

Showing Who We Are.... By Carl McMurray

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

In our Wednesday night Bible study we discussed Romans chapter 14 and the place of opinions in our relationships with one another. You might have thought that we were discussing lines of fellowship or division, but we weren't. We were really discussing how we identify ourselves to others.

Over the last month you might have read in the Russian trip BLOG of encouraging the Christians who feel alienated in their own culture. You might have thought that we were doing them good, but that wasn't the end of the message. We were really identifying ourselves and the brethren who sent us there.

Harold Comer in his studies of church growth indicates that when churches reach about 80% full in their buildings there is often a division. The Scriptures will be appealed to as if that is the reason, but in actuality there is a feeling of discomfort that arises just from being crowded. People try and blame their discomfort on some vague biblical principal and then use that as their door to leave. Aside from noting that we are at a dangerous place here in Anderson because of this principle, you might think that division is about crowds and buildings and percentages. It's not. Once again, it's about how we identify ourselves to others.

You see, Jesus said that we will identify ourselves to others by our love for one another. When we go to another to encourage them, or misbehave, or leave our brethren in the dust, it is shallow reasoning to blame our behavior on circumstances. We are actually just showing our love, or lack of it, for others.

When we send the good news of Jesus overseas or across town, when we send funds to storm wrecked brethren, when we sit with those who are ill or sit on our opinions so that peace might hold sway, when we stand in public and hand out materials, when we invite friends to come worship with us, we are not just doing these things that we think we're doing. We're also identifying ourselves to other. Those others ARE watching and they can figure out what we're really about. And Jesus said that all men would know if we were HIS disciples by how we loved one another.