

## **A Dream of Reconciliation II Corinthians 5:18-20**

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In April of 1990, newly elected trustee Jerry Johnson, a 25 year old, Colorado Pastor, circulated a 16 page document entitled, **The Cover-up at Southern Seminary**. In this document, the young pastor accused President Roy Honeycutt of "Doctrinal Infidelity."

Whatever your perspective of this event, you must see something of the beauty and the beast in of our denomination:

The BEAUTY . . . . A doctrinal belief in the priesthood of all believers that provides freedom for such an expression.

The BEASTLINESS . . . . That a Godly man of integrity can be interrogated by the arrogance and judgementalism of those who abuse the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

### **How Can Such Beauty And Beast Be Made A Blessing**

Several years ago I was a last minute substitute at the SCB Forum asked to speak on reconciliation. Believing strongly in redemptive action, I accepted. In preparation I called two younger pastors in my state whom I had know a long time, who were openly identified with the fundamentalists and asked them to pray and come to hear me speak.

I prayed, prepared, and entertained visions of grandeur. I preached hard. Few came; they did not. I appealed to reconciliation and proceeded to alienate myself from both sides.

People who knew me best believe me to be very conservative theologically, but liberal in terms of

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methodology. I am suspect to many because I do not jump bandwagons or align with power structures.

I have been accused of being a liberal theologically . . .  
False.

I have been accused of being a denominational loyalist . . .  
True.

I have been accused of not believing the Bible . . . False.

The accusations are based on the fact that I minister to the divorced and am willing to help my church study intelligently the role of women in the church. After six months of prayer and study we voted 51-49% against women deacons and nobody got mad. I pastor a multi-racial, multi-cultural church where over 500 adult Catholics have been baptized.

I love the Lord Jesus, believe the Bible, and am committed to the church as the vehicle God uses in this time and space as he used the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

After growing up in the SBC, serving six churches, and one state convention, I am heartbroken and bewildered. Nevertheless, I believe you may well be the answer to our denomination's controversy because you have the distinctive opportunity to influence the one group that can make a difference: college students. They can learn because they are striving to to be authentic and to think for themselves. They are not yet enslaved to a system or hunger for security. They can learn to make a difference because you are their teacher. This is the blessing I propose you teach in the beauty of holiness.

1. That we stress the Great Commandment, Love. Do not tell me what to believe, show me how you love.
2. That we teach both John 3:16 *and* 17, remembering that there is no condemnation for those who believe. We are not in the condemnation business.
3. That we not forget to teach that love and forgiveness are the highest revelations of all scripture and that apart from rejection of Jesus there is no sin beyond forgiveness.
4. That we remember grace is amazing and that we should never, never forget why we need saving.

5. That Jesus did not say "Follow me and I will make you doctrinally correct" but "I will make you fishers of men." And we should remember that Jesus fished with a net, not a hook and he fished for a living, not for recreation.
6. That Jesus came not to give us religion but relationship and when I am properly related to God it is evidenced by how I love my fellow man.
7. That faith is a first-person experience. It cannot be adopted or appropriated and cannot be received from any authority except Jesus Christ.
8. That the Bible is a book of love, not a bludgeon. It is a blanket that covers my shame and warms my heart if I wrap myself in its truth.
9. That we have been given the ministry of reconciliation not as an option but as a mandate (that means to love even your enemy.)
10. That anyone who says he loves God but hates his brother is a liar and the truth is not in him and loving our brother includes the radical right, wrong, left and left-out and the skunks and the moles because the Bible says he created them all and said "Good."

Any knowledge that makes me love less is not knowledge from God.

These are the basic precepts properly taught and modeled that I believe and embrace if we are to be the people of God and build a fellowship that is believable.

There is an old parable about a Zen Master who would respond when asked, "What is a Zen?" by simply raising a finger and glancing heavenward. He heard that one of his young students did the same. So he called the student, had his finger cut off and said, "Now, what is Zen?" The true disciple may be so required not merely to imitate the Master but to implicate himself!

Scripture commands me to study to show myself approved unto God, not Adrian, Jerry, Joel, John or Russell, Landrum or Daniel. But each of these as objects of my love must be part of my ministry of reconciliation.

Jesus says in his society there is a new way for people to live:

You show wisdom by trusting people.  
You show leadership by serving.  
You handle offenders by forgiving.  
You handle money by sharing.  
You handle enemies by loving.  
You handle violence by suffering.

In fact you have a new attitude toward everything, toward everybody. Toward nature, toward the state in which you happen to live, toward women, slaves, toward every single thing. Because this is the Jesus Society and you repent, not by feeling bad, but by thinking different!"<sup>1</sup> May your thoughts and mine so dare that difference.

**NOTE**

1 Ruby Wiebe, *The Blue Mountains of China*, McClelland/Stewart (1976), pp. 215-216.