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Inspired living

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Transparency

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

Home-school mum *Michelle J Dyett-Welcome* writes from the US, and encourages considering a deeper form of relating to one another . . .

[Christ laid everything down for us.

What are you willing to lay down for him?]

"Did you hear what the Pastor said today Roger?" Sarah said as she turned to face her husband at the dining table. "He wants the members to be transparent, open and genuine with one another. He sounds just like my therapist Dr Ehrenberg. He can't be serious. Does he really know the people in the church? Sandra the liar. Pam the former prostitute. Jeff the adulterer. Mark the womaniser. Eddie: Mr Rich and stuck up. Jennifer the 'I have to have what you have' sister."

Placing his fork down gently by his plate, Roger clasped his hands. "I heard Pastor and I agree with him. It's about time he called people into account. Christ did. Pastor put the responsibility where it belongs, on us to work out our salvation under the bright light of Christ." Breathing in, deeply he continued, "Sarah you left one name from your list."

"Who is that?"

Sheepishly Roger said, "Yours. Have you noticed that as soon as someone tells you something about someone, you have to find someone to tell it to? It seems to me that is gossiping." (Prv 11:13)

Sarah's nostrils flared. "And you Roger. What are you?"

"I'm a sinner with millions of faults and I'm not ashamed to let people know it." (Rom 3:23)

Some questions to ponder

Does this sound familiar to you? Can you see yourself in Sarah, Roger, or the Pastor? Do you struggle with being transparent? Are you wearing a mask? Playing a role? Living a lie? Or are you one who tries to encourage openness, genuine communication, and honesty. Unfortunately many Christians are pretending to be who they are not. They try to live up to an image and lose themselves in the process. Christianity is about genuine relationship, relationship with God and with each other.

I could rattle off statistics to hammer home the point that the lack of transparency is negatively impacting the church. I could quote from the Bible about how the lack of transparency and genuineness led the Jews of Christ's day to value the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law (Matt 12:1-6). Or I can simply ask you to reflect on your relationships with others in the church. Are your interactions warm, honest, and truthful? Do you feel safe? Can others be vulnerable around you? Are you genuine? Are you playing a 'role'? (Eph 6:9; 1Jn 3:18-19)

Being transparent

Every Christian at some point in their journey must ask themselves these questions. I did. The questions shouldn't stop there but should pursue the underlying reasons for the lack of genuineness and what one does on an individual and corporate level to address and correct it.

What does it take to be transparent—one might say courage, or an 'I don't care what people think' attitude. It takes more. It takes willingness, time, determination, perseverance, and focus to develop transparent relationships. One must be willing to submit to God, to share your valley and mountain top experiences, to testify about what God has done for you, through you and what he is working on in you.

By truthfully and tactfully sharing, we mentor to others. As we listen, we are mentored to. True mentoring has a reciprocal effect. Paul used a similar strategy to groom Timothy and co-labour with Barnabas. Many therapists, teachers, and parents use a modelling approach to teach acceptable behaviour. Eli taught Samuel through modelling. Christ trained the disciples through modelling. These great men of the Bible built relationships through the sharing of life experiences (Mk 3:11-19).

Relationships that last are built over time. The deepest friendships I have are those I forged when I was young. They've crystallised over years of testing and pressure. They are my diamonds. Deep relationships don't need to be limited to elementary school pals, high school friends, or college buddies. These relationships can be groomed and nurtured in the church. How?

- By investing the time to get to know the members
- Being willing to invest yourself in the relationship
- Having the courage to be vulnerable
- Being determined and persistent

Is there a chance you can be hurt? Yes. Does it mean you will be hurt? No. Christ laid everything down for us. What are you willing to lay down for him? (Rom 12:1-2)

Your focus

In life many things challenge our resolve. They test our determination. Paul admonishes us to keep our eyes fixed on the prize (Phil 3:12-14). Don't get side tracked. Members of the church body can say things that will hurt our feelings. They may even do things that undermine our efforts. What we do and how we live is for Christ, not man. Remain focused on Jesus.

It is said it takes 21 days to break a habit or to create a new one. I am sure for some this is true while for others it may not be. Regardless of whether this works for you or not, it takes persistence and determination to change life long habits. Maybe this is what Paul had in mind when he spoke of enduring to the end. Persevere and make up your mind that no matter what, you will be genuine, warm, truthful, honest, and transparent. If, like the alcoholic, you take two steps forward and one backward, rejoice in the fact you are still moving toward the mark.

Paul put it best; all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). No matter what masks are worn, what role is played, what impression is given, we all have shortcomings. Each of us has areas needing change. We can cover them up and try to hide them from people. Or we can expose them to the light of God. We can encourage and mentor as we forge new and transparent relationships.

Are you willing to take the challenge? Will you be transparent in your relationships. CW

Further Reading
Hebrews 13:1-3 | Romans 12:10