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The Five-Legged Steer

JULY 15TH 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

The Five-Legged Steer

Reprint Compliments of Men At The Cross By Joe White

VIDEO OF THE DAY

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

1Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 2You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 4There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. 12The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether

Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

In the school I grew up in, it seemed there was always something to which a boy could look forward. These things were discussed on the playground with varying degrees of excitement, depending on what time of the year was at hand.

To the graduating kindergartner, there was the wonderful world of Mrs. Hamby's first-grade class. It was widely known she rewarded learning with candy. Then, there was Miss Holmes in the second grade-she was young and very pretty, and the object of not a few first crushes. With the third grade came Miss Pope, and five extra minutes on the playground at every recess. Mrs. Lowe's fourth-graders got to sing in a Christmas program at the mall. Mrs. Schmidt's fifth graders had "BINGO Fridays." But the granddaddy of them all was Mr. Cottle's much-rumored field trip to see the five-legged steer, ample reason in itself for most little boys to stay in school until the sixth-grade.

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I remember how excited I felt, when at last the hallowed moment had arrived. We had just boarded the yellow school bus, and the air was abuzz with commentary. Opinions on the girls' side ranged from "gross" to "unnecessary." The guys, on the other hand, were unanimous. This was the zenith of our young lives.

"I don't want to see a stupid, old cow," said Susan Suggs. "It could have ten legs and I still

wouldn't want to see it."

"Which just proves you're dumb as dirt," replied Bobby Spoons. "Anybody knows if a cow had ten legs, it'd be in the Guinness Book of Records, and people'd pay good money to see it. Besides, it's not a cow. It's a steer."

"What's the difference?" asked Susan.

Bobby Spoons didn't know.

Jeers and applause exploded from both sides of the aisle, as the bus lurched out of the parking lot. Sixty-five miles later, we arrived at "Lester's Little Sahara-Home of Exotic Delights." The bus windows were covered with red, prairie dust, and you could already feel grains of sand between your teeth.

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As we disembarked, my buddy, Clifton Baker nudged me. "Do you think it'll be in the back or the front-or somewhere in the middle?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The leg. I mean, there's got to be extra room for it somewhere."

Steven Parham leaned into the conversation. "Who cares where the leg is! I just want to see it run. I'll bet that thing's as fast as Bob Hayes"

[images/Blog Images/show/uja7](#)

Lester, or someone pretending to be Lester, met our class at the turnstile, and off we went on the tour. First, we saw some newborn baby pigs-still wet from birth, which drew a yawn from the guys, but gagged half the girls. Then came the dried up fishpond, full of tarantulas. Susan Suggs fainted right there on the spot, and had to be taken back to the bus and fanned for the rest of the afternoon. Again, we boys were unimpressed. We had come for one reason, one rite of passage-to see the five-legged steer and, forever after, to possess the kind of knowledge that separates men from boys on playgrounds all around the globe.

But still, we had to endure the ostrich eggs, and the live rattlesnakes, and the six-thousand pound prairie dog, which turned out to be made of plaster, and was under repair, due to a leaky ceiling. Finally, Lester led us to a door, that opened into a dimly lit stall. Above the door was scrawled, "Behold the Five-Legged Steer."

"All right!" said Steven Parham, rubbing his hands together. "Now, for some action."

I wish I could tell you that what followed was the fulfillment of a dozen little boys' dreams, surpassing even Bingo Friday and our crushes on Miss Holmes. But it was all over in a matter of seconds. Having been hurried into the presence of a dismal bovine, with what looked like a pair of panty-hose full of sawdust strapped to its back, then out the back gate into the parking lot, we all stood blinking in the bright sunlight at one another.

[images/Blog Images/show/ujaa](#) "What a jip!" exclaimed Steven.

"That wasn't even a real leg," said Clifton.

I don't recall there being a single bit of eye contact between the genders on that long ride home. In the end, we enjoyed the stop at the Dairy Delite far more than any of the "delights" we had seen at Lester's place. But you can bet that none of us ever said a word about it to the fifth graders. We went right on bragging [images/Blog Images/show/ujac](#) about the five-legged steer as if it was the St. Louis Arch or the Taj Mahal. And to my knowledge, that story has not changed in forty years.

In I Corinthians 12, Paul is warning his audience to "Beware the five-legged steer!" He describes the church as "the body of Christ" with "many members." Unfortunately, some of the Christians in that church had become discontent with the kind of "member" God had designed them to be. They wanted to possess someone else's gift or talent. They wanted to be an eye, when they were meant to be an ear. The end result was, some of them were becoming about as useful as a fifth leg on a four-legged animal.

Paul said it very plainly, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?"

Don't let envy of other Christians turn you into a useless appendage. Choose this day to be the man or woman God has designed you to be. Ask Him to reveal the work He is doing around you. Then, ask how you can get involved in that work.

QUESTIONS:

1. There are ways for every Christian to be useful in the Church. Name a few.
2. When we try to be like someone we're not, problems occur. Share a time when this was

true in your life.

3. How has God designed you to be useful in His Church?

LIFELINE:

At one time or another, we have all felt like a useless fifth leg. God has entrusted special gifts in each one of us. Discuss how you will go about finding what your gifts are. Discuss how those gifts are useful to God.

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