

Shades of Gray: *Gray is not black or white!*

I. **Announce:**

- A. **Slide#1** Voter Registration today: Elections are only 8 weeks away.
- B. **Slide#2** Families that Soar: please register online familiesthatsoar.org
 - 1. **Volunteers needed:** Set up; tear down; hostess; usher; registration Sign up Info Booth
- C. **Slide#3** Iranian Pastor *Youcef Nadarkhani* is freed! Age 35. Sentenced to death for his faith. Charges were lowered to **evangelizing to Muslims**. 3 yr sentence. He already served.
 - 1. **TY:** Persecuted Church update & our Sat morn Persecuted Church prayer team.
- D. **Slide#4** Children at Risk: Next Sunday 3pm. Meet in Sanct. Showing the movie Nefarious. Great understanding of the problem of Trafficking. **No kids under Jr.High age** (parental discretion advised)
- E. **Slide#5** Teachers Stand/pray for: Public, Private, Christian, Charter, ISP, Home School parents.
 - 1. **A letter from a public school teacher:** In the next few weeks a group of missionaries - probably several dozen from this church - will be sent out again to the mission field and need prayer. The people group they are reaching out to varies in their exposure to Jesus. And those who do not know Him have some twisted and profoundly deep misconceptions about our Lord that need to be corrected. Most come from broken homes. **But** the government had forbidden these missionaries to speak openly about the faith, so they have to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves when sharing. **And even then** they risk losing their jobs if it comes out that they are **openly sharing their faith**. They need prayer for wisdom, patience, discernment, and most of all **love**, because the people they are reaching out to are often unloved themselves and feel there is no purpose or meaning to life.

II. **Slide#6 Intro:**

- A. **Questions:**
 - 1. When are you free to enjoy your liberty?
 - 2. When should you limit it for the sake of others?
 - 3. What gray areas has the Lord told you to abstain?
 - 4. How should you respond to those who enjoy more liberties than you do, IF they're participating in those activities w/discretion?
 - 5. How should you respond to those who are flaunting their liberties?
 - 6. How do you respond to those who choose to enjoy fewer liberties than you do, especially when you are in their company?
 - a) Over the next 2 weeks we'll tackle these questions.
- B. Your love may be tested more by *Christians* who **disagree w/you**, than by **unbelievers** who **persecute you**.

1. *It takes a diamond to cut a diamond.* Swindoll
- C. What do you do when your Christian brother/sister disagrees with you, on how God's people ought to live?
- D. Let's establish right up front what Paul's is **not** talking about.
 1. He **is not** talking about clearly laid out doctrines of Scripture.
 - a) He **is** talking about biblical **Gray areas!**
 - (1) **Gray areas?** - areas of **doubt** and **opinion**.
 - (2) **Neutral issues?** - **preferences & tradition** ("but we've always done it this way")
- E. Sometimes *disputable matters* turns us **blue** in the face, which makes our Christian friend see **red**, **but** Paul points out here it should be **Gray!**
- F. **Title:** Shades of Gray: Gray is not black or white!
- G. **Slide#7 Outline:** Accept One Another; Accept Non-Essentials; Accept The Lordship of Christ.

III. Slide#8 **ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER! (1-4)**

- A. No disputes over doubtful things **or** over *disputable matters* NIV; **or** *do not quarrel over opinion* ESV
- B. **Background:** A lot of issues in that day on how the food was prepared, if it was sacrificed to a pagan god?
 1. **So here it was:** the Carnivores **vs** the Herbivores; the meat-eaters **vs** the plant-eaters; the Juicers **vs** the Vegans; In-n-Out **vs** 5 Guys!
 2. The **abstainers** had concluded that what was wrong for them was wrong for **everyone!**
- C. (3) **Do you consider yourself a mature believer?** – If so, love demands that you defer to the immature believers in the family.
 1. Love protects people & gives them a chance to grow up.
 2. **But** vs.3 lets us know **BOTH** weak & strong **or** mature bel's & new bel's, acceptance must be mutual!
- D. God has welcomed both the "weak" & the "strong".
 1. Weak in the sense that they were uncertain about how faith in Christ affected the status of OT regulations.
 - a) **Example:** When I 1st got saved I had a Crucifix on the wall, at the foot of my bed. When I'd say my prayers at night I was told I should stare at the crucifix when I prayed. It was a habit for 19 years. I wasn't sure if I was supposed to stop?
- E. How much of your **religious heritage** should you give up when you get saved? How much do you **need** to give up?
 1. Share about missionary in Perspectives.
 2. "Redeem what you need to redeem, Don't what you don't need to."

3. We don't care much about **a drunk's theology** if he stumbles in at the last minute before the altar call of a Billy Graham Crusade, & ends up going forward to accept Christ.
 - a) **Yet** when we have a **Muslim man** come to Christ, he better know how to cross his "T's" in **Trinity** & dot his "I's" in **Incarnation!**
 4. Peter, after a few years of ministry with Christ, was finally able to say *who Jesus was*, **but as he did**, Jesus said it was the Father that tipped him off. **He didn't get it on his own.**
- F. Since meat eating isn't a big issue today, what might be some of these areas Christians are divided over, that aren't considered sin in Scripture?
1. **1st I'll add**, before giving this list: **Scriptures do give guidelines in relation to each of these.**
 2. **2nd I'll add**, Think beyond Southern California. Think of a church in the South **vs.** a church in the North. **An ultra-conservative church vs. A very liberal church.** A church in Germany **vs.** A church in Haiti.
 3. **3rd I'll add**, some of these will sound funny now, others might immediately make you **roll up your sleeves**: Going to movies, having a TV/cable, cosmetics, tattoos, alcohol, tobacco, card playing, dancing, fashion(does trendiness=worldliness?), which bible translation you use, sports, Music, Material wealth.
 - a) **Wherever you stand on these issues, you must accept your Christian brother or sister who differs.**
 - b) If you are an **abstainer**, you must not judge the **participator**.
If you are an **participator**, you must not judge the **abstainer**.
 - c) **This call to acceptance comes to us as a command of God. If we are to obey Him, we have no choice!**¹
 4. **So Brian, doesn't that make Christianity pretty wishy-washy?** No, we are not talking about **Essentials**(Sin, Deity of Christ, salvation by faith, lying, stealing, etc.), **but Non-essentials**.
 - a) **So**, Wing-tips **or** flip-flops; walk to church **or** drive a Lamborghini; move your body to the music **or** stand erect; KJV **or** the Message Bible...Let's **Accept One Another**.

IV. Slide#9 **ACCEPT NON-ESSENTIALS! (5,6)**

- A. **2nd issue** is in regards to days. Certain days of the week, Sabbath observance, Holy days, maybe Feast Days.
 1. We have no problem if a church wants to meet & have church on **Saturday**. **But** they're wrong if they think everyone needs to do the same.

¹ Kent Hughes, pg.262

2. How do you celebrate Christmas? Is the Stockings allowed but not Santa? A Tree but not too much Tinsel? Halloween/Harvest is coming up. Costumes or no costumes. Biblical costumes only, or is Hello Kitty ok?
- B. **Slide#10** Two of the most famous Christians in the Victorian Era in England were **Charles Spurgeon** and **Joseph Parker**, both of them mighty preachers of the Gospel. Early in their ministries they fellowshiped and even exchanged pulpits. **Then** they had a disagreement, and the reports even got into the newspapers. Spurgeon accused Parker of being unspiritual because he attended the **theater**. Interestingly enough, Spurgeon smoked cigars, a practice many believers would condemn.
1. **Who was right? Who was wrong?** Perhaps neither, perhaps both of them were wrong!
 - a) **2 more things about Spurgeon's cigars:** **1st**, when asked about his cigars, he said he did not smoke to excess. When asked what he meant by excess, he answered, *"No more than 2 at 1 time!"* - **2nd**, what many do not know about this story is when he **gave up** his cigars...when a large billboard was erected with a picture of him smoking a cigar on it.
 2. There is **a reverse truth** implicit here also, which is: If the Lord convicts you that something is wrong in **your** life, **you** had better not do it, **even if** other Christians are doing it! [more on this next week]

V. **Slide#11 ACCEPT THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST! (7-13)**

- A. (7) All believers live out their lives accountable to God!
1. Thus no decisions are made in **isolation**, but in accordance w/the will of God as understood by the individual!
- B. (10) Note the 2 times he uses **brother** to emphasize **unity** that *weak* & *strong* Christians have.
1. He's saying, *"stop trying to be God to one another."*
- C. All of us are going to stand before the **Bema**, the judgement seat of Christ.
1. There **your works** as believers will be judged. There God will judge **your motives**.
 2. **Slide#12** 2 Cor.5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 3. 1 Cor.3:13-15 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
 4. **Slide#12b Bema** is the transliteration of the Greek word **Judgment seat**.
 - a) **Slide#13** Paul appeared at **Gallio's** bema seat in Corinth (Acts 18:12); **at Herod's** bema seat in Caesarea (Acts 23:35); **and** at **Nero's** bema seat in Rome (Acts 25:10).
 5. **Slide#14** Personally I will be glad when my life has been exposed and corrected. **For the first time I will be 100% right about everything. Ha!**

- D. Each believer will have enough to do in keeping **his own account** right without interfering with others accounts!
1. **Reconcile your own bank account!**
 2. One thing is for sure, **we'll have to give account for our *judgmental attitude* towards our fellow Christians.**
 3. Know this...the final judgment is up to God. His evaluation will be perfect. Our reward will be exactly what we deserve. As will our brothers & sisters.
- E. (13) Our desire must not be to get everybody to agree w/us; our desire must be to pursue peace, not cause others to stumble, & help others to mature in Christ.
1. Both strong & weak Christians can cause their brothers & sisters to stumble.
 - a) **One may flaunt their freedoms** in Christ;
The other may try to **fence the others in** w/petty rules & regulations.
 2. **We need to be both strong in the faith, & sensitive to other's needs.**
 3. We are all **strong** in some areas, & **weak** in others.
- F. **So Paul gave us Christian guidelines for Gray areas, to achieve **unity** amidst **diversity!****
1. Receive those who are different than you.
 2. Don't look down on those w/differing views.
 3. Remember that those who disagree w/us are still accepted by God.
 4. Let God Judge!
 5. Love requires self-limitations!
 6. Become convinced what is right for you personally!
 7. All members of the body of Christ are interrelated, interconnected, & interwoven!
 8. We both are the Lord's. We are on the same team!
 9. All members will face God's Bema judgment individually.
 10. There is no right & wrong side...except for you personally.
 11. You will be graded on your attitudes you've displayed & how you've treated those who disagreed with you.
- G. **Lets' remember it often comes down to a judgment call.**
1. And we're bound to make mistakes now & then.
 2. If we love one another, love covers a multitude of **sin** & I'm sure...a multitude of **mistakes!**
- H. **Slide#15 We'll give Rupertus Meldenius the last word:** (a Lutheran theologian and educator. 1582-1651)
1. **Slide#16 "In Essentials, **Unity**; in non-essentials, **Liberty**; in all things, **Charity!**"**