

Spring's Hottest Trend: Glasses

By Heather Iriye

The first run of the Bouncer commercial back in December 2004 brought on an explosive debate over whether radical inclusiveness was too controversial to air on national television. Of course for most, that's yesterday's news. However, with a new commercial coming out this spring, history is about to repeat itself. And current events are telling us of people who are still orphaned and searching for a home which will feed them spiritually and give them water for their life's journey. Can this Christian family step up to that challenge?

....Or perhaps this mind-set is all wrong. Maybe this is *not* a challenge which needs to be met and conquered. Maybe, just maybe, it is simply a matter of taking on a new perspective. There *is no* challenge here, so the hard part is over. This is all just a matter of putting on a new pair of glasses and adjusting to the new sight. But before one can put on their new spectacles, it is first helpful to see the world through blurry eyes as a means of comparison.

It's amazing what one can find on the internet these days. Like the *Human for Sale* website. It's nothing more than a little mindless fun, not to be taken seriously, or at least one would hope. The slogan reads "*How much money are you worth???*" A person will answer an online questionnaire about their lifestyle, body type, mental ability, etc., and the site, in turn, tells them how much value they hold in monetary terms. Now, this *could* be an excellent opportunity to launch into a thesis about how stupid a concept this all is, however, a bit of self control will be exercised...but only for a moment. Okay. Moment's up.

The problem with the *Human for Sale* website is that it tries to put a concrete, numerical value on humanity. Certain traits are awarded more money than others. Money is taken away if some qualities are marked. There are even traits that are worth nothing at all. There is no room to argue about what's "good," "bad," or "of no value."

Societal perspective often falls into this trap. Almost as if all individual thought is lost, people begin to "group think" and decide as a whole what is acceptable, or disdainful, or deserving of apathy. Judgment is passed. Imagine if Jesus had gone up to someone and said, "Um hi. Tying the thong on the outside of your ankle is *so* last Purim. Off with you now....out of the Temple." The Christian story might be a bit different than what it is presently. But instead he said, "I judge no one." John 8:15

What kind words to come from someone who was constantly in the critical eye of the public. In judging no one, Jesus found equal value in each individual. Jesus constantly wore that new pair of glasses. In viewing each person as an equal, as a precious child of God, there was equal love to be freely given to all. He was not about giving more points to the pretty pious people. He was not about investing more value in certain lifestyles. Jesus was about a shift in perspective, putting on the glasses of loving equality and knowing that all creations of God come from the same seed.

The eloquent Paul used the metaphor of a body: each person serving different functions, possessing various talents, maintaining beautiful individuality, and at the same time, serving together in love. But ironically, love is one foundational concept that is often lost, overlooked, ignored completely. Why is love so easily forgotten? There are 60 books in the Christian bible and in those, the word "love" appears approximately 902 times. From an early age, most people are taught if something is repeated, it usually holds some significance. It's a sign to pay attention. Then again, if something is reiterated enough, one might be tempted to turn on their selective hearing.

Perhaps now is the time to take out the earplugs and start listening again. Paul reminds us that love is endless and patient, not insisting oMinds do not have to agree for hearts to be open. When there is such expansive, ineffable value to be found in every child of God, it is easy to realize that individuality

feeds the spiritual wealth of a community. It does not take away from it. Once this is realized, it will be easy to open doors a little wider. There *is no challenge* here, only a shift in perspective. It's time to put on the glasses and take out the earplugs. God is still speaking, Now is the time to experience the voice, take in the vision, and love through the equality which God has gifted to all living spirits.

Questions for Thought, Discussion and Action

1. Is there an example from your life where you came to see something in a profoundly new way? Did it happen all at once, or was your perspective change gradual?
2. Are there limits to how much disagreement a community can tolerate? How does a community live together in love *and* variety? Can you picture, or have you experienced, conflict as productive?
3. How can this Christian family give the spiritual homeless a place to grow and provide water for their journey? What are 3 things we can do to extend our invitation even wider?



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