

Looking Past Color to Operate in God's 'Agape' Love

When I got to work one morning, I looked down to realize I was wearing one black shoe and one blue shoe. No, I'm not kidding. I really was. I'm adding this to my list of reasons not to buy the same pair of shoes in more than one color!

Blonde jokes aside (I'm sure I'll have to endure them perpetually as a result of this faux pas), I notice something interesting as I look at my "pigment-challenged" footwear choice. Other than their color, they are exactly the same.

Both shoes serve the same purpose. Both have the same quality of workmanship. The only thing that makes them different is their color.

Glancing down at my shoes, I imagine a correlation between what I see when I look at them and what God sees when He looks down on His children. His appreciation of and love for us transcends race, gender, social status and age. And regardless of our outward appearance, He equips each of us to fulfill the purposes He designed for us before the foundation of the world. In His eyes, we are unique—yet the same.

The challenge lies in how we see each other.

Evangelist Dave Roever travels around the world, speaking about his experiences during and after his service in the Vietnam War. One statement I heard him share when he was giving an account of lying in a military hospital with life-threatening injuries has always stayed with me. He said, "I noticed a black soldier lying in the next bed. I didn't think I had anything in common with him. But then I noticed that in all the places where our skin was gone, we looked exactly the same."

The bottom line for all Christians is our mandate to operate in God's *agape* love. I once heard someone say, "Your Christianity is only as strong as the person you love the least." Ouch.

Whether you struggle with prejudice or not, there's someone—some . (Extra Grace Required) person—who just came to your mind!

All of us have room to grow. But when we focus on outward differences, we hinder the unity of the Spirit Paul talks about in Ephesians 4: "I ... beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vv. 1-3).

As you go about your routine today, look around at the variety of gifts and abilities God has placed in those around you. His workmanship and purpose can be found in every believer. Ask the Holy Spirit for a paradigm shift to see others as He sees them.

And if, like me, you plan to start a new habit of turning on the closet light when you get your shoes out of the closet every morning, just think: Even a little shoe color mishap can become an illustration that humanity is God's living oxymoron—same difference.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 07/22/2013

This week thank God that when He looks at you His appreciation and love for you transcends your race, gender, social status and age. Ask Him to continue to order your steps, direct you to share His *agape* love with others, and move you toward fulfilling His special purpose for you.

Pray that believers everywhere would see themselves as one in Christ yet unique in design and purpose. Pray that the church

would be an example of racial unity and love, that we would unite in prayer for global revival, and that our nation would turn back to God and seek His mercy, grace and forgiveness. Ask God to remove wickedness from high places and for His justice to prevail. Remember Israel, the persecuted church, and those who are grieving the loss of loved ones, health, homes and provision, through no fault of their own. 2 Chron. 7:14; John 17:21; Jer. 33:3