

Truth **in** Grace

Truth in Grace Ministries

Dan Hayden, Director

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The UNIQUE **Dan's Desk** Christian

Daniel 1

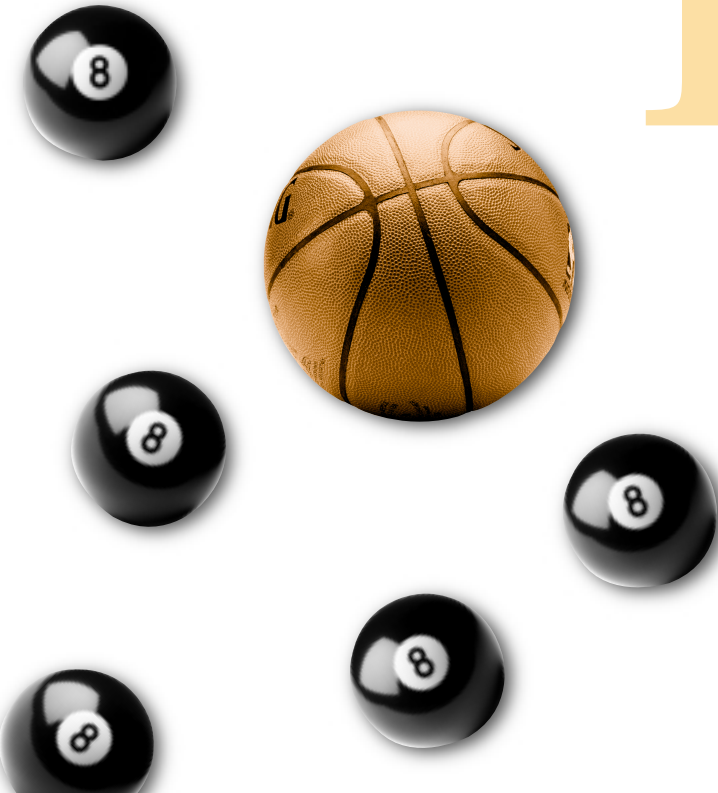
Roy was a good looking young man who professed to be a **Christian**, but he was also as odd as a featured attraction in

a circus sideshow. He was a tall, strong, handsome man with many excellent talents and there was a self confidence about him that gave him an unusual boldness in sharing his faith. On their initial encounter with him, most people were impressed.

Yet it didn't take long to sense that all was not well with Roy. He had crazy ideas about living in suspended animation and fantasized in private conversation about actual visits with extraterrestrial beings. He was a strong advocate of Pro Life — which was good, but his solution to the problem of Pro Choice was to kill all abortionists by lining them up on the Governor's lawn and shooting them — which was not good. He also said that he had secret knowledge that made him a desirable person to the FBI, but since extraterrestrials had "brainlocked" him, he needed to find a secret code that could unlock his special knowledge. There is more, but perhaps you are getting the idea that Roy was indeed marching to a different drumbeat than the majority of society.

Eventually Roy was institutionalized for his psychotic abnormalities, but for a long while he had been deemed harmless (though strange) and was allowed to come and go freely in the community. That would not

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have been a problem except for the fact that he was very vocal about his religious faith and that he was a member of our church. He actually became a negative witness in the town and many were turned off to us (and Christ) because of him. Roy was not just different, he was odd.

Unfortunately there are many professing Christians who exhibit behavior patterns that are not consistent with biblical Christianity. They may not be psychotic like Roy, but they are certainly odd and out of touch with true spiritual reality.

In seeking relevance, the church began to lose its significance

Now it is true that Christianity is unique and that because of that uniqueness Christians are expected to be different from those who do not know Christ. That does not mean, however, that we are to be weird and repulsive. What it means is that we are to exhibit a difference that is attractive and winsome.

The Gospel is an offense to those who do not believe in Christ — we understand that and live as Christians in the light of it. But nowhere does the Bible say that Christians are to be offensive. The world often views us as self-righteous snobs who live hypocritical lives and too often, to our shame, they are

right. In reality, they are not rejecting Christ and Christianity — they are rejecting our miserable and inaccurate portrayal of Christ and Christianity. We're not just different — we're weird. The world can see it, but somehow we don't get it.

