

“It’s All In Perspective”

I have learned over the years that everybody sees things a bit differently, which makes life both interesting and challenging. Even in church, over theological issues, folks can see things either a bit differently or totally differently, depending on their perspective. To me the beauty of the Bible is that it gives us a standard to live out, by which one day all will be judged. And if we all truly seek God’s Word and His purpose for us in His writing it to us, we may have small differences of perspective, but we will agree on the basics of the Biblical standards for holy living. It’s when our perspectives get so out of the norm of what God desires in our lives that we get into predicaments.

Along these lines, something quite funny happened on that trip down to Charleston that my family took earlier in the summer that speaks to seeing things from different perspectives and getting into predicaments. Addie Lee, Emily, Kimberly and myself were down at the market in Charleston, just walking through, looking at all the wares for sale. We got separated and I was kind of off from them when I bumped into Emily. Now Emily was all excited and showed me this shoulder bag or back pack sorta thing that she’d just bought. She was excited about her purchase and asked me what I thought about it. It was indeed quite colorful, light weight, just the kind of thing that she’d enjoy. She was delighted with her purchase.

About that time, I got a call from Addie Lee who was at the same stand where Emily had made her purchase and asked me to come down there and help her pick out a bag for her as well. Happy to help, I headed her way. When I reached her, there was a whole counter of these multi-colored bags. As I began helping her pick one out, I noticed something that I had failed to notice while I was looking at Emily’s bag. On the back of the bag, in the center of the main compartment, was the word “HEMP.” I looked at Addie Lee and asked her if that word meant anything to her. She didn’t catch on at first, but I reminded her that the “hemp” plant, and there may be several forms of that plant, are what growers make marijuana out of. Yep, it is a cannabis plant that is known as hemp that ultimately is made into the drug that you smoke, while legalized in some states is still illegal (in the drug form) in federal statutes.

So, now seeing the word “HEMP” on that bag gave her a different perspective as to whether she wanted to buy it or not. Addie Lee decided to forego buying it, so she would not have to explain to everyone that she is not a proponent of “hemp,” rather, by not buying it, she chose not to participate in the production of, sale of, use of, any form of marijuana, whether it is in a pipe, rolled up in a cig or made into a book bag. She just wasn’t having any part of it. Good for her!

But, that leaves ole Emily with an already purchased “HEMP” bag, which I could see her in her innocence taking into church or the public square and having to hear a gazillion times, “Hemp, isn’t that the marijuana plant?” In fact, I’d still love to see her trying to explain that one, and I can hear someone saying, “So Emily, you’re supporting the hemp industry these days?” Yeah, that’d be a hoot!

But alas, I called her and said she might want to come back to the booth where she bought her bag and I explained the situation to her. The salesman did confirm that the hemp (cannabis) plant also produces marijuana. Emily’s countenance dropped and I laughed. Now, her entire perspective on that bag changed and what was once seen as a great buy was suddenly an embarrassment. I asked the salesman if there was any way she could get her money back and at first, he seemed reluctant. So I said, “Look, we are not really the hemp tot’n, marijuana smok’n kinda family. We don’t really want to support any form of the production of anything that traps people into a life of addiction in any form, so could you just give my daughter her money back.” I think he was more stunned at my confession than he was accommodating to my request, but he was nice enough to refund her money.

We laughed until we cried the rest of the day...my daughters buying “hemp...cannabis!” Now that really wasn’t that big of a deal, but I guess it all depends on one’s perspective. Some other Believer could buy that product and not have any problem with it, but from our perspective, we simply choose to not support any industry that thrives and preys on addictive and destructive behavior in some form of that product. That’s just our perspective! We are not judgmental nor are we apologetic, it’s just our perspective. So you see, one’s perspective affects much of our lives and our perspective can change over time based on our life experiences.

But the one thing that never changes is the Word of God. Some folks say the Old Testament says one thing and the New Testament says something different. No it doesn’t! The Word of God never changes and it never contradicts itself. Someone once said that their Sunday School teacher said that tithing is taught in the Old Testament, but is not mentioned in the New Testament, therefore, one doesn’t have to tithe. I said, “Your Sunday School teacher is correct. The New Testament doesn’t mention tithing that I am aware of, but it does speak of our giving to the Church. In the early Church, the Believers sold their houses, lands and other possessions and brought them to the apostles. Do the names Ananias and Sapphira ring any bells? So, if you want to squabble about the tithe, you don’t have to tithe, but according to the New Testament expectation, sell all possessions, your houses, land, bass boats, firearm collection, your jewelry, your high heel shoe collection and any other possessions you may have and bring it to the Lord. That is what you are expected to do in the New Testament. Remember the story of the rich young ruler? Jesus told him to go sell all he had and give to the poor.” Suddenly this gentleman’s perspective on tithing changed and he said, “You know, tithing is starting to sound better all the time!” “Yep, I thought so,” I said.

Listen, my heart is so heavy right now for what I have had to deal with in a church recently that I cannot even speak about it. How can God’s perspective on His house be that it is to be a House of Prayer, but in some of our churches, church life is so disruptive, abusive and destructive that the police are called several times to just keep the peace...during worship services. I told some church folks recently, at church, that if they’d stop coming to church they might learn to actually like each other...cause outside of church they are civil to one another,

but in the Lord's house they bring only animosity and strife,
bitterness, anger and hostility.

Wow, do we ever need to change our perspective! From my perspective, it is getting to be crunch time, do or die time, put-up or shut-up time, in many of our churches. We either need to be the Body of Christ to a lost and dying world, or we need to close our doors and stop being a hindrance to the Kingdom of God. Listen church, we need to either change our behavior or we need to change our name...and that's my perspective!