



## Accepting (to be)!

by Mark Brunner

### *Different Flavors!* (Ephesians 3: 6)

When was the last time that you served on a committee? In my case, I can't tell you the number of times it's been. It's been a lot over the years. There have been the community groups, reunion committees, a number of different boards, and, of course, those always available church committees. One thing I've learned over the years however, is this: a committee with more than one viewpoint is usually the committee I enjoy serving on or chairing, for that matter, the most. When a group is of one mind from the start, somehow nothing creative is ever achieved. It takes diversity within a group to find real unanimity in the end. Groups that start with different viewpoints but end up with a viewpoint sifted through the creative thoughts of the individuals involved, are the groups most likely to find the best and wisest answers to a problem when all is said and done. There is, nonetheless, this one condition: a group must be willing to find consensus through toleration and acceptance of other's opinions. Otherwise, different viewpoints will only lead to creative chaos.

Here's a thought from Robyn Cavallera: "I like ice cream and vanilla is always my first choice; but not my only choice. In that sense, I kind of see myself walking in God's footsteps. You see, God started out with one flavor too—human, that is. He produced it very carefully. He made a man full of flavor

and body. Then He realized he was lonely, so He created another flavor to complement the first: woman. As time went on, the flavors became increasingly diversified, and so did the added ingredients. We are all ice cream that God has created. Some may be plain vanilla, but to God, we are "Primo," deluxe vanilla! I think the main thing we need to keep in mind is that no one is the same flavor. No one. However, we all started from the same source. If God had wanted us to all be Vanilla, we would have. However, He chooses to produce many varieties and flavors throughout the body, to give us each, a taste of the wonderful variety, of another's different flavor. We are all of the same Spirit but, not the same flavor." (Robyn Cavallera)

Next time someone rubs you the wrong way, try to keep ice cream in mind. God made that person, that flavor just the way he wanted to! They're the right flavor or mixture in God's eyes. You and I have no right to try to add our own ingredients to them, to "improve" the taste, so to speak. Welcome the differences and flavors of each other as God intended each of us to be. Invite the viewpoints of others and then look to see how your viewpoint can compliment someone else's. Maybe if we do, we just might finally come to that "unity" of the Spirit that is God's will. Variety IS the spice of life; especially when that variety finds its unity in the Divine Flavor of the Universe, God Himself.

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## *If But Loved By One!* (Romans 15: 7)

When I was a kid I enjoyed helping my Dad do carpentry work. I remember the few times I was there at his side waiting to hand him something or, every better, actually hammering something or, if he was really in a trusting mood, maybe sawing a piece of wood for him. One thing about my Dad, though, he wasn't always a wellspring of patience. So, when I did help, I knew I had to be on my toes. On one occasion, when he allowed me to saw a 2 x 4 for him, I missed the mark, however. He made the pencil scribe on the piece of wood and told me to cut the beam to the right of the scribe. Being the good listener

that I was, I made the cut on the left of the pencil mark. That made the piece about 1/4" too short. When my Dad went to nail it in, he shook his head, looked at me and frowned. But, on this one occasion I didn't get the lecture I expected. All he said was "I guess we'll have to find another place for this one." You know, that little bit of acceptance on his part did more to build my confidence in doing it right the next time than any lecture could have achieved. I hadn't achieved what I wanted, but he gave me the confidence to believe I could do it better the next time.

