

Dr. Stan's Biblical Perspective Which Clique Or Camp Are You In?

By: Dr. Stan A. Frye
President, Gateway International Missions, Inc.

Many of you who read this magazine know very well that I have been in full-time ministry for many years. In fact, my wife, JoAnne, and I have tried to serve the Lord faithfully together for 48 years. During these many years, it has always bothered us tremendously about the divisiveness of those in the body of Christ who will have absolutely nothing to do with other believers if they don't fit into their clique or possibly their camp. This sinful attitude has probably done more damage to the Kingdom of God than any sin I know. We all know that God has taught us that believers should live in unity with other believers, even if we might differ on some things such as doctrines that are nonessential to salvation, personal opinions which make no difference in light of eternity, and many other things. In fact, I personally believe that most of the church fights, the arguments among pastors, the friction in pastoral groups, and even the division in most large associations and denominations happen because of a buddy system which produces these cliques and camps. Yet, when we read the Bible, we discover that it is God's will for us to be unified in the church body and with other believers. For instance pay attention to these next verses found in **Ephesians 4:11-16**. **"And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."**

Folks, these verses are some of the greatest verses in the entire Bible. Why? Because they specifically tell us that God has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to help the church, the body of Christ, become unified and brought together in order for God's people to bring edification to the body and to each other as individuals. The purpose of these men who are to lead the churches is not to divide the churches, but to bring the churches together and help them to grow in the Lord so that they will not be led astray with unsound doctrine. And yet, what I have seen for the past 48 years is an increasing isolationism which causes some in the body to avoid other believers based upon the the most flimsy excuses you have ever heard. And, most of these so call reasons in the shells of excuses are man-made excuses based upon self-concocted opinions and personal preferences. Ninety-nine percent of the time, it is not a valid reason for separating from another believer, but it is simply because pastors, evangelists, teachers, church leaders, and many others have been taught to avoid all others that don't fit into their clique or camp. And sad to say, most of those who participate in this isolationism do so just simply because some well-known preacher, Bible college professor, or other church leader has taught them in order to be super-spiritual that they must follow these instructions to stay away from these other believers just because they are told to.

Now, let me mention some of these cliques and camps that are being used all across America to keep saved Bible believing people away from others. One of the primary camps is the colleges or schools where these church leaders attended. I remember as a young pastor having other pastors come up to me as a young man and the first thing they would ask me is, "Where did you go to school?" And if it wasn't the school that they approved of, then they would have nothing to do with me. They didn't ask me if I was saved, when God called me to preach, or any other valid question. They just wanted to know if I was in their camp. Right here in North Carolina I have found more of this probably than any other place I have ever been. It is amazing to me how professing believers and pastors can pretend to be so spiritual that they won't have anything to do with anyone who didn't go to school where they believe everyone should go. For instance again, there are those here in our area that will have nothing to do with other Christians or church leaders if they didn't attend West Lenior Bible College. Then, there are others that believe if you didn't go to Southeastern Seminary, then you don't rate. Of course, Fruitland Bible Institute is the only place God prepares preachers properly. Also, what about Bob Jones University in South Carolina,

or Ambassador College in Shelby, N.C? Maybe even Tabernacle Bible College in Greenville, S.C., or Tennessee Temple in Chattanooga. Then, there is Pensacola Bible College, Liberty University, Clearwater Bible College, Luther Rice Seminary, Crown College in Tennessee, and on and on we can go trying to promote our clique or camp and none other. I am sure that if these believers don't belong to my camp, then they must be going to hell and the preachers are ill-prepared for the ministry. Where did we ever come up with this terribly divisive concept that everybody else is wrong if they don't agree with us? I can truthfully tell you that Jesus has had nothing to do with this rotten attitude.

Why folks, I even see here in our area of North Carolina, especially with our radio preachers, that if you don't sound like a certain group of preachers when you pray and preach, you can't be genuine. There are the preachers with the "holy-hack" and then others with the "holy uh". There are some that feel that they have to even breathe like their mentors have taught them, and if they don't, they can't be preaching. To me it seems like many of these people have become so enamored with others so much that they want to be just like their instructors and not just be themselves as God made them and called them.

Also, there are people who can't even hang out with people who use a different kind of music in their churches, or possibly have another style of worship. I am not saying that we have to accept everything that comes down the pike, but why can't we be at least civil and interested in the others who don't dot their "i's" and cross their "t's" just like we do? And, why do we automatically cross off some missionary that was not trained in our school or camp? Why do we reject even listening to others who are not from our camps or cliques? Or possibly, why do we just fellowship with those who agree with us and let us always have the final word? As I have been thinking about this, the Lord reminded me of a great illustration. We are told that if schools only have former students who teach in their schools and no one else, this is called inbreeding and eventually, the student body will be limited in knowledge because the information they learn will have come only from their own teachers. In addition, what about the intermarriage of family members who have married incestuously only people within their own families way back up in the mountains somewhere? When this happens, often times the mental ability of these people becomes very limited. And, these family members are looked upon as having been inbred! Is this what is happening with our preachers, church leaders, teachers, and others who only accept those within their own camps and cliques? I sincerely believe it is, and

our churches and the Christian community is the worse off for it. I might go so far as to say, "Some pastors and church leaders should be ashamed of themselves for the damage they have done because of their isolationism. Instead of church builders, they have become clique builders!" And, if you remember from your teenager years, no one is hated more than a clique builder! So, where is the edifying of the body in this generation of Christians? It seems to me that much of this is about preachers who want to control others, live like Pharisees with their heads in the clouds, and they want to make sure that they keep inbreeding their people so that only their people can pastor the churches in their areas and fully submit to the Pope-like antics of these super spiritual leaders. By now, you should be as sick on your stomach as I am on mine. I can't stand this arrogant, egotistical attitude anymore than I can tolerate dust, smoke, and chemicals as I struggle with my incurable lung disease. So, before I move on, I must warn you sarcastically to not associate with someone who didn't go to your school, doesn't worship just like you, and especially if he or she doesn't pray with the same rhymes and the same tone of voice.

By the way, before I forget! I have worked on the African mission field for 30 years. During these years I have watched missionaries who have to walk a thin line and behave perfectly when they are home here in the states in order to keep raising money. However, after they have been on the fields for a long time and they are about to go bonkers because all of their friends and family members within their camps are back here in America, you might just see an Independent Baptist hanging out with a Presbyterian in Africa just to have a friend! Imagine that! Of course, I am sure that no one will take photos for fear the churches back here will see them on Facebook or somewhere else and the missionaries lose their support!

We Choose Our Friends by Compatible Sins!

As I come to the end of this particular article, I just want to add that we must be careful in choosing the camps or cliques we want to hang out with. The reason that we may be choosing a particular camp or clique to spend time with may be because these mentors and instructors want us to commit the same sins of arrogancy and Phariseeism that they are committing so that this sinful philosophy may be passed on to others. In other words, these controlling people want us to join them in their sins instead of breaking free from this legalism and spending time where we choose. As I have preached for years, "we usually choose our friends by

compatible sins.” What I mean by this is that we choose our friends based upon their tolerance of the sins that we commit so that we can feel comfortable around them. But there is one thing we always forget, if people demand us to abide by their rules in order to be accepted, then we will never be free to obey Jesus and carry out His individual will for our lives!

