

# FOCUS ON FAITH

## UNIQUE - PART 2

Last month's subject of being unique has brought some interesting responses. Someone commented that one of the problems they have with churches is feeling that you have to conform and in doing so our uniqueness and individuality becomes compromised.

It's a fair comment and of course the tendency exists for church leaders to believe its part of their job description to share 'the truth' according to their doctrinal and denominational beliefs. And there are enough passages in the Bible over which there is scope for varying views and genuine disagreement in interpretation!

However I personally think it's far more constructive to look at the areas where we can agree rather than focusing on potential 'wedge-drivers' (no, that's not a combination golf club) which cause disputes. We need to value diversity and respect the differences that make us individuals.

The Bible has an interesting take on this. The Apostle Paul writing to the church at Corinth talks about relationships in terms of the different roles and functions of a body. ***"If the body was made up of ears, where would the sense of smell be?"*** he asks rhetorically. And of course he's right - we need all the different capabilities and functions of the variety of body parts we have been blessed with.

I'm constantly amazed at the various talents and abilities people have. Recently a few men from the Bridgnorth area got together to raise the profile locally over the Make Poverty History campaign. In just a few weeks they were able to organise a Concert event, get extensive local newspaper and radio coverage and took a banner with over 1,300 signatures on it to the MPH Rally in Edinburgh ahead of the G8 Summit. Their passion for the injustice and inequality so-called Third World people are suffering caused them to do something practically. Instead of talking about the problem, they were galvanised into action. To achieve what they did in such a short timeframe meant they needed to be not only focused but to make sure they utilised the wide variety of gifts and talents. The team not only needed the visionaries but also the creative, the practical, the administrators as well as the 'gofers'.

This brings me on to my next thought.

Often the comment is made that ***"No-one is indispensable"***. However everyone is ***invaluable***. All too often we ignore the vast array of talent available to

us by not recognising other people's ability to contribute. In my view the best leaders are those who facilitate the outworking of other people's specialisms and provide the supportive atmosphere and environment where they can blossom. Which teachers do we remember most fondly? Invariably it was those who enabled us to learn experientially, encouraging a practical, hands-on approach instead of just a theoretical one.

Try this quote for size: ***"If you're told, you may listen but not hear what's being said; If you're shown, you may look but not see the implications; But if you're involved, then you'll learn, understand and improve."***

And sometimes we get the wrong idea about church. It's not a place where the few (or often just the vicar) serve the needs of the majority. It's the place where everyone can and should be involved. It's the place where we can all belong, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute their unique abilities and where, as a result, we are all better off because of the variety on offer.

Jesus chose twelve very different characters to be his first Disciples. They weren't academic theologians or skilled orators or leading businessmen. Some of them were pretty rough diamonds but as Jesus worked with them, teaching them His Father's ways and challenging their misconceptions, they were welded into a dynamic bunch who changed the world.

I'm sure that's what the Christian faith is all about – making a difference and accepting one another, differences and all. Let's celebrate our diversity, even if sometimes it causes conflicts, because as we work together we'll experience all the benefits our uniqueness brings.

If you'd like to find out where and when Church Services are being held, log on to ***www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk*** which has details of local Christian Churches and contact details. And if you think there's something we can help you with or you have a question on faith issues, drop me an email using the link on the website. I'd love to hear from you.



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