Going to Extremes

There is a reverse side to this concern, however. A number of decades ago, many Christians and church leaders began to realize that much of the American church was irrelevant and insensitive to the real world. Isolated from the mainstream of society by the fortress mentality of “us Christians in the church” versus “those pagans in the world,” there was a growing alienation of the religious community from the secular culture. The church was losing its influence as the salt of the earth and missing its opportunity as the light of the world.

So a deliberate shift began to take place as many in the church sought for a more meaningful interaction with society. But as so often happens with pendulum swings, the reaction produced another extreme. In seeking relevance, the church began to lose its significance, and in pursuing identification with the culture, it began to lose its uniqueness with Christ.

The church of Jesus Christ is to be “in the world”, but it is not to be “of the world”. There is an intended balance between identifying with a common humanity for the purpose of meaningful interaction and living a separated life unto the Lord for the purpose of personal holiness.

Jesus Himself engaged in radical identification with the people of His day in contradistinction to the religious elite who were aloof and condescending to the people. It must also be noticed, however, that He maintained a radical difference of spiritual integrity that made Him unique when compared to either the sinful populace or the self-righteous Pharisee. He was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Not either... or, but both... and. It was the balance of His commitment to the truth in conjunction with His graciousness toward the people that made Him both attractive and effective.

Unique Is Good

This balance can be seen in the story of Daniel and the three Hebrew men, that introduces the Book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, tried to force these men of God to become enculturated to their new environment in Babylon. They were given new names and were put through a training program for three years to teach them the Babylonian language and customs. They submitted themselves to this process and what they learned became an important part of their relevant witness for God in the Chaldean culture.

Yet there were other aspects of that culture that violated their uniqueness as men who were deeply concerned about their spiritual integrity with God. In Daniel chapter one, the issue was food. God had prescribed certain dietary regulations for Israel in the Mosaic Law that prohibited them from eating various kinds of food. So Daniel and his friends determined in their hearts that they would not defile themselves with the king's food. It was important for them to retain their uniqueness as men of God by maintaining a difference in matters of moral integrity between themselves and others around them.

Learning the Aramaic language was one thing. It was important as a means of effective interaction with the Babylonian people and demonstrated a willingness on the part of the Hebrew men to identify with the surrounding culture. And besides, language learning was amoral. It did not violate their separated walk of holiness with the Lord.

Eating food prohibited by the Mosaic Law was quite another matter, however. There were moral consequences in accommodating themselves to that part of the culture. As men of God, they were different from the pagan Babylonian society, and it was important for them to maintain that difference. Relevance with the culture was no longer the issue. Spiritual integrity was at stake. In this matter it was more important for them to insist on their uniqueness as men of God than to accommodate themselves to Babylonian dietary preferences for the purpose of acceptance.

There are two aspects of this story that warrant special attention. The first is to notice that there was an attempt to balance truth and grace. Daniel and his friends insisted on maintaining their integrity with the truth of God's Word and they accepted their uniqueness as men of God in a pagan culture. On the other hand, they approached the matter with tact and

grace. They were not dogmatic and abrasive in communicating their spiritual convictions, but rather, they were gentle and sensitive. Daniel explained the matter carefully to the Babylonian authority and asked for a special reprieve from the king's request. What he discovered was that the real concern of the Chaldeans was not that the Hebrew men eat their food, but that the health of the men would not be jeopardized by a different diet so as to displease the king. In essence the Babylonians were saying, "we don't mind if you Hebrews are unique and different, we just don't want you to be odd or weird." And Daniel agreed.

The second thing to notice about this story is that God brought honor to those men in the eyes of the Babylonians even though the men insisted on their uniqueness as men of God. The text says,

And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm (Daniel 1:20).

The point is that a holy life which insists on a radical commitment to the truth of God should not be thought of as mutually exclusive from a gracious and compassionate spirit that reaches out in love to a pagan world. Balance is the key. When you have truth without grace, you lose your audience. When you have grace without truth, you lose your message. Jesus was full of both — He was *"full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14) — [emphasis mine].

