



Pastor's Page

A World of Difference.

This time last week Tony Blair was our Prime Minister now it's Gordon Brown. Yesterday people were smoking in Pubs and clubs up and down the land, today it is illegal. It used be illegal to practice homosexuality yesterday thousands of people marched through the streets of central London for the annual Gay Pride festival. We used to have baking hot weather in June this year it has been the wettest month since records began. But amidst all this unprecedented change, it's good to know that some things remain the same – No Brits have made it into the second week of Wimbledon! (Hard luck Tim!)

Change excites some people but scares others. As Christians I believe there is one kind of change that we are called to resist and another kind of change that we are called to initiate. The one that we are to resist is the pressure to change from our Christian viewpoint and adopt the world's standards in order to "fit in". Whilst Paul said "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22) he was not advocating compromise on Christian behaviour. His motive was the salvation of people and his method was to be sensitive and flexible where necessary not putting stumbling blocks in people's way. He knew the danger of compromising with the world and so instructed the Christians in Rome not to; "Conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing will". (Romans 12:2) JB Philips translated the verse this way; "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold" So this is the change we must resist, the temptation to conform to this world's pattern. The problem is that we can so easily get comfortable with the world's ways. The other morning I'd been at church for about an hour when someone asked if they could put some lights on. "Oh sure" I said "I hadn't realised how dark it had become" Our eyes do soon get used to the dark at the physical level and the same can be true at the spiritual level. However, as someone once said, "we've not been called to curse the dark but to light a candle"

The change that we are called to initiate as Christians is the transformation that Christ brings to people's lives. Jesus called us to be *salt and light* in the world. And as he "renews our minds" we must transform our neighbourhoods and communities by living Christ-like lives. Bill Hybels, the senior pastor at Willow Creek Church in America says; "Every church is called in Scripture to affect its community. That is the *salt and light* concept referred to in Matthew 5. It is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, provide resources for the poor, love our neighbour, relieve oppression, change inequitable structures and be a conscience to the community concept" That may sound a little daunting and we need to see that we cannot do it all, but we can play our part. We may not be able to change the whole world but we can change the whole world for one person by introducing them to Jesus.

I listened to a young Muslim man on the radio yesterday speak about Islamic terrorists carrying on their murderous ways unless the west changes its foreign policy. A change in foreign policy is not the answer, a change in men's hearts is and only Jesus Christ can bring about that change. This is the message that our changing world needs to hear.

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