

THE CHURCH IN REFORMATION

by Robert Ricciardelli - Vision to Advance

In case there are some who still have not seen it, there is a shift going on in our Father's house, inside and outside of the four walls. Most of us realize there is only one church and one body of believers of our Lord. There are many diverse personalities, all wonderfully made in all different sizes, shapes, colours, cultures, and rule books of life. I want to talk about two distinctive segments of the Church of our Lord today.

Nuclear Church

The term "nuclear" literally means a cluster or nucleus. Many of us have been raised by a cluster or nucleus of a specific denomination. For the most part, the good, bad, and ugly denominational structures have brought many of us to where we are today. We all have been saddened by the liberal shift of some of these structures, as well as the shift of making the gospel of Jesus Christ palatable and un-offensive for all. In some cases, repentance is optional and a profession of Christ, without the true Lordship of Christ, supposedly brings one into the kingdom.

We also have many churches that have been birthed as non-denominational because of some of the perceived flaws in the systems of their day or the shifts of today. It should not be looked on as a negative thing, as all of the denominations themselves were birthed out of a previous system or older wine skin. Martin Luther had at least 95 reasons why he felt he could no longer abide with the Roman Catholic Church of his day. My Catholic friends of today actually are thankful. Some of the positive changes during the past few hundred years in the Catholic Church were the result of a new wine skin of belief and visionary leaders that saw things a little bit differently in their interpretation of God's