

May 25, 2015

It is a commonly understood principle in life that the division between those who are actively achieving and those who are passive is proportionally divided into eighty percent passive and only twenty percent active. This principle is reflected in all walks of life and regrettably also in the church; but should the world's norm apply to the Body of Christ?

Using Paul's Biblical description of the human body as a representation of Christ's Church or "Called out ones" (Ecclesia), then is the eighty twenty pattern Biblical or worldly? If we look at our own bodies as an example then our existence would be very limited if only twenty percent was functioning (though on a more humorous note, we probably feel that way sometimes in our lives)!

Paul states, "Now here is what I am trying to say: ALL of you together are the one body of Christ and EACH ONE of you is a separate and NECESSARY part of it."

Firstly, if we fail to play our part then the whole body will be dysfunctional. If only twenty percent are "playing their part" we have a totally malfunctioning church... welcome to the church as we see it today. One of the reasons for the dysfunction is the belief that there is a two level class structure; a concept of an elite "Clergy" ("called to the ministry") and the rest as "Laity" (meaning "the unlearned ones"). The reality is that my liver and kidneys are as "called" to serve my body with exactly the same degree of commitment as my head; the ONLY difference is one of "ROLE." Paul clearly explained this in his letter to the "Church" in Corinth, and not just to the "Clergy" but also to the "laity." We have only one head and that is Jesus. All of us are parts of His body.

But some will say, "everything has a leader;" maybe so but leadership is a role to which all of us are called in exactly the same way my liver and kidneys are to my body; it does not give my head the right to consider my liver and kidneys less important. Every member in my body is subject to the other so that I can exist as a healthy person. In the church setting we are related to each other through the Holy Spirit. We are subject to Him and each other, irrespective of our roles. Again, Paul states; "submit yourselves to each other." It is out of mutual submission and honouring each part of the body that we function as God designed. If the liver and kidneys fail, the waste products of the body will poison us. We are told to "give honour to whom honour is due," and not to "lord it over each other." If I choose to dishonour my liver and kidneys by not caring for my bodily functions then within a few days I will die; welcome to the church of today! We are living on "life support."

The separation of the church into two classes has a second deadly consequence; as "laity" we are not allowed to function in our particular calling and as the common proverb states, "Use it or you will lose it." We do just that, if we are not allowed to engage in our calling. We lose our vision, our purpose and gradually we die. This creates a mindset that absolves us of our real calling and instead we become observers, attendees at church, and eventually parasites living off the work of the twenty percent.

There is a third challenge; if we are rejected from the opportunity of expressing or developing our calling and decide instead to "do it my way" (to quote Frank Sinatra) then heed the warning of Absalom's life and follow the pattern of the relationship between David and King Saul. When one cell decides that it is the centre of the body and requires the body to serve itself that is called cancer. Both the host and the cancer die at the same time.

For the church to fulfil its mandate from Jesus "to make disciples of all nations" we need to make sure we are not reproducing the "cancers" of our own life. Instead we need to replicate the character of our Head, who was not only submitted to the Father but only did and said everything He saw and heard from the Father.

“ALL OF YOU TOGETHER ARE THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST;” what we are endeavouring to achieve within this local church is just that. If you are prepared to submit to this vision then we welcome you to take part in changing the eighty twenty model to the one hundred percent BODY OF CHRIST pattern as described in Scripture.

Shalom.

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