



THE PASTOR'S PEN

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Water Anyone?

Too often in the life of the church, we begin to focus on a single issue to the exclusion of all other matters. Being single minded can sometimes lead to great accomplishment, but it can also blind us to the very solutions we need in order to solve our problems or deal with the issue before us because it is not the answer we are looking for.

A good example of this is found in the story of an Arab walking through the Sahara desert, desperate for water. As he was struggling with his thirst, he saw something far off in the distance. Hoping to find water, he walked towards the image, only to find a little old man sitting at a card table with a bunch of neckties laid out on it.

The Arab asked "Please, I'm dying of thirst, can I have some water?"

The man replied "I don't have any water, but why don't you buy a tie? Here's one that goes nicely with your robes."

The Arab shouted, "I don't want a tie, you idiot, I need water!"

"OK, don't buy a tie. But to show you what a nice guy I am, I'll tell you that over that hill there, about 4 miles, is a nice restaurant. Walk that way, they'll give you all the water you want."

The Arab thanked him and walked away towards the hill and eventually disappeared.

Three hours later the Arab came crawling back to where the man was sitting behind his card table. The man said, "I told you, about 4 miles over that hill. Couldn't you find it?"

The Arab rasped "I found it alright, but they wouldn't let me in without a tie."

The point of the story, of course, is that we need to be open and consider what help is being offered by those who have knowledge of the area where we are struggling to find an answer. The Pharisees knew the scriptures and the prophecies about the Messiah; but they rejected Jesus because He did not fit their interpretation of what a Messiah should look like, act like or teach about God. As a result, they missed the truth and very gift from God they had been searching for all their lives.

For us in the church today, it is very easy to focus on a single issue of doctrine or belief and use it as the proverbial "litmus test" to judge the rest of the teachings and beliefs of another. Just because an individual or a group disagrees with our personal view of a doctrine or an issue does not mean that

they are 100% wrong on everything else. They can still have some truth that we need to listen and pay attention to without accepting what we know to be false. We may disagree with the catholic doctrine that focuses on the "Infallibility of the Pope;" yet we do agree with weekly communion, prayer, praising God in worship and dozens of other areas. Are we going to stop communing, praying and worshiping just because they do it and we disagree with them on other teachings? Of course not, we simply do not follow or practice the areas we do not accept as be correct.

The bottom line is that as we try to deal with what a denomination teaches, what a friend or relative believes about God or what other folks in our congregation may or may not believe in the same way we do; we still need to listen and evaluate what they saying in a fair and honest way. If we do, then we will find out that there are probably a lot more points of agreement than disagreement between us.

As Disciples we come

together and sometimes we have to agree to disagree on an issue. That does not mean that we reject the

person or the congregation. It means that we just reject the viewpoint or teaching that we have found to be in error. We still worship the same God as they worship. We still come around the same Table of our Lord as they come around. We still even drink the same water when we are thirsty that they drink. We just may not require you to wear a tie to come inside and be served.

With a glass in hand and no tie,

James