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SMILE FOR THE CAMERA!

By Mark Gorman

The photographer is the only person in town who makes more money when he lies than he does when he's telling the truth. Think about it. You go to the photographer for a portrait, and return a week later to see the proofs. You're horrified! They look exactly like you! If you had wanted something to look like you, you could have done that at home with your own camera in the back yard. You came to the photographer to get something that looks like a movie star.

You suddenly become indignant with him, "Who is this person? This certainly isn't me! I want my money back!"

The photographer begs your forgiveness and offers to do a "retake".

When you come in for the retake, he runs into a back room, sifting through his camera attachments and finds a soft-focus filter. This is a filter that is heavy on mercy. It has a lot of grace. Basically, it smoothes out the wrinkles and makes your skin look silky-smooth. It's a "kinder, gentler filter."

Then, he pulls out a special light, called a "hair light". He places it at just the right angle to make it look like you have more hair. In some cases, this would be categorized as a miracle. He then uses another light, at a different angle, to cut off a couple of chins. By the time he's through, he has produced a photograph, which looks nothing like you. It really does look like a Hollywood movie star.

When you view the proofs, you are thrilled. "You, sir, are a genius! You're the first person to capture the real me on film. If I didn't know better, I'd think I was looking in a mirror."

As I said, it looks nothing like you. But you came to this photographer so he would help you lie.

In shopping malls throughout America, there are photography studios, which specialize in making people look more “glamorous” than normal. People are standing in line to have these glamorous photos taken. And who can blame them? We’d all like to look better than we do now.

When you go to a doctor for an X-ray, do you ask him to use a soft-focus filter? When you meet with the doctor to view the X-rays, and he points out a problem, do you ask if it can be airbrushed out of the X-ray? Absolutely not! In fact, you will pay more money to get a doctor who can take more accurate X-rays and read them with greater precision, to find problems that the previous doctor overlooked. Why?

An X-ray is about survival. A portrait is about image. The problem with most of us is that we have come to think that image is more important than survival. Our life – our walk with God is NOT about image. It’s about survival. In fact, it’s more than life and death. It’s about eternity. When we understand that, we will come to understand the importance of truth.

Too often, we seek only for those who will tell us good things about ourselves. Just as it was with the photographer, we want them to make us look better than we really are. If this were all about image, that would be O.K. But remember this is about survival. For that reason, we need someone to help us see the truth about ourselves, in the same way that the doctor helps us by showing the flaws in our X-ray.

Until we hear the doctor’s report, we’re not likely to change our lifestyle in a way that will prolong our quality of life. In fact, without that X-ray, we may very well have continued to do something, which was damaging us inside, while undetectable on the outside

Do you see how foolish we are, when we seek out those who tell us only flowery words about ourselves - not realizing that the “good feeling” only masks the hidden problems, which threaten our existence?

Look, I know from personal experience that you cannot ask just any random person to “be honest” with you. Because, all too often, people may use that as an opportunity to inflict pain and hurt, especially when you have “opened” yourself to them in that way.

You should NOT arbitrarily ask any and every person you know to “tell you the truth”, to give you an X-ray.

Instead, remember the words of one of my mentors: “If you cannot help me go from where I am now, to where I want to be, then you do not qualify to be in my circle of influence – to be my mentor.”

So, the first qualification for anyone who is allowed to “speak into your life” is to determine whether that person has already proven that they can achieve what you want to achieve, and that they can help you reach your Dreams. Have they proven that they are qualified to speak into your life?

Second, do they truly care about you – about who you are, and how their words will affect you?

Because, it is possible for someone to be fully qualified to “critique” you, as an “expert” in their field, but if they don’t truly care about you as a person, and if they aren’t concerned about how they may hurt or wound you with their words, they still can NOT be trusted to speak into your life.

But if you find someone who not only knows how to help you get from where you are, to where you want to be, but they also truly, genuinely care about you – about your well-being, then you may have found a good candidate for you to approach – to ask them to speak truth to you. That would be the kind of person I would ask to speak into my life – to give me an X-ray.

It is sad to realize how many people in this world have absolutely NO desire for an X-ray. They ONLY want a portrait – a photographer, to make them look good. That’s how they choose their friends. It’s how they choose their spiritual leaders – their pastors. It’s how they choose their so-called mentors. But if someone ALWAYS tells you that you’re doing everything correctly, that you look great, and you are NEVER wrong, then they are not really your friend. They’re either lying to you, or they’re too dumb to know better, and you don’t need advice from dumb people or liars!

Remember, there are two ways to learn in life: Mistakes & Mentors!

Your friends love you the way you are.

Your mentor loves you too much to let you stay the way you are!

And Mentors are part-time Radiologists – they give X-rays – because they care!

(More on this topic next week...)

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