

Stereotyping

by Wayne Goff

Stereotype: “a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.” [Oxford American Dictionaries]

I have been known to stereotype people or things. Sometimes I do it intentionally to get people’s attention. Sometimes I do it without thinking. For example, Wednesday night’s talk began with a husband and wife car shopping. I suggested that men would be chiefly interested in the car’s motor, while women would be chiefly interested in the car’s color. That’s probably generally true, but I was reminded by some resourceful ladies in our congregation that they most certainly did not fit the stereotype! (They were very good natured in their teasing while making their point.)

I have also suggested in the past that red-headed people have a temper to match their hair’s color! Having grown up with a red-headed sibling, I feel justified in making that observation. But then again, I had a step-mother who had less temper than anyone I know -- and she had red hair, along with both her parents!

Growing up in Arkansas, I have often been the object of stereotyping. “Hey, if you’re from Arkansas, how come you’re wearing shoes?” (Real funny the first ten thousand times you hear it.)

Being left-handed, I’m constantly being reminded that I am “writing with the wrong hand.” Of course, since the opposite side of the brain controls your actions, then it stands to reason that left-handed people are the only ones in the right minds! (Real funny, at least to me.)

Well, I better make my point before I run out of room. Stereotyping is all fine and well when we are teasing. But on a more serious note, we must be sure that we do not judge people improperly when it comes to spiritual matters, Matt. 7:1-2. Jesus says that we will be judged as we have judged. The Good News is that Jesus will be our final Judge and He will not be guilty of stereotyping us. He will judge according to our words and deeds in that Final Day, 2 Cor. 5:10. If that is the case, we all have some repenting to do (Acts 17:30-31) because we have all done something wrong (Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:8). Be kind and merciful in your treatment of others. Most of all, be liberal in your assessment of who will and who will not obey the Gospel. Everybody deserves one chance, and never underestimate the power of the Gospel to save (Rom. 1:16)!

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