

Accepting Our Differences

By: Bob Lenz

It doesn't take a lot of intelligence to see people are different: men and women; young and old; black, white, red, yellow, and many shades in-between. Our physical features are as diverse as the cultures from which we come. There are over six billion people on this planet. Not only do we each look different, but each person also has a unique personality with likes and dislikes. Too often these differences have caused division instead of appreciation and unity. Our history books are filled with examples of racial discrimination and segregation.

Unfortunately, we have not yet rid ourselves of prejudice and division. In most schools we categorize people as brains, jocks, preps, nerds, geeks, skaters, or druggies. If someone doesn't fit any of these groups he/she falls into the woodwork. After high school we are put into more categories: unskilled labor, housewives, management, welfare recipients, executives, and freeloaders. We classify everyone from the beggar on the street to the entrepreneur who owns half the street. As a result, we've lost sight of the overall picture. We do not dream of unity, harmony, peace and love, much less experience them in reality.

Our judging and classifications have encouraged feelings of superiority in some and inferiority in most. The weak, the hurting, the old, the minorities, and the handicapped many times feel forgotten. Instead of loving and giving we are fighting and taking. The strongest dominates our society as we deteriorate to the laws of the animal kingdom's survival of the fittest.

I saw a cartoon called "Mountain of Success". At the bottom of a mountain, a man starts climbing. He is sweating and puffing as he inches toward the top. The crowded path is rough and steep. He steps on people and pulls others down because he thinks it's the only way to make it to the top. When he gets to the top, a look of accomplishment quickly fades as he sighs and looks around. There is another person at the top and he asks, "What's up here?" The person answers, "Nothing, but don't tell them!" And points to the masses struggling up the hill.

I want to tell them! I want to scream for all to hear: "That's not where life is found!" Life is not a game where the person with the most toys at the end wins! I am not saying that we should give up all aspirations of success and progress. For sin is being less than what we were created to be and literally means "missing the mark".

I do not applaud success at any cost nor do I encourage giving up. The issue I want to address is our focus. What have we given our passions, longings, desires and interests to? In other words, what has captured our hearts? Our passions will determine our goals and our goals have determined the behavior that has caused division. What should we focus on? I believe we should aim for love. When we focus in on our individuality we lose love. But when we focus in on love we'll find new freedom in our individuality.

We were designed to live for love. Our first priority should be to love God and then to love others as we love ourselves. When we live by and for love we will celebrate the differences of each individual. Our differences were meant to pull us together, not push us apart. Instead of fighting for what will bring liberty and justice to all of society, we are living for number one. Yet when someone lives that selfish lifestyle, there is no joy. We weren't meant to live independently. It's time to see that our differences are what can make life exciting again. Our differences can bring purpose back to our hearts and challenge us to take steps to see words like; unity, harmony, and peace become more of a reality. But it's only possible as we focus in on love and not our differences. I urge you to also take the necessary step of focusing in on the Author and Creator of love. He's even been called love itself. God is love! I believe He is the only answer to help us go from living for self to living for love.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

Life Promotions • Appleton, WI • www.lifepromotions.com • 800-955-5433