It Is a Personal Matter

This understanding of the need for both truth and grace has important ramifications for us as Christians. First of all, it should influence us with regard to our personal walk with the Lord.

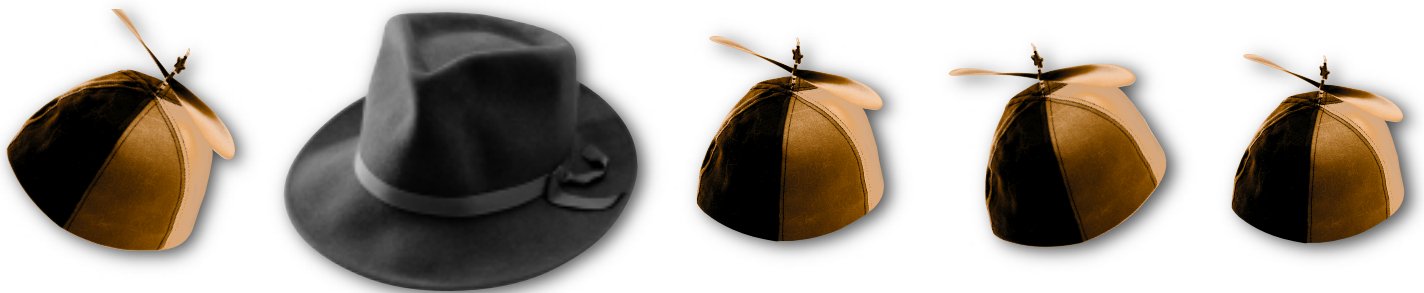
In all of our attempts to become relevant and blend in as normal people in the cultural landscape, it does seem that we have lost much of our uniqueness as the people of God. We may not cuss and carouse like the worst elements of our society, but we are probably just as materialistic as our neighbors

in the way we spend our money. We may not rent X-rated videos like some of the more lustful pagans, but we may be tolerating more sex, violence, and language in our video choices than we did ten years ago. We may go to church on Sunday unlike the family next door who stays home, but going to church may not have any more impact on our daily lives than not going to church.

Everything in the Bible argues for the fact that "Christian" should be more than a religious label. It ought to be consistent with a unique lifestyle of godliness and sacrificial love. The message of the Gospel of Christ is intended to have an impact upon life. It is not just a theology to be believed, it is a relationship with God that revolutionizes a person's life. The Christian is different — uniquely different from every other person in the unregenerate world. And according to the Bible, that difference has radical implications, not just cosmetic ones. The Christian no longer loves the world (1 John 2:15-17) which means that there ought to be an observable difference in the way Christians live — how they think and what they do.

So, check it out. Is it possible to tell that you are a Christian by the way you work, by the way you spend your leisure, by your preference in music and entertainment, by the way you spend your money? Are you truly committed to the cause of Christ in the world? Is godly character and integrity of life an observable priority? Don't make excuses — answer honestly. Are you a unique creation of God or just another pastel color blending in with the dull shades of a secular world view. It is meaningless to tell people that Christ will make a difference in their lives, when there is no difference to be seen in one's own life.

The Christian is different—uniquely different from every other person in the unregenerate world



Different — Not Weird

It Is a Corporate Concern

This spirit of accommodation has also affected the way we “do church.” In our desire to please people, the vertical dimension of our worship has been smothered by horizontal concerns. Seeker services have become the popular trend, where the objective has been to represent Christ as being as much like what people are accustomed to in the world as possible. In fact, the clamor for relevance in such churches has masked any sense of the true difference that exists between Christ and the world.

In his book, *The Gagging of God*, D. A. Carson questions the rationale behind the contemporary church’s accommodation to the secular spirit in music, drama, devotional messages and a general philosophy of entertainment as the framework for worship. He quotes from a survey done by the Park Street Church in Boston of the 50,000 people around them as to what most people are attracted to in a church’s ministry. It was interesting to discover, he said, that their response “had nothing to do with program, entertainment, excitement, music, or the like... their big word was ‘authentic’” (p. 494). In other words, people were really not interested in churches that put secular bait on a religious hook for the purpose of catching them. What they were looking for was something real. They were not interested in a religious experience clothed in the gar-

ments of their paganism. What they wanted was an authentic relationship with God.

