

## The We/They Mentality

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Evangelism is one of those functions that is not comfortable for me. Going door to door once as a teenager, my comfort level grew only a little as I interacted with strangers. The memory that remains impactful to this day is one in which the young woman I was with offered to help a woman with her groceries. The woman invited her in and they spoke of God's grace and mercy. I do not know if the woman accepted Jesus. However, she did express a renewal of hope. This single event challenged how I thought of those who seemingly did not believe as I. The we/they mentality was present was alive and well in me.

The fact that we may be nurturing a we/they mentality can be difficult to discern. We all do this: see our way as better, our church as the "right" church, our behavior as more godly than those around us, elevate our own thinking above another, see those less fortunate in life as somehow less than us, and being on the "in" crowd as a sign of greater spirituality.

In reality, the we/they mentality is a most destructive attitude in families and churches today. Although perhaps temporarily necessary in something like sports, the we/they mentality undermines the inclusive nature of grace and mercy by the Lord extended to all, if they but receive it. All being created equal before the Lord is a much needed mindset for families and organizations to function smoothly.

Paul in his discourse to the Jews in Acts 13 states, "Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." (NIV) The Jews in leadership nurtured the we/they mentality to the point in which they became prideful and arrogant, unwilling to be corrected or taught. When anyone entertains this type of mentality (unknowingly at times), those around them feel shamed, humiliated and like they do not belong. No wonder people dislike Christians.

Are there ways to avoid this mentality that has the potential to ruin our testimony of what God's salvation can provide? Yes! Here are some things to consider as you come before the Lord. \*Do you respond with curiosity to those who think differently than you about God? \*Are you willing to discover how they came to those assumptions? \*How might your compassion and understanding pave the way for the person opposite you to experience God's love? \*If God asks you to help someone in some practical way, would you do it? \*Who has extended God's grace to you?

Responding with curiosity, compassion and understanding does not mean you agree. It means you respect their experience. If we are to be the only "Jesus" some people see, it is one way to

reveal the heart of God. His grace, mercy and salvation is for ALL. Not just those we deem worthy to receive it.

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