

## Pastor's Corner: 2-23-2019 – Seeing the Other Side

Back in 1992 a book was published called, “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.” This book spent 121 weeks on the bestseller list and was highest ranked work of non-fiction in the 90's. One of the underlying ideas of the book was that men and women struggle when communicating with one another because they are fundamentally different from. Men and women simply process things differently - so differently that we may sometimes wonder what planet the other is from.

I have more or less accepted this as a true statement and have seen it play out in my own home. I have noticed that my wife will occasionally bring up complaints about work or some other topic and my initial response is to want to jump in and offer solutions. She doesn't want solutions. She wants to talk about it. I can get myself into trouble if I try to solve problems that she is perfectly capable of solving on her own. So, I've learned to try and clarify what kind of discussion we're having. Is this a “shut up and listen” kind of talk or a “help me decide what to do” kind of talk? When we begin to understand some of the fundamental differences in the way men and women communicate we can (hopefully) improve how we relate to one another.

A couple of weeks ago I was reminded that not only are men and women from different planets, but we also experience this planet very differently. What I mean is that the experience of going through life and interacting with society is a very different experience for men versus women. Let me give an example.

I drive a rather impractical, small, red, rear-wheel-drive, convertible – in North Dakota. I don't have a need for a big SUV or mom-mobile so I bought a zippy little car that suits me perfectly, 90% of the time. Since this is my only vehicle in North Dakota I do drive it in the winter. At the first sign of snow I throw on a set of Blizzaks and the little sports car zips along through the ice and snow just fine. Occasionally a stranger will look at the car and ask, “how's that thing do in the snow?” I'll explain about the snow tires and that it does quite well. Usually they will follow up with something like, “looks fun”, or “yeah, probably does better than my car.” I smile, agree, and go on my way.

My wife has a very different experience when driving my car in the snow. The comments she receives (frequently) are more along the lines of, “you must not be from around here, driving a little car like that”, or “I'll bet I could put an ice cube behind those tires and you'd be stuck in place.” Hahaha – everyone laughs at the silly girl driving a sports car in the snow. Aww shucks, ain't she cute.

The same thing happens at the gym. I've been lifting weights at the YMCA since moving to Bismarck. I can count, on one hand, the number of times someone has come up to me while I'm lifting. In each of those cases the comment was, “hey, can I get a spot?”

Amy will go to the gym and quite regularly receive unsolicited advice on how to lift, or what exercises to do. She literally has to wear headphones from the moment she steps onto the floor until the moment she leaves to encourage people to mind their own business.

What I'm trying to say is that men and women experience the world differently because we are treated differently. When the car thing happened a few weeks ago I was reminded again of these differences.

So, what does all this have to do with anything? Why write a pastor's corner about it?

I guess I'm commenting on this phenomenon as a reminder that we should be careful to try and see things from other people's perspective. When we make judgments or decisions based only on our own experience or perspective we may really miss out on understanding where people are coming from.

I think this is a Biblical approach to interpersonal dynamics. In fact, the Bible teaches that God became flesh partially for this very reason – so that he could experience and know what it was to be human. Heb 2:17-18 says, “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

Jesus has walked a mile in our shoes. He has experienced our experiences. This is what makes him uniquely qualified to be our intercessor. He can speak eloquently in our defense because he knows, first hand, what it means to be human.

Since Jesus is our example, it behooves us to try to see things from the perspective of others and not just from our own. Men should try to see things from the perspective of women. The wealthy should try to

see the perspective of the poor. Citizens of a country should try to understand the plight of refugees. The list could go on.

I think much of the division of our country comes from the fact that we are locked into our own perspective and we refuse to look at things from someone else's point of view. This is not to say we will (or should) agree with every perspective. But I am suggesting that we should try to understand one another a little bit better. As James counsels us, let us be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

Have a Happy Sabbath,  
Pastor Tyler