When a woman dresses seductively to catch a man, we question her moral integrity. Why is it that when the church dresses seductively to “catch” a convert, we applaud its clever use of deceit? People may get saved in such a ministry, but what is lost may be more than what is gained.

Christianity is not just different — it is unique. It is not just another religion among the religions of the world, it is the only way to God (John 14:6). Christ is unique. The Gospel is unique. The Body of Christ (the Church) is unique. The Christian is unique.

And so, our worship is unique. Our music is unique. Our commitment to the study of the Word of God is unique. Our desire is to please the Lord, not ourselves. It is all very Christocentric. And, quite frankly, it is not something for which we need to apologize. It is the essence of authenticity — and according to the Boston survey, that is evidently more attractive to seekers of truth than our paltry attempts at entertainment.

So if you want to be weird, do it on your own time (preferably in your basement). On the other hand, like Daniel and his friends, don’t hesitate to be unique. The world is watching to see if we are authentic. 🙏

The OFFICE

News&Reviews

Where would a ministry be without the supporting cast that makes it all happen?

Truth in Grace has certainly been blessed of God with talented and committed people behind the scenes. The office of Sola Scriptura, which is shared by a number of ministries, including *Truth in Grace*, is a kaleidoscopic vision of perpetual motion. Things are happening and the rest of us know that we would all dry up and blow away were it not for Sandy and Dean. One thing we all wonder — how can two people do so much?



SANDY KSYCKI — Office Manager Efficiency, commitment to excellence, contagious congeniality, and “Sure, I can do that,” are things that come to mind when we think of Sandy. She maintains the data base, supervises the packing and mailing of ministry materials, and serves as the receptionist and secretary for a half dozen co-workers. Sandy and her husband David moved to Grand Haven, Michigan from Chicago, Illinois in 1995. David, a gifted musician, had been representing Yamaha Corporation of America in Michigan, commuting from the Chicago area. Sandy had been working for a direct mailing business in Chicago — but they were both beginning to realize that their destiny was really in Michigan. When their daughter Cyndi finished Junior High, they made the move. Leaving Chicago was hard; Sandy had grown up as a Polish Catholic south of Chicago, and at 15 had come to faith in Christ through a friend’s invitation to a youth function at the Moraine Valley Baptist Church. In 1976 she and David were married and served the Lord in that church. After settling in Grand Haven, Sandy worked as a receptionist and billing clerk for a small company. Their family soon became involved at Grace Church where their fellowship and service have been greatly appreciated. Thus, when the need for an office manager surfaced, Sandy was a prime target. For a year and a half now, she has managed us well — and we are grateful to the Lord. In her spare time Sandy enjoys quilting and cross-stitching, as well as gardening. Recently she has also been developing her talents with creative memories (photo albums) and amateur photography. Weekend trips to Ann Arbor are now factored in as daughter Cyndi is a freshman at the University of Michigan this fall. Thanks Sandy, for all your work and service unto the Lord.

A Word from the Word

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

1 Peter 2:9

περιποίησις

Have you ever known any peculiar people? I could tell you many stories of people I have known who were just plain odd. Like the man who said to the psychologist, “People think I’m weird because I like potato pancakes.” To which the psychologist responded, “That’s not weird, I also like potato pancakes.” At that point, the man became excited and said, “That’s wonderful, Doc. Listen, why don’t you come over to my house — I have closets and closets full!”

When the King James translators used the word “peculiar” in 1 Peter 2:9, identifying Christians as a “peculiar people”, this is **not** what they had in mind. According to A. T. Robertson, the word “peculiar” comes from the Latin word, “pecus” which means “flock”. The KJV translators were simply reflecting the idea that believers in Christ are the unique possession of God — they are His flock.

Actually the word in 1 Peter 2:9 is the Greek word **peripoiesis**, which has the idea of possession, or personal property. It is the preposition **peri**, which means “around” — connected to the noun **poiesis**, which refers to something that is made, or done. Kenneth Wuest, the Greek scholar, says “the Greek word means literally ‘to make around,’ that is, to make something and then to surround it with a circle, thus indicating ownership.” Thus, the New American Standard version translates this phrase as “a people for God’s own possession.” The NIV says, “a people belonging to God” and the NKJV says “His own special people.”

