

November 20, 2014

We all approach life from our own perspective. Our view of it and its situations are read and influenced through our inherited DNA, family upbringing, local and national culture, religious background (if we have one) and even the climate. This creates in us an expectation mindset that can be called “my agenda”, or living my life according to my personal priorities. This might serve our purposes living in isolation but in the community experience we’re faced with the challenge of blending our agenda with that of others.

Within the denominations of Christianity there are structures and frameworks that either limit our personal agendas completely or allow degrees of freedom of expression of it. God is a relational God and He designed us for community, first with Himself then with others; that’s why participating in a community is an important opportunity for us to bond with one another so we can experience the belonging that we all need. The Bible illustrates this involvement as “The body of Christ” with each member being important and valuable.

The challenge is, how do we structure our relationships in order to allow each member to function without anyone controlling and dominating? Jesus tells us that HE IS THE HEAD and we are the members and He gave us the Holy Spirit to bond us together in love. The goal is UNITY IN DIVERSITY. Working it out is the process of learning to submit our personal agendas to God’s agenda in conjunction with the rest of “the body”. We can only become a functioning part of Christ’s body if we die to our own agendas, and the paradox of the reality is that it’s only in dying that we find ourselves fully alive and fulfilled. I don’t lose myself, I find myself in death of self (Matthew 16:24-25).

Unless we experience and establish this attitude in our hearts and minds, our personal agendas will cause friction and discord resulting in a dysfunctional church. Our lives should become expressions of Jesus as our head through the leading of the Holy Spirit. All individual ambitions must be subject to Jesus as the head.

The working out of these principles is found in Paul’s instructions “in honour preferring one another submitting to one another..... being patient with each other in love”. Unless we follow this attitude, our personal agendas will be insensitive to the other parts of the Body of Christ and control, manipulation and domination will rule. It becomes a power-struggle and we repeat Cain’s behaviour and figuratively “murder” our brother. Cain’s violent act was the birth of all war such that all recorded history is marred by blood.

Jesus gave us His peace but personal and corporate peace is only achieved by dying to our personal agendas, submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and becoming expressions of His life and teaching. This means that in both the structure and interaction of the members of the Body of Christ self has to die.

Jesus said that He came to serve, not to be served and that is the model for our relationship with each other, irrespective of our role or office in the church. He stated that leadership would be identified

by a servant's heart. Paul described himself as "bond slave", a slave by choice to Jesus and to his Body, the church. My agenda has to become Christ's agenda...

Shalom.

Ron Harris

