

Oct. 28, 2018

Who is your neighbor?

“Mmmmmm! Is that meatloaf I smell cooking?” I asked my wife as I walked in the door after work.

“Your favorite!” she responded cheerily. “How was your day?”

“Oh, you know. Work stuff. Nothing to trouble your little mind with!”

She sighed, so I put one arm around her and with the other raised her little chin: “Listen Muffin, don’t forget, no one cooks meatloaf like you do!”

She smiled. “Oh, honey. I guess that’s why you’re the man and I’m the wife!”

“That’s right, muffin. *That’s right.*”

In reality, if I ever were to say my wife, “Nothing to trouble your little mind with” in answer to ANY question ... it’s enough to say that I had better be in a different room before she responds. Maybe even a different state. She would hunt me down. She wouldn’t hit me with a pan or kick me in the shins; her look alone would be enough to cause physical harm. It’s her superpower.

There’s a good chance that the first few paragraphs at top reminded you of a 1950s TV commercial. Or maybe an episode of “Leave it to Beaver.”

Consider the following: One of the most difficult tests I ever have to take is at the eye doctor.

“One ... or two,” she asks as she flips from one slide to the other. The pressure’s on. Which slide is clearer? One or two? C’mon, Dave, think!

“Um ... could I see the first one again?”

“Sure. One ... or two.”

“Uuuhhh ... two. No, one! TWO!!” Finally I just pick one at random, preferring to avoid embarrassment, even if it means paying for prescription lenses that make a semi-colon look like an insect crawling across the page.

Because I require progressive lenses, and because I’m far-sighted in one eye and near-sighted in the other, my eyes present a tough challenge for the doctor. My glasses are never perfect. I don’t blame the doctor. I blame my creator, Dr. Frankenstein.

Why did I make that abrupt switch from discussing 50s sensibilities to an eye test? We have all sorts of lenses that we look through in life. In college, I had a “media” class during which we viewed all sorts of commercials and print ads. Many from the 70s were so blatantly sexist that you couldn’t help but laugh out loud ... or cringe. What kind of lenses were those folks looking through when they made these ads?

One of the milder print ads was for toothpaste. It showed a girl at the dentist, speaking to the camera: “He says my teeth are so good, I can be his receptionist when I grow up!”

Note to dentist: How about she becomes a dentist and takes over your practice after you lose your license for offending one too many people with your sexist comments? Huh? How about that?!

Among the worst is a bowling alley ad that reads, “Have some fun. Beat your wife tonight.”

Wow. Nowadays, the ad would have made the national news, drawing protestors to the bowling alley—which is nice to know, because it tells us that society hasn’t become totally desensitized to damaging rhetoric.

But things seem to be sadly changing. Moving backwards.

Have you noticed that we're trying to rebuild some of those walls that we have worked so hard to tear down? Walls of sexism? Walls of racism? Walls of bigotry? More and more incidences of hate are being reported. It's as if the lens through which we see the world is once again becoming blurred. The prevalence of hate words have resulted in more and more hate actions. Hate words dehumanize, which makes it easier for those in power to achieve an end result. It's much easier to eliminate programs that help migrants when you convince the world that they are criminals.

Hate words by those in leadership positions grant permission for hate words to be used by the populace. They grant permission for action. Suddenly what was avoided last year is embraced this year. Hate is in. *Love is so last year.*

This is how hate gains a foothold. It doesn't happen when a group of white supremacists hold a rally, it happens when good people keep silent.

The solution is simple. Replace that blurred lens with the lens created by the sacrifice of our Lord, who suffered and died on the cross for *each and every human being on this planet.*

His only request is that in exchange for His extreme sacrifice, *we love one another.* Let's not fail Him.

Jesus replied: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." -- Matthew 22:37-40