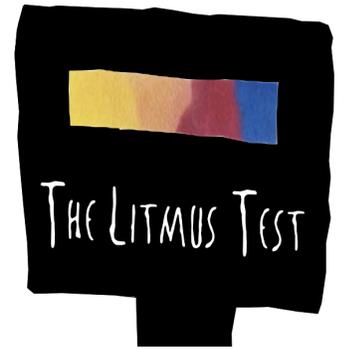


Let's Go Deeper...
Wednesday, June 28, 2017
David Shirey



I received an e-mail on Monday morning that read as follows:

Hello,

My name is Matthew (not his real name) and I am a student at the University of Kentucky. I am searching for a church to attend, and before I started visiting a lot of places, I wanted to get a feel for where various churches stand on a few issues, both theologically and in practice. Could you please explain your congregation's stance (if any) on the following issues:

- 1) Homosexuality (Is homosexuality a sin? Do you celebrate LGBTQ weddings in your church building?)*
- 2) Biblical inerrancy*
- 3) The doctrine of the Trinity*
- 4) The Lord's Supper (is it an open table for both believers and seekers or are baptized believers only encouraged to partake in it?)*

Thank you so much,

Matthew

Several thoughts immediately crossed my mind, a few I pondered and a few I showed to the door as quickly as possible.

The first thought that came to my mind was, “Good for Matthew. An entering freshman at UK who is actively looking for a church home.” The caricature of entering freshmen is that the beginning of their college years is the end of their churchgoing years. Sundays for the next four years will be for sleeping in (and sleeping off Saturday nights). Not so for Matthew. Good for him.

A thought I quickly showed to the door was a snarky *Harrumph* at a set of questions that seem to reflect a fundamentalism that defines faith in terms of adherence to a set of specific doctrines coupled with stances on certain social issues. A century ago, in reaction to the rise of the historical-critical study of Scripture (reading Scripture in the context of the original authors’ worldview, social settings, and circumstances), five “fundamentals” were put forth as beliefs defining true believers. They included:

- The inerrancy of the Bible
- The literal reading of the Scripture, especially regarding Jesus’ miracles and the Creation account in Genesis.
- The virgin birth of Christ.
- The bodily resurrection and physical return of Christ.
- The substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross.

Litmus test social issues across the years have ranged from “where one stands” on

same-sex marriage to evolution, abortion, feminism, and capital punishment. The reason I quickly showed my knee-jerk *Harrumph* to the door was that I have my own “fundamentals” and litmus tests that, like it or not, define my view of the Christian faith as much as Matthew’s fundamentals define his. Fie on me if I quietly disdain persons who I suspect look down their nose on me for having answering the doctrinal and hot button issue litmus tests different than they if I do the very same thing to them.

What are my “fundamentals?”

- Live the Great Commandment (Love God and love neighbor).
- Live the Ten Commandments (the sphere of personal morality).
- Do justice (the sphere of public morality).
- Be generous (with time—volunteer, and with treasure-- tithe).
- Cultivate humility, decency, and goodness (cf [Philippians 4:8](#)).
- Love your enemy. Do not return evil for evil. ([Romans 12:17-21](#)).

I encourage you to line out your own fundamentals. By what interior plumb line do you measure your thoughts and deeds as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Back to my UK correspondent Matthew. Having ushered my unChristlike sneering shadow out the door, I typed a short, honest, and respectful response to his questions.

I began, “Hi Matthew. Welcome to Lexington” and ended with, “Blessings as you seek a congregation in Lexington in which you can continue to grow in your faith and your service of God and neighbor through Christ Jesus.”

--David

He responded,

David,

Thank you for the timely response! I respectfully disagree with [your stances], so I don't think I will be visiting, but I really do appreciate your help and your quick response! Thank you so much!

God bless,

Matthew

I responded, “You are very welcome, Matthew. Blessings in your search for a church home in Lexington.”

I wish my young brother in Christ well. I am grateful he extended the same grace to me.

--David