

Which will come first in the 21st Century . . . BELONGING OR BELIEVING?

Part 2 of an article by Gil Cann (Part 1 can be read in April edition of the ECHO)

As you will notice on many church notice boards it is common for churches to promote themselves as 'a church for families'. By all means let us be supportive of marriage, good parenting, and stable family life. But to pursue that goal for your church is to automatically exclude nearly half the unchurched population! Forty eight per cent of unchurched people don't live in what Christians think of as families i.e., the original husband and wife, living together with their own natural offspring. They live in a bewildering array of broken, single-parent, adopted, adapted, blended, divided, second or third time round, grand-parent led and even same-sex parent families.

In the twenty-first century, (ie tomorrow!) we must see our churches not as 'churches for families' but as extended families for people of all kinds. Many of these people have no experience of healthy-family life. Even those whose marriages, first or otherwise, are still together, are in desperate need of 'extended family.'

The nuclear-family is very fragile. It is a pathetic substitute for true family, yet throughout the western world it is idealised by most people including millions of Christians. Even the vast amount of Christian literature on marriage and family unquestioningly accepts the 'norm' of the small nuclear family. But its smallness, independence, desire for privacy and 'fortress mentality' make it incredibly vulnerable, as the statistics tragically show.

An old African proverb declares 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'.

Likewise it takes a whole church, or at least part thereof, to make a marriage work, to enable good parenting, to grow in our relationship with God and to become more authentic followers of Christ. Modern western individualism has wrought havoc in evangelical churches, justifying private faith, consumerism, independence, and resistance to sharing resources, being disciplined and receiving correction and advice.

God never intended us to 'make it on our own' at any level, or in any area of even our private lives. We all need to be part of an 'extended family'. Churches, by their very nature, are potentially such families, desperately needed by Christians and non-Christians alike properly understood churches are incredibly well - placed to meet a large and rapidly growing need in our communities - the need to 'belong'.

- Gil Cann <gilcann@start.com.au> (Used with permission of Gil Cann)

WHO ARE YOU WITH?

Russ Blowers is a pastor and an active member of the Indianapolis Rotary Club. Each week at club meetings a different member gives a brief summary of his job. This is what Russ said:

"I'm with a global enterprise. We have branches all over the world, and representatives in nearly every parliament and boardroom on earth. We run hospitals, feeding stations, crisis pregnancy centres, publishing houses, and nursing homes.

"We care for our clients from birth to death. We're into life insurance and fire insurance. We perform heart transplants. Our original Organiser owns all the real estate on earth plus an assortment of galaxies and constellations. He knows everything and lives everywhere.

"Our product is free for the asking. Our CEO was born in a hick town, worked as a carpenter, didn't own a home, was misunderstood by his family, hated by his enemies, walked on water, was condemned to death without a trial, and rose from the dead - I talk with him every day."

DEVOTION:

IT IS THE LORD YOU ARE SERVING

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." - Colossians 3:23-24

When the famed Bible teacher Harry Ironside was a boy he worked for a Christian cobbler named Dan Mackay. Harry's task was to take a piece of cowhide that was soaked in water and to pound it with a hammer until it was hard and dry. Then he found out that other cobblers took a short cut and would attach the leather to the shoes before they were dry. "They come back all the quicker this way, my boy!" one cobbler said.

Harry brought up the idea of Mr. Mackay. Mr. Mackay replied: "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Harry, I do not cobble shoes just for the four bits and six bits (50c or 75c) that I get from my customers. I am doing this for the glory of God. I expect to see every shoe I have ever repaired in a big pile at the judgment seat of Christ, and I do not want the Lord to say to me in that day, 'Dan, this was a poor job. You did not do your best here.' I want Him to be able to say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

No matter who your employer is, Christ should be the one you are working for and serving. Who do you work for? Today in prayer, thank Christ for your job and do it unto Him with all of your heart.

"Keep us Lord so awake in the duties of our callings that we may sleep in peace and awake in glory." - John Donne

God's Word: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." - Colossians 3:17

DEVOTIONS IN COLOSSIANS

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MAY DIARY FOR ROSS

Fri	4	Wardens, Parish Council and Ministry Leaders Meeting
Sun	5	Consultancy at St Aidan's
Mon	7	Post Ordination Training
Tue	14	Commissioning of new Presbyterian Moderator at St Andrew's
Wed	15	Diocesan Ministry Council (Hobart)
Thur	16-18	Synod

Wed 22 Meeting in Hobart with Bishop to discuss the next phase of
Conversations with the Launceston Clergy and Wardens
Thurs 23 Mission Support Officers - Hobart