

Santa's Reindeer Had Shallow Values

I woke up thinking about Rudolph. It'd been quite a few days since Christmas, but there I was, lying under warm covers thinking about a reindeer.

I started singing "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" to myself (just to pass the time – I didn't want to get up) and as I sang I started to realize what an awful scene this song describes.

- Rudolf is different (only he has a glowing red nose).
- The other reindeer (the "in group") laugh at him and call him names.
- They won't let him play with them.

Name-calling. Derisive laughter. Making fun of someone. Ostracizing. Excluding. Bullying. I know, I know, it's only a silly song, but how well it reflects the world in which we live ... the world in which our children live.

Reindeer Values

Santa's reindeer had shallow values. They looked at externals, like red, shiny noses, and missed the heart. People do the same – we think more like reindeer than we do like God. The Bible makes that quite clear:

1 Samuel 16:7 LORD said to Samuel... "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

God spoke these words to Samuel as the prophet was tasked with anointing one of Jesse's sons to be the next king of Israel. Jesse paraded seven of his eight sons before Samuel, but God gave Samuel the thumbs up for none of them. So Samuel asked Jesse if there were any other sons, and Jesse (reluctantly it seems) told Samuel that one more son did remain, David the youngest, but David was out in the fields tending sheep. (Surely Samuel would understand why Jesse hadn't called in *that* son. David was just a shepherd, working a disreputable job, and clearly not fit to be king.) But Samuel didn't listen to Jesse's surface evaluation of David. Samuel listened to God – the One who knew David's heart. (See 1 Samuel 16:1-13)

A Not So Silly Song

Rudolph's silly story isn't so silly after all. It spotlights on our own hearts. David's dad was acting like Santa's reindeer. Both used surface traits to pick their favorites. They relied on externals, on the outward appearance. So, all too often, do we. Sometimes we're the target, sometimes we're the perpetrator.

**Externals blind us to the hearts of those we meet and need to love.
What a terrible loss.**

A Few Questions

Have you ever felt like a Rudolph? (Have you have ever been excluded, laughed at, or put down for being “different”?)

Alternatively, do you ever act like Santa’s other reindeer? (Do you ever sidle up to “the insiders” because it gives you a sense of belonging? A sense of worth? A sense of safety?)

Have you ever opposed bullies? What gave you the courage to do so?

How good it would be, how wise and helpful, if we, like Samuel, looked at people the way God looks at each of us. I pray that we’ll each ask God to teach us to look behind outward appearances (looks, job, achievements, possessions, status, connections) and instead become aware of people’s hearts.

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