

THE ISSUE OF ISSUES

Contrary to most common opinions regarding psychopaths and sociopaths is that they “look like one” when it has been observed by real-life case histories that it is not so much “what they look like” but rather “what do they think like?” These individuals come in all flavors of physical appearances and fit no common mold, but they do all tend to have very similar thought patterns and one of the in common symptoms in their thought process is the objectifying of people. This means that they fail to attend to the humanity of others—the feelings, interests, needs and etc. are non-factors.

The alarming thing about this mental malady is that it is NOT restricted to just the psychopaths and sociopaths of the world—no, this is a far more common failure, which we don’t wish to admit, among “normal people” also!

As a pastor we see this objectifying of people on a fairly frequent basis. In many counseling sessions it becomes, many times, all too clear that one of the problems with the problem is that those that are seated across the desk suffer from empathy erosion due to seeing people as objects and not as humans. The “issue” becomes the “person” and, as we well know, “issues” have no feelings, nor flesh and blood—they are just “things” with which we have a problem. Until “breath and life” can be revived and make those we counsel see the “person” who “holds” the issue then we often labor in vain.

While there exists a full-blown narcissistic personality disorder, we should also understand that there also exists narcissistic “flavored” personalities which, at times, exhibit the unwillingness to identify with the feelings and interests of others and often shows arrogant and haughty attitudes.

I am sometimes reminded of a book I read once, “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat” by Oliver Sacks when I see how some people treat other people. It is, far easier than we imagine, to allow ourselves to drain the life out of our opponents, adversaries, and panelists and make them “issues” devoid of human-like qualities. Once this objectifying is done then it matters little how we deal with the “issues” at hand for after all they are just “issues,” plain and simple. It is, then, no problem to be exploitative and take advantage of others to achieve our own ends. Why? Because “issues” can’t bleed nor feel.

Jesus Christ exhibited always a “person-oriented” personality. We are struck by such passages where He acted, spoke and saw in compassion. The Hebrew and Greek words translated “compassion” in the Bible mean “to have mercy, to feel sympathy and to have pity.” We know that, according to the Bible, God is “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psalm 86:15).

Like all of God’s attributes, His compassion is infinite and eternal. His compassions never fail; they are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). When Jesus saw His friends weeping at the grave of Lazarus, He felt compassion for them and wept alongside them (John 11:33-35). Moved with compassion for the suffering of others, Jesus healed the large crowds who came to Him (Matthew 14:14), as well as individuals who sought His healing (Mark 1:40-41). When He saw the large crowds as sheep without a shepherd, His compassion led Him to teach them the things the false shepherds of

Israel had abandoned. The priests and scribes were proud and corrupt; they despised the common people and neglected them, but Jesus had compassion on them, and He taught and loved them. It would be impossible, then, to see Jesus Christ as One who objectified people!

Ought we not to be imitators of Jesus Christ? Setting a watch on our hearts and lips that we do not fall into the tragic trap of letting issues and problems dehumanize those with which we deal. Yes, we must confront certain issues and problems in life, but we must always be able to see the breathing and living person with whom they are attached to. True, a bloodless “issue” is always easier to conquer but rarely do they exist alone—usually there are seeing eyes and beating hearts of feeling human beings with which they accompany—and it is necessary that to deal with one is to deal with the other. Issues, you see, also wear shoes and socks.

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