



A Man Called Norman

“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.” Romans 12:16 (NKJV)

Back in 1984, Focus on the Family broadcast a powerful true story (that became both a book and movie) by Mike Adkins about a man named Norman. No one in his small town would have anything to do with the smelly overalls, weird speech, unkempt man named Norman. Then one day, God moved a Christian man named Mike into a new house just two doors down from Norman. As Mike was in prayer for an opportunity to reach Norman with the gospel, the Holy Spirit moved Mike to cross the street one day and help Norman with his broken-down lawnmower. Before he knew it, Mike was fixing Norman’s dirty toilet, inviting him into his new home, and taking Norman to a ballgame. In time, Norman came to faith in Christ and the two men became best friends until separated by death.

The Bible says, “...for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7, NKJV) It’s the old sin nature that motivates us to choose to make friends with those who are like us, or those who can do something for us. Instead of selfishly holding on to this high opinion of ourselves, God wants us to recognize His grace towards us and walk in humility. We are *all* sinners saved by God’s grace and He wants us to love our neighbor as ourselves. God is no respecter of persons.

How often do the Scriptures say that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:11)? In just the book of Matthew alone, we find Jesus healing every disease and sickness among the people (4:23), teaching to love our enemies (5:44), instructing to give to the needy (6:2), healing a man with leprosy (8:3), and healing the servant of a Roman Centurion (8:13). Jesus saw the heart (the faith) of Zacchaeus and stayed at the house of this sinner (Luke 19:7).

So who is *our* Norman? God wants us to look beyond ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, and language barriers, and reach out in love to the custodian at work, the murderer in prison, the homeless on Skid Row, the widow, the orphan, the elderly, the poor and unemployed, and the neighbor we’ve never met. After all, it was Jesus who left the fellowship of His Father in heaven and was born in a lowly stable in order to save sinners like us. The prophet Isaiah said it this way, “*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him...*” (Isaiah 58:7, NKJV) Let’s pray for the Normans in our lives this week.

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