The verb form of this word (**peripoieómai**) is found in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to translate the words of God through the prophet Isaiah, when He said, “*This people have I formed for myself*” (Isa. 43:21) — [emphasis mine]. It is a strong statement of personal possession — the people belong to God. They are His.

So this word **peripoiesis** is certainly a special word to describe how unique we, as believers in Jesus Christ, are as the personal possession of God. He made us a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17) and then He put a circle around us to indicate His ownership, and said in effect “these people belong to Me.” We are indeed a “people for God’s own possession” (1 Peter 2:9 - NAS).

Christian friend, I hope that you are encouraged to know that you really *are* “peculiar”. You belong to a special group of people who are the unique possession of God. You are a member of His eternal family. And that means, of course, that you are the special object of His love and care.

It also means however, that we are to live consistent with who we are. We’re not like other people in the world. We’re more than different — we’re unique. And so, we live unique lives to the glory of God who has given to us His Holy Spirit “as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession (**peripoiesis**), to the promise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:14).



DEAN TISCH — Administrator Whatever needs to be done, Dean can do it. It’s that servant spirit, coupled with capable service, that blesses everybody at Sola Scriptura and *Truth in Grace*. Dean oversees the accounting for all of our ministries, including *Truth in Grace*. Financial integrity is an extremely important part of any ministry, and Dean keeps us on track here. Furthermore, he supervises the distribution of all ministry materials and is the ubiquitous help for all of our 800 line callers — whether ordering materials, seeking answers to Bible questions, or needing a friendly voice of encouragement. Dean’s resumé reads like a “been there, done that”. A graduate of Southern Illinois University with a degree in Agriculture, Dean had planned to serve with the Peace Corps in El Salvador, but the tensions in Central America shelved the idea. After working for a roofing company in Florida, he returned to SIU for graduate work in business. His real interest, though, was Becky, whom he’d met during his senior year. The fact that they are married shows that it was a shrewd move on his part! Back in Chicago, Dean was in retail management before both he and Becky got their Master’s degrees in Education, but full-time teaching never materialized. Then in 1994, after a handful of other jobs, he joined Sola Scriptura to serve the Lord. Dean had received Christ as his Savior during the summer after his freshman year in college, through the prayers of his best friend and involvement with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Dean and Becky are members of Grace Church here in West Michigan, where Dean serves as a Deacon. He loves basketball, as well as swimming and fishing with his boys, Cooper and Malachi. Little Dara thinks her Daddy’s pretty special, too. So do we. Thanks, Dean. We appreciate all that you do.

Truth in Grace

Bits & Pieces

...Sorry! We missed the summer edition of our quarterly publication. The reason (or is it an excuse?) was that Dan was embroiled in the final stages of procuring his Doctor of Ministries degree at Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania; and that left little time for writing articles. So if you didn't get a summer issue, don't think that we forgot you. Hopefully, and Lord willing, we're back on track with this fall edition.

...Many continue to ask about our son Rob, and his family concerning their plans to go to Slovakia as missionaries. Prefield ministry has gone well and they are at about 70% level of support. The birth of their fourth child, Devrah, has added another dimension to family life, but they hope to leave for Slovakia in November. If you would like to receive their prayer card and periodic ministry letter, their address is: Rob & Rhinda Hayden, 7337 Roselane, Jenison, MI, 49428; or e-mail — robnrhinda@compuserve.com.

...Further steps have been taken and some progress made toward our goal of developing a radio ministry. The Lord continues to encourage us in that direction, so we remain hopeful. As you think of us, pray that God will give His wisdom for future plans and decisions in this regard.

...As you look ahead toward the Christmas season, we are working on two new Christmas tape albums of Dan's teaching — **"Battle of the Kings"** (5 tapes), an exposition of Matthew 2, and **"When God Became a Man"** (4 tapes), studies on the Virgin Birth. Lord willing, these will be available for purchase by November. And don't forget our previous Christmas album — **"Name Above All Names"** (5 tapes), studies on the names for Christ in Isaiah 9:6.

New Tape Series

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