

Parable of the Restaurants

by David Jackson

Charlie thought, “I am hungry; I want to eat Chinese.” He went into the Oriental Palace and sat down. The waitress asked, “Would you like to see a menu, or do you want to eat from the buffet?”

Charlie responded, “I don’t need a menu. Bring me steak and potatoes.”

“We have a nice pepper steak, and you can have white or stir-fried rice with it,” the waitress countered.

“I don’t want nothing but steak and potatoes!” he said.

Smiling sweetly, the waitress pointed out the window and said, “Ryan’s Steak House is across the street.”

The next day Charlie thought, “I want Mexican food.” At Delgado’s he asked Juan for steak and potatoes. Juan pointed out that they had excellent steak fajitas with beans and rice. Charlie said, “I want to cut up my own steak, and I want potatoes with it!” Juan spoke kindly that if those were his desires, he should go to Outback or Logan’s Road House—each restaurant has at least six varieties of steak and baked white or sweet potatoes.

A few days later Charlie went into Fazoli’s. Without looking at the menu board, he walked up and told the person at the ordering counter, “Give me one of them double-decker burgers and an extra large order of fries.” The young man at the counter said, “Sir, we only serve Italian food here. Wendy’s and McDonald’s are on the corners across the street and one block down.”

Then the next day, Charlie wrote a letter to the city planning commission with the suggestion that the county approve no further applications for restaurants unless they included on their menu steak and potatoes, in case he chose to frequent those restaurants.

The next Sunday Charlie got up to go to church. He decided that he wanted to visit one of the new churches that offered a contemporary worship style. When he got there at 11:00 a.m., the place was crowded. He discovered that their worship service began at 10:22 a.m., and they were halfway through the praise and worship time. He looked under the chair for a hymnal but found that the words they were singing were projected on a screen. The guitars, violin, brass and drums jarred Charlie's musical sensitivity that was tuned into organ and piano. He knew none of the tunes or lyrics of the songs. As he fumed, four persons appeared at the front and got into an argument over some family issue—Charlie did not know them but recognized the argument. It was similar to the one he and his sons had experienced on a too frequent basis. Next, a fellow without a coat and tie came out, sat on a stool, and talked about dealing with conflict in the family. He presented a strong message but only read a Bible passage at the end—and it too was projected on the screen in some modern language.

Then the next day, Charlie wrote a letter to the local Baptist association with the suggestion that they approve no further church start proposals unless they included hymns, hymnals, and his preference in preaching style and Bible translation, in case he chose to visit those churches.