

Something Stinks

Almost every day I am reminded that spiritual pride is alive and well in the American church. In spite of the renewal that has refreshed us in the last few decades, many of us are still looking down our noses at other Christians—whom we consider either theologically inferior or just plain unconverted. Examples of this pride are everywhere:

- * A band of churches based in Tennessee claims that their group is the only true church because they deny membership to anyone who has been divorced and remarried.

- * Some Pentecostals and fundamentalist Baptists still teach that women shouldn't wear pants, makeup or excessive jewelry—claiming that their standards of outward behavior make them holier than everybody else.

- * Oneness Pentecostals, who number close to 1 million in this country, are convinced that they have a corner on the truth because they say “In the name of Jesus” instead of “In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” when they baptize converts. This contentious doctrinal argument has kept them out of fellowship with other born-again believers for 85 years.

- * Members of some traditional congregations claim they are superior because they read only the King James Version of the Bible. (Maybe they think Jesus spoke with a British accent.)

Has anybody noticed that it really stinks around here?

I wish I could say that this sickening odor of smugness can't be detected when charismatics walk in the room, but the truth is we have been just as guilty of separating ourselves into elitist camps. I know independent charismatics, for example, who think that God has nothing to do with any church that is part of an organized denominational structure. They don't realize that their newly formed "cutting-edge apostolic network" has as much unhealthy control as a group that's been around for decades.

When I confess to these elitists that I am praying for a spiritual awakening to hit Lutherans, Methodists and Episcopalians, I'm bluntly told that God has blacklisted those people. When I suggest that the Holy Spirit might want to pour out a fresh wave of renewal among Catholics, they scoff and say that God would never visit a "harlot church."

We'd better be careful. We who pride ourselves on being "Spirit-filled" need to check to see what we are really full of. Just because we have laid claim to the latest prophetic revelations, the trendiest worship or the newest church-growth models doesn't mean we have the Father's love in us. And just because we left "dead" denominations to form "new wineskins" doesn't mean God stopped caring for the people we left behind.

The Father is pouring out His grace in unexpected ways today—and touching people we thought He had abandoned. I hope you won't let pride block the flow of that grace as it heads your way.

Please examine your heart. If you've judged another denomination as being undeserving of Jesus' presence and power, repent and ask the Lord to put a burden in your heart to see revival come to every church. When our pride is gone,

Jesus will draw near to the fragrance that humility brings.
And people who don't yet know the Lord will enjoy the smell.