and full, and for those of us not living in the war zone, Ukraine is not front of mind all day, every day. And so, we commit our time, energy and resources—our caring—to things that are in front of us all day, every day. Unfortunately, some of what gets our best doesn't matter as much.

## **Caring for what matters**

We might have more capacity to care about things that matter if we didn't give so much of our capacity to caring about things that don't. Does it really matter who wins the Super Bowl or that the Dallas Cowboys aren't in it ... again?

That question isn't about football. It's about scale. Just how much of our time, energy and resources do we need to give to what entertains and comforts us? Enough that it diminishes our ability to pray for and support, in tangible ways, our brothers and sisters around the world?

For all I know, the driver of that white Tesla needed more compassion than judgment from me this morning. It took me a while to find the capacity to care about that.

There's only so much we can care about. So, let's make sure we care about

what matters.

*Eric Black is the executive director, publisher and editor of the Baptist Standard. He can be reached at [eric.black@baptiststandard.com](mailto:eric.black@baptiststandard.com). The views expressed are those of the author.*