

Make Church a Part of Your Life

WEEKLY SERMONETTE

“Lessons from the Horse Business”

By Preacher/Teacher Terry Laughlin, CrossRoads Ministries

SACRIFICIAL LOVE

There are so many earthly experiences in life which show us the powerful effect love has on everything we come in touch with. One is the horse business. There are horse lovers and there are horsemen. Horse lovers do love horses and so do horsemen. However, there is a great difference between the love (eros) expressed from horse lovers and the love (agape) shown from horsemen. One is self serving while the other is sacrificial service to horses and their owners.

Horse lovers will have horses, usually more horses than they have money and time to care for appropriately. Horse lovers like having horses because they like how horse ownership makes them feel. Horse lovers are often irresponsible in overseeing these noble animals' overall care. Horse lovers take little notice of what is fed to the horses. They make little to no effort in getting the horses ready for the task they want the horses to perform. And horse lovers have wrong expectations of the animal they are riding. Their horses are often asked to perform while being undernourished or over fed (too heavy). Their horses are often asked to do a certain task without the

proper schooling, training and conditioning. Their horses often perform while physically hurting as the ignorant ride them, taking no notice of the discomfort being expressed by the horses. Do not take me wrong – this is not done on purpose, but out of blindness because of lack of study, improper discipleship (horse-

manship), and poor stewardship of God's creation.

Horsemen show a sacrificial love for horses. They recognize that there is going to be some kind of accounting to God and the owners of the horses they are given stewardship over. They study long and hard and put themselves under the discipleship of horsemen

who have proved faithful. They search to find the proper feeding and conditioning program, enabling the horses to achieve the goals set before them. They spend the months needed to train and school the horses before asking them to perform any certain task. A horseman's expectation of the horses they train is that the animals respond with willing hearts. Horsemen are a blessing to horses and owners. They are the ones that make the true horse business a success.

God-fearing, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit led Christians are like horsemen. They offer sacrificial service to mankind. (1 Corinthians 12-14) They study to show themselves approved. (1 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:2) They know that there is going to be an accounting. (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:7) They make sure that the children of God are properly fed (Matthew 4:4) and prepared for works of service to God and man (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:6) This is done through sacrificial love for the Lord and mankind, thus, making the Lord's work a success.

Show Good Stewardship – Express Sacrificial Love!

A Decision for God

Decisions, decisions... our lives are full of them. Decisions are stressful. People want to help us make our decisions, but differing opinions can increase our confusion and weigh down our spirits. Why not pray about it? Include God in the decision. With Him by our side we have peace and strength as we face the challenges of our lives. Study His Word and learn of His will for you at your house of worship this week. Make your decision for God.



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Weekly Scripture Reading

Mark 1:21-45	Mark 2:1-28	Mark 3:1-19	Mark 3:20-35	Mark 4:35-5:20	Mark 5:21-43	Mark 6:1-29
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Scriptures Selected by the American Bible Society

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NORTON COUNTY MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE

Churches That Work Together

By Kirk Kasson

John 17:20-21 (NIV) *Jesus Prays for All Believers*

“My prayer is not for [the disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

A common criticism of Christianity is that we have so many “different churches”. “They can't even get along with each other,” some say, which is especially sad, considering the prayer of Jesus, “that all of them may be one.” However, as serious as the problem of church dissension is, I oftentimes think the discussion is overblown. I want you to consider how well the local churches in Norton County work together.

By my count there are 16 separate congregations representing 13 denominations in Norton county. While it is unfortunate that any division exists in the body of Christ, it has been my experience during my 14+ years as a minister in this area that we work amazingly well together.

Our churches vary in size (from some in the teens to a handful averaging in the hundreds) as well as doctrine. Some are more formal, some are less. Some have part-time pastors, some have multiple staff. Service styles range widely.

But regardless of our differences, I have seen a strong consensus that the people of Norton County need to encounter Christ on a personal level, and that the best way for this to happen is in the community of Christ, through the teaching and living out of His Word. I can't speak for all churches, or all pastors, but I believe that this sentiment is strong throughout our county.

On a similar note I have experienced a genuine concern and compassion for any in our county who are in physical or financial need. Again, time and again, I have observed that the churches in our county are eager to help others.

The Norton County Ministerial Alliance has been a conduit for many of these good works. Many churches working as an alliance can do much to help those in need and to share the fellowship of Christ. We do this through financial assistance to local residents by pooling resources and people from these churches and sending them directly to the need. All of this is done confidentially and with discretion, so that needs can be met. This is all accomplished with money provided through offerings and donations of churches and individuals.

In addition, our alliance offers the opportunity for all of the churches to worship together occasionally. Good Friday, Thanksgiving, and the National Day of Prayer are events which have brought large groups together, as well as our County Fair Gospel concerts. These gatherings inspire me to know that the church is one, that we do believe in the same Christ, and that we can do much together.

People may never agree on all things. Music, baptism, leadership and other issues may continue to keep Christians apart on Sundays; but what a blessing it must be to the Lord when we work together for the good of all and for His glory.

Kirk Kasson is current president of the Norton Ministerial Alliance

Donations to the Norton County Ministerial Alliance are tax deductible and are solely used for the reasons cited above. No ministerial alliance member receives any compensation. Donations may be sent to:

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