

Impacting The Church!

“... so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Romans 12:5 NAS

In the last three issues of “In Focus” I have laid the problems of the world at the doorstep of The Church, a major rebellion within has her reeling; I have accused her of being out of focus, looking at things upside-down; and I have asked the question, “Are you the rebel causing the problems?” Today we get to turn a very important corner from describing the illness to beginning to define the solution.

Beginning

I believe the solution to the problems of the world rests on the shoulders of one person, **YOU!** “What?!” “How can you say that?!” “How in the world can you place the entire responsibility of the whole world on my shoulders?!” “Who are you to place such a burden on me?” “How am I suppose to save the world?”

As I have said before, the primary problem with The Church is that Her thinking is upside down. As Christians we have our eyes focused on “saving the world”! Quite honestly, that has already been done. Some are less concerned about the world than they are about The Church. The Church, however, is not to be our focus. What, then, should be our focus?

Jesus stood in the midst of the Sadducees and Pharisees knowing they desired to trip Him up, to find something by which they could discredit Him. But from their question and answer sessions we get the answer to the question, “Where do we start in solving the problems of the world?” Picture in your mind, if you would, Jesus has already effectively shut down the Sadducees. Now its up to the Pharisees to take their best shot. “And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’” Now, this passage of Scripture is not new to us, is it? In the common vernacular we would say, “What does it take to be a great Christian?” We know how He answered, don’t we? “And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.” Matthew 22:35-38 NAS Today, right now, Jesus is giving us the same answer. Do you want to impact the world for Christ? Do you want to transform the world? Do you have a burden for the Bride of Christ, The Church? Do you desire for her to be purified and cleansed? Do you long to have a major role in bringing Christ to the world through His Church? Then “... love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” “Oh, but I do and the world isn’t changing!” That is impossible. As you change so too does the world because you are a part of the world. “Every private decision contributes to the moral and cultural climate in which we live, rippling out in ever widening circles – first in our personal and family lives, and then in the broader society”¹ “Transformed people transform cultures.”²

Changing Our Focus

Let’s get real practical here. If you have been married for any length of time at all (1 week) you have probably found there are times of conflict between you and your spouse. Of the parties involved in the conflict, the only one you can effectively change is yourself. You can’t change your spouse. The sooner you learn that the better the relationship will be between you and your mate. The same principle applies in every relationship you have. In every relationship the only one you can change is yourself. You can beg, plead, reason, bribe and threaten but you can’t change another soul on the face of this earth. Oh, you can redirect behavior, but you can’t change anyone but yourself.

How, then, do we change an entire world? By changing that over which we have influence and leaving the rest to God.

God’s Plan

You see, God has a plan for the world and you are an integral part of that plan. However, it is so complicated, and you are so limited in your capacity to understand, that God has only given you what you need to know and requires you to be faithful only to that.

Ephesians 4:11-16 is the best summation I have found in the Scriptures for God’s plan and my part in it. In this Scripture He tells us that He places people where He wants, with the giftedness they need, for the “building up of the Body of Christ; to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.” NAS Isn’t that what we want? Don’t we desire, with every breath, to be built up in the Body of Christ, to a mature man, in the fullness of Christ? Lest we get confused with the process God simplified it for us in the 15th and 16th verses. “... we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” NAS

From this scripture we find three things will happen in a life of relationship with Christ. We will grow up, be fit together, do that for which we have been made. Before we go there, however, we must firmly set our focus: Who causes the growth? Read the scripture again. I do not cause, the church does not cause but Christ, The Head, causes the growth.

Grow Up

As one who has achieved the age of maturity and has been out on their own for sometime perhaps you take offense at someone who tells you to “Grow up!”. However, this passage of scripture points out a vitally relevant aspect of the Christian life: It is a process and not an event.

Every mature Christian I have met understands the truth of Philippians 1:6 “... He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” NAS When we accept Christ as our personal Savior and Lord He begins a process of transformation in us which is only completed as we cross the threshold from this life to eternity. Through His Spirit He is renewing our mind and our heart to be His and serve His purpose (Romans 12:2).

So, the process of “growing up” is taking place each moment of every day. It is His intentional work in you as He makes this tremendous transformation.

Fitted and Held Together

Within the context of this verse, again for focus, who is responsible for the fitting and holding? Does God place it on the individual? Does He say you must hold on to others, assuring you make a proper fit for the functioning of The Body? No! Does He place the responsibility on church leaders or on the church as a whole? Again, No! The description is that of a natural process. As we mature in Christ, as we grow up, The Body of Christ will be formed because that is God’s plan, the natural product of His design. That growth will be a natural result of our relationship with Him. It is not something we do. It is not something we plan and execute. Like the growth of a child in its mothers womb, God provides the miracle of development. Mom is the vessel in which the child is developed.

Proper Working Part

Perhaps the most precious thing we have missed as modern Christians is the understanding that we are uniquely made for the glory of God. This Scripture in Ephesians is only one of the places where this is so clearly stated. Here, God tells us that the functioning of The Body is dependant on “...the proper working of each individual part...” Not only are you the only one you CAN change, you are the only one you are SUPPOSE to change! You see, God has made you to function in a way that only you can function. He has called, gifted and enabled you to accomplish that **individual** part for which you were made. No one else fits. Your disobedience to God harms and hampers The Body of Christ from being all God has called Her to be. BUT, your obedience is His way of changing the world!

Simple Solution

Perhaps the biggest change which must take place to impact the world for Christ is for each one of us to recognize that the solution to the problems are simple, not complex. The solution is as simple as my being the proper working individual part for which God has made me. Think of it this way, if every molecule in your body were perfect what would be the condition of your health? You would be “perfectly” healthy. It’s that simple!

Having said that, can we let go of all the other “stuff” which has come with modern religion? Can we leave the complexity to Him? Can we live in a relationship with Him which is so intimate as to allow Him to change those around us in His timing, in His way as only He can? Can we yield ourselves to Him so completely that we allow Him to correct our focus? Can we focus all our energies on being who He has called us to be and keep from trying to figure out the complexities of building The Body? Can we yield ourselves to His simple plan?

Members One of Another

It is quite obvious, through God’s Word, that He has not designed us to be alone.

- 1) He established the family
- 2) He established community
- 3) He established work
- 4) He established congregations
- 5) He has made us social beings

In fact He said, “...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Even though God has given you an individual part, you are incomplete without the other members of the body for there is only one Body of Christ. Thus, we are interdependent on each other. You cannot reach the potential God has for you unless you are properly related to the other members of The Body.

Test Time!

Its time we took stock. That The Church is in desperate straights is not at issue. She clearly is not the “light to the world” God intends Her to be. The question looming over us is, “Will we take God at His Word, allowing Him to build His Body one life at a time, ignoring, if we must, what we see as the greater issues of the day?” Can we be content to be the proper working individual part for which He made us without needing to figure out how He is using us in the complex frame-work of His Church? Can we allow Him to impact The Church through our simple obedience? Can we allow Him to trans-form our culture by transforming us?

Can we let go and let God be God?

Next Issue: **God Ordained Relationships**
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¹Colson/Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?*, Tyndale, page 294

² Ibid, page 295