

Article 15 The Christian and the Social Order

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Well, good morning. I hope you're all doing well today.

Jill DeWinsky and her family, by every appearance, was doing quite well. They lived on the correct side of the tracks in a suburban home, a two-story, nice suburban home in Minnesota.

She had the opportunity to engage in a one-week mission project to travel across the tracks with her church to do a vacation Bible school in a mobile home community that was near her home and was near her church.

When she did, she discovered that many of the people that lived in that community were right at or right below the poverty line, and many of them had some severe struggles. The head of the household often did not speak English and was having trouble being able to do the normal commerce in the area, and the jobs were limited because of that.

So, she had volunteered for a week, and she looked at the need, and she decided it was bigger than one week. And so, she used her leadership skills and her organizational skills to rally together some volunteers to set up programs to be able to help the folks that lived in this mobile home community.

They did after-school homework with the kids so that they would do better in school. English as a second language classes for the parents, food distribution, and then legal assistance for immigration issues. And it grew to where she was also doing summer camps for the children.

These ministries aimed not only to help these people do well, to live better, but it was in response to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

You see, Southern Baptists don't see social ministries as the end. We see them as a means of doing our work, our work of carrying out the Great Commission.

Article 15 of the Baptist Faith and Message does not have a corresponding article in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith or the abstract of principles as many, if not most, of the other articles in the Baptist Faith and Message do.

It first appeared in 1925 in our original document, and as it did, it stood in stark contrast with Walter Aschenberger's views.

Social work does not replace the church's mission. Our mission is the Great Commission, and we must keep our eye on that. However, it does not replace it, but it can facilitate it. It can become a platform for us to be able to carry out the mission.

Now, the 1963 revision clarified that very point. It said, means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when it is rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus.

And it further defined this article with a broader scope of cooperation. It said, in order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of goodwill and in any good cause.

Later, in response to the cultural changes that was happening in society since the 1963 revision and the very unfortunate 1973 wrongheaded Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, the 2000 revision addressed several issues under this umbrella article.

It says, in all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography, it said, we should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

Well, Dewinsky thought at first, she was just given a week to be able to do the kind of work that Southern Baptist does. And then it grew to something bigger to where she was driving her nice car from the suburbs over into the trailer home community regularly on a regular basis. And on one of those drives, she became convinced that where she lived was making her less effective in her work.

So the Dewinsky family sold their two-story suburban home and purchased a mobile home to live among the people in the mobile home park, to be one of them.

Now, despite a recent problem with frozen pipes and the loss of a garage, an attic, and a basement, she says that she's glad that she made that move.

Jill said, "We're just building a better future here and we're being obedient to what God called us to do."

Now, some would say the Dewinskys are not doing as well as they were before. But James, the half-brother of Jesus, would disagree.

Here's what he wrote. *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You are doing well.*

As I said in the beginning, I hope you are doing well.