Here's a story: "A man decided to ask his boss for a raise in salary. It was Friday. He told his wife that morning what he was about to do, All day the man felt nervous and apprehensive. Late in the afternoon he summoned the courage to approach his employer. To his delight, the boss agreed to a raise. The man arrived home to a beautiful table set with their best china. Candles were lighted. His wife had prepared a festive meal. Immediately he figured that someone from the office had tipped her off! Finding his wife in the kitchen, he told her the good news. They embraced and kissed, then sat down to a wonderful meal. Next to his plate the man found a beautiful lettered note. It read: "Congratulations, darling! I knew you'd get the raise! These things will tell you how much I love you." While on his way to the kitchen to get dessert he noticed that a second card had fallen from her pocket. Picking it off the floor, he read: "Don't worry about not getting the raise! You deserve it anyway! These things will tell you how much I love you." (Thanks to Sermon Fodder)

Total acceptance! Total love. Her love for him wasn't contingent upon his success; in fact, just the opposite. If he were to fail, if he were to be rejected by his boss, he'd be all the more accepted at home. She stood behind him no matter what; softening the blows, healing the wounds, believing and loving him. The willingness to stand beside a person no matter what his capabilities or ability to fail is the definition of love. And I like to think that's the way God look at His relation- ship with you and I! "We love because he first loved us." Although His "pencil mark" on our lives is exacting, second chances are a big part of His plan. Thank God for that!

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## *UFO'S!* (Proverbs 31: 28)

Life is full of those little moments I like to call "UFO's", "U(you) Failed Oops". You know, those little moments when it suddenly dawns on you that some deep character flaw, hidden for years, unexpectedly surfaces in your life. That's when the: "I guess I do say that a lot!" Or, "You know, you're right. I do tend to do that!" comes to mind; those little character flaws that lay hidden for years; failings that surface, especially at those moments when you're lecturing someone else on just the same thing you do all the time. Usually it's a moment when you ought to be encouraging but criticism is easier, more satisfying. I had a U.F.O. moment the other day. My son Dan had shared his frustration with me on finding the right path in life. He listed the things he did well—his special spiritual gifts. Instead of praising him, however, I criticized him for not applying those gifts. That's when a U.F.O. suddenly popped up; and it had my "career path" written all over it. I was reminded of how often I had done exactly what I had admonished Dan for. It occurred to me, perhaps, because someone hadn't encouraged me, I stayed the course at a time I should have sought a better path.

Here's a story: "Keith Hernandez was one of baseball's top players. He was a lifetime .300-hitter; who had won numerous Gold Glove awards for excellence in fielding. He's won a batting championship for having the highest average, the Most Valuable Player award in his league, and even the World Series. Yet with all his accomplishments, he had missed out on something crucially important to him – his father's acceptance and recognition that what he had accomplished was valuable. In a very candid interview about his relationship with his father Keith related: "One day I asked my father, 'Dad, I have a lifetime 300 batting average. What more do you want?' His father replied, 'But someday you're going to look back and say, "I could have done more.'"" (Speakers Sourcebook II.)

How easy it is to find fault even when it's with someone who is excelling. The problem is: often those with a knack for pointing out the weaknesses and fallibleness of others, only have this talent because of a deep sense of

familiarity with the same failing themselves. It's by their own shortcomings that they know others in the same boat so well. It might be wise for those who are quick to criticize to consider these wise words: "Lots of faults we think we see in others are simply the ones we expect to find there because we own them ourselves." So, the next time a U.F.O., "U Failed Oops", pops up on your radar screen, step back and pull-up on the criticism. Who knows? Your encouragement might mean the difference between success or failure for someone on the edge of excellence, just waiting for you to nudge them forward.

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## *My Father's Oldsmobile!* (Galatians 4: 6-7)

"I'm the gray-haired bald guy with glasses." That's the way I described myself on the phone recently to someone I was about to meet for lunch but hadn't met before. After hanging up I walked out the office toward the elevator at the end of the hall. As I passed the office next to mine I caught my reflection in their floor to ceiling window. Their lights were out and the glass was the perfect mirror. As I passed I saw a gray-haired bald guy with glasses. I stopped to take another look. Sure enough; I had described myself pretty well. There was no doubt about the gray, baldness and, well, the glasses were the clincher. "Is that how I look to others? I mean, I know that I'm balding, getting gray and wear glasses. But, that bald and that gray?" Yep! The window didn't lie. As I stepped into the elevator a thought crossed my mind. I had two choices; I could be happy with bald, gray and glasses or I could be unhappy about it. Which one was easier? Put it this way; there is some comfort in the fact that accepting what is today, is always better than hoping for something better tomorrow. My future is balder, grayer and, probably, thicker lenses. I guess I'll take today.

Here's a thought from Shawna Williams: "I've never been anything spectacular, rather plain and average actually. In college my classmates called me an "Oldsmobile." To me that meant: plain, ordinary, common, dull,

unfashionable, hum- drum, homely, uninteresting, an unremarkable, run-of-the-mill sort of car. "Yeah." I told myself. "But I'm not my FATHER'S Oldsmobile." I didn't want to be an Oldsmobile. Oldsmobiles were boring, meant strictly for transportation—no frills, no fun, just service. Who wanted that, and who wanted to BE that? I wrestled with it, thinking that if I had to be an Oldsmobile I was going to be a dang nice one. Now, after years of being an Oldsmobile I see the wonder of God's creation in my children and in the love of my husband, and realize that Oldsmobiles are not unwanted. There have been the times that I've helped a friend in need, or been helped by a friend whether in deed or through encouraging words, and I see how significant an Oldsmobile moment can be." (Shawna Williams)

God often uses the ordinary things in this life to glorify Him, the Oldsmobiles, so to speak. Although they don't make Oldsmobiles any more, they were and still are considered dependable and sure, sturdy, comfortable, sensible, and, in this sense, an instrument of service. That being the case, we can be happy and honored to be our Father's Oldsmobile. Being happy with balding, graying and thick glasses is OK; especially when these are just the mundane qualities that God is looking for in a disciple these days. He's looking for Oldsmobiles, and I'm proud to be one!

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## *This Wisdom of Where I Am!* (Ecclesiastes 4: 26)

Are you a Pollyanna? I've been accused of that from time to time. A Pollyanna is who is always searching for that one small kernel of good that somehow, by a Pollyanna's objective viewpoint, must be in every situation no matter how bad it seems. One of my favorite phrases is, "Things could be worse." One thing that I've learned over the years is this: finding the good in the midst of the bad is a process of discovery and seldom a bolt from out the blue. For example: You're saw- ing down a dead tree and the chain slips off the saw bar. That's bad. Now you have to remount the chain by removing the

housing and reengaging the clutch and bar. That's a job—kind of bad. Ok! You get the saw apart and you notice that the saw teeth are somewhat dull. Well, since you have the chain off anyway, you take the time to file the teeth; thereby giving you a sharp chain. That's pretty good. Getting everything back together, you go back to sawing down the tree with a sharper chain that gets the job done faster and easier. That's REAL good! One bad thing, accepted, led to a good thing, hidden there the whole time.

Here's a story: South African pastor Andrew Murray, was faced a terrible crisis. Gathering himself into his study, he sat a long while quietly, prayerfully and thoughtfully. Presently his mind flew to his Lord Jesus. Picking up his pen, he wrote this in his journal: First, He brought me here, it is by His will that I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest. Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child. Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow. Last, in His good time He can bring me out again—how and when He knows. Let me say I am here, (1) By God's appointment (2) In His keeping, (3) Under His training (4) For His time. (Robert J. Morgan, *The Red Sea Rules*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001, p. 12-13.)

Hugh Downs put it this way: "A happy person is not a person IN a certain set of circumstances, but rather a person WITH a certain set of circumstances." (Speakers Sourcebook II) The "in" and the "with" make all the difference. When we accept our lot in life as something that we are working within and not something that has swallowed us whole, our perspective on happiness can change overnight. The Bible tells us that when we seek sorrow there is no doubt that we will find it. Bad things happen; of that there is no doubt. But, when we accept the bad things as opportunities in which some good might be hiding, bad things are but steppingstones to the peace we were looking for in the first place. So, be a Pollyanna. Who knows what good things you've been overlooking because you were focused on the bad all along.

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