

December 5, 2021

Viewpoint from the Valley Grove Church Of Christ

‘Segregation’ In A Second-Hand Store

By Karl Diestelkamp

There I was, in a second-hand store to search through its many books. To my surprise, all of the books were arranged according to the color of the covers. Talk about giving new meaning to the phrase, “don’t judge a book by its cover!”

I thought, wouldn’t it have been strange to say to my wife, “Honey, I’m going to the store to see if can find some green books to go with my all green library.” And, after going there to come home and say, “I’m back, and you won’t believe this. I ran into a guy who was looking for yellow books to go with his all yellow library. And you know what? We agreed to help each other — if I come across any yellow books I will send them to him and if he finds any green books he will send them to me — only he does not want any dark yellow books and I admitted that I did not really want any pale green books either. Neither of us want any of those ‘shabby’ little cheap books or ones that have been badly used or that are stained.” That would be as absurd as arranging books by the color of the covers in the first place.

But those books got me to thinking about local churches. The archaic notion that certain brethren would “be more comfortable” in a congregation made up of people more like themselves (whatever that means) is still around in some places. No, most would not admit that the color of the “cover” was really the issue or that some of the people we fail to embrace or encourage are “shabby” and “cheap” and have been “badly used” in life or are too “stained” for our tastes, but it does happen. While “language” and “geographic location” may at times determine the makeup of a local church, culture, social status, economic achievement, ethnic composition, academic standing and skin color should not be used to deliberately attract only certain ones and to exclude others.

In Christ, “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ” (Gal. 3:28). We have “put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in

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all” (Col. 3:10,11). All such distinctions are erased in Christ. The world uses these artificial, separating barriers for its advantage, but Christians are forbidden to do so.

Peter declared, “. . . of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and woketh righteousness is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34,35). The gospel is to be preached “to the whole creation” (Mk. 16:15); and we are to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). That includes those who may have had an unsavory past, like some in Corinth of whom Paul said, “such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). And, for that matter, like all of us as well, who “have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

If the Lord has received those who have been “washed” and “sanctified” and “justified,” on what grounds could I possibly refuse them, or discourage them? If we consider ourselves to be “strong.” Paul wrote, “Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying . . . Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:1,2,7).

If we are tempted to make distinctions between people over superficial differences, we “become

judges with evil thoughts . . . if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors” (Jas. 2:1-11).

Now back to the color of the books. I did not even look for a single book among the colorful “factions” on the shelves. That is not the way I search for a good book. Likewise, the church of the Lord has no “color.” You make the applications!

Churches “Of Christ” And The Needy

By Steve Fontenot

Who are churches of Christ authorized to relieve? The only way to know is to appeal to the Scriptures. The Christians in the Jerusalem church were “selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need” (Acts 2:45). Who were the “*all*” and “*anyone*” in the context? They are the same ones being discussed in vv. 41-44 “. . . those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe . . . and all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

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The Jerusalem church provided so that “there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles’ feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need” (Acts 4:34-35).

“Among them” = “the congregation of those who believed” (v.32).

The disciples in the church in Antioch “determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea” (Acts 11:29).

A collection was made by churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia for needy in Jerusalem. Seven times it is said this collection was for needy *“saints”* (Rom. 15:25, 26, 31; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12). To say Paul used this for the relief of someone else (non-saints) is to accuse Paul of a misappropriation of funds. Whereas there had been an age-old racial barrier between Jews and Gentiles, many thanksgivings were being given to God for the liberality manifested by these Gentile churches toward their Jewish brethren, be they in Jerusalem or anywhere else, “unto them and unto all” (2 Cor. 9:13).

Timothy, the evangelist in Ephesus, was to “let not the church be burdened” with the relief of widows with children and grandchildren, “so that it may assist those who are “widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:16). *“Now she who is a widow indeed, and who has been left alone has fixed her hope on God, and continues in*

entreaties and prayers night and day” (1 Tim. 5:5).

In the New Testament, churches “of Christ” provided for needy “in Christ.”

What Were You Looking For?

By Leslie Diestelkamp

Jesus was trying to show those who had surrendered to John’s teaching that John’s purpose was really to prepare them for the One who would come after him (Lk. 7:24-30). To stress this lesson, Jesus asked them some very pointed questions:

1. Did you go out to see a reed shaken in the wind? That is, did you expect John to be a mealy-mouthed, milch-toast whom you could push around, and who would tickle your ears?

2. Or did you expect John to be a sophisticated socialite who would appeal to your own vanity, and who would conform to your own worldly ways?

3. Or perhaps you expected John to be simply a prophet who would reveal future events, or perform some great feat before you?

Of course we know that, regardless of what they went out to see in John, the multitudes were convinced of their sins and brought to submissive repentance (Matt. 3:1-6).

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John surely did not beckon with a wavering hand or speak with a quivering lip. He did not reason with them about past events or future prospects on earth. He did not make his appeal as a “man of the cloth,” as a dignified representative of some sect, but his appeal was to their conscience and their will.

There may be similarity in this and attitudes we see today. The people may think of a preacher as an ambassador of good will, a rather simple man who should try to please everybody, or a dignified, scholarly gentleman who, in deep, resonant tones speaks great swelling words of insignificance!

But, like John, the preacher today must come to the people with determination to bring them to Christ. He must go everywhere with “the sword of the Spirit,” bringing sincere people to total submission to the gospel of Christ which was anticipated in the kingdom message John preached long ago. It would be well, also today, if preachers could imitate the character of John by demonstration of condescension coupled with courage and dedication that did not waver in the face of death.

December Birthdays:

The 8th Melton Yarbrough; 14th Jacob Hisaw; 16th Doug Morgan; 20th Ian, Landon, and Kevin Collins; 23rd Ricky Thomas; 24th Robin McCartney; 29th Gail Justice; 30th Alicia Threadgill

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Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.
Worship 10:30 A.M.
Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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