



Pastor's Page

A World of Difference.

Friday was a busy day but I decided that in between other commitments I could fit in a visit to the barbers (that's "hairdressers" for the younger readers!) As I walked in I was amazed to see the place empty. Still, the young lady 'on duty' quickly sprung into action and led me to a comfy chair. Assembling the tools of her trade she asked me how I wanted it cutting. Before I could answer Rob (my usual hairdresser said) give him a number 4. "What's that?" I asked nervously wondering if I'd need a general anesthetic for it! "Oh just trust us, it'll suit you" he replied. I tried to talk them out of it but I lost the argument! I had visions that I'd come out looking like 'the last of the Mohicans!' However, when the dastardly deed had been done to my relief it didn't look any different to my usual haircut (very trendy!!) My fears were probably due to the fact that I don't really like change.

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". (Romans 12:2) JB Philips translated that 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. Recently 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 both the physical and 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 must confess I still find the thought of doing this quite nerve-racking, but like the haircut experience, once I trust the one in charge and stop worrying about how I'm going to look my fears subside. (What is a 'number 4' anyway?!!)

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