

My Somerset Life

A diary by Brian Snellgrove

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Discrimination vs. Judgement

I'm spending significant amounts of time in the mornings listening to TWR trans world radio which is an evangelical and theological re broadcasting station in the United Kingdom anyway to act as a conduit for the many excellent religious radio channels in the United States and in the English speaking world. R C Sproul was an American reformed theologian and ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church in Altamonte Springs, Florida and I listened, entranced, as I normally do when he speaks.

He was talking this morning about the importance of using our gifts and that everybody has a gift except some people don't know it or don't use it. He said the job of the minister is to be a drill sergeant and activate people in the congregation to use their gifts for the benefit of the community. One piece that particularly struck me was the difference between discrimination and judgment. He gave the illustration of when he goes to a doctor with a stomach pain he wants to know whether it is caused by bad food or stomach malfunction.

He wants the doctor to discriminate between one condition and another. Making a judgment about a person whose circumstances you dont know is another matter. eg 'You are no good'. That's a judgment. The doctor's diagnosis is to professionally discriminate between one cause of a problem and another.

The way we use discriminate or indiscriminate is a pejorative word. It means that a person is incapable of distinguishing and choosing the correct path. For example he is not discriminating about his friends. We are critical of someone who is in this category because it doesn't involve any careful thought or choice. We can use this with material things as well as people for example the indiscriminate use of fertilizers is damaging to the environment or the indiscriminate killing of a group of villagers. So a person

of discrimination can be praised but a discriminatory attitude is not necessarily the same thing as it implies ignorance, prejudicial type of attitude towards those who may not fit.

Discrimination needs to be accompanied by objectivity and fairness. We all have different skills and abilities and one is not less important than the other and that is why the other sayings of Jesus such as ' we are all members one of another' are necessary to be a counter balancing influence to the strong tendency to compare ourselves as better or worse than others.

Summary – both discrimination and judgement can be miss applied.

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