

They're funny things, opinions

By Lee Dunn

On having opinions

We all have them, of course. What we think of as right and wrong. What we would trumpet as our cause. Some of us (usually the loudest) point fingers, assign blame, preach from the pulpit of ignorance. We sometimes simplify issues that are complex, so that we can aim our self righteous darts more easily. Others, twice burned, keep their thoughts to themselves. I wish it were not so, because the voices of quietness are quite often the ones that are measured, considered, and constant.

As I sit here drinking my cozy coffee, I am surrounded by the marvels of modern technology. The high speed internet (which I don't need but pay for anyway), the fancy phone that seems to beep every three minutes. The big three of the social media sites, especially the one where comments flow fast and sometimes furiously.

So many of us cannot disagree without being hurtful. I am taken aback as I read some of the responses to those who have expressed a belief or opinion and in no way have been hurtful themselves. Even were I to think that someone's opinion was wrong, naïve, ignorant, etc. I would try to avoid a flame war by either not responding, or by quietly stating my own views.

This, I am sure, has happened to many of us? We make a benign response to someone's comment, and then get jumped on unexpectedly by someone that does not even know us. A friend on social media had once shared a gloomy story about how we are raping the earth with pollution, chemical and radioactive wastes, endless and growing urban sprawl. They wondered how much longer our planet could support such expensive and uncontrolled growth. They saw it in how their own neighbourhood had changed within the last 30 years. Once a sleepy village, and now a suburb of the greater city spread. I commented on their story, saying 'This reminds me of an old Paul McCartney song called too many people?'. Five minutes later, someone I did not even know commented 'If you think there's too many people, why don't you just hang yourself. Then there would be one less?'

Perhaps you will say 'Well, it's just a troll. Pay no mind.' Hard to unsee something like that. Because we're all so connected now, and we can use anonymity as a shield, are we therefore more brazen, uttering forth the worst of our animal instincts? What's the motivation for this type of thing, other than to make others feel small, and thyself the righteous one?

The old saying 'If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all?' is a little unrealistic today, but, please, if you must disagree, do it constructively, not destructively. And show a little civility.

And, yes, there is still a lot of hope out there. I see so many people trying to do these very things. But, sadly, they are shot down many times and given hurtful labels. Just stop.