

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4-28-21

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accepts from
EVERY NATION



Dear Friends in Christ,

Sometimes we get this “God said it. I believe it. That settles it” mentality about what the Bible teaches that more often than not better fits our past experiences, how we were raised, or what we were previously taught. But a thorough study of the Bible can challenge that thinking. And seeking to know God and live as God calls us to will frequently result in our realizing that what we previously thought doesn’t actually fit with how God calls us to be.

A friend of mine, Pastor Steve Beckham, posted a few examples that drive this point home:

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: Moabites are bad. They were not to be allowed to dwell with God’s people (Deuteronomy 23). **BUT THEN** comes the story of “Ruth the Moabite,” which challenges the prejudices against Moabites. (Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David, and Jesus was their descendant, so where does that leave you on Moabites?)

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: People from Uz are evil (Jeremiah 25). **BUT THEN** comes the story of Job, a man from Uz who was the “most blameless man on earth.”

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: No foreigner or eunuchs allowed (Deuteronomy 23). BUT THEN comes the story of an African eunuch welcomed into the church (Acts 8). (Tradition also says that the nation of Ethiopia was evangelized and became Christian because of this eunuch.)

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: God's people hated Samaritans. BUT THEN Jesus tells a story that shows that not all Samaritans were bad (Luke 10). (In fact, the Jews didn't hate the Samaritans because of who they were. They hated them because generations before, foreign conquerors intermarried with Jews and their blood was tainted with foreign, "impure" blood. There was so much prejudice against them and their offspring that they settled in the area of Samaria—today's West Bank—to avoid the bigoted treatment they received.)

THE STORY MAY BEGIN with prejudice, discrimination, and animosity, but the Spirit moves God's people towards openness, welcome, inclusion, acceptance, and affirmation.

When we are tempted to respond toward others not like us with bias, we would do well to follow the example of Jesus. He regularly included those who proper Jews were supposed to shun. He welcomed those who the religious leaders rejected. The example of Jesus made it clear that, as Peter says in Acts 10, "...God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears (believes in and honors) Him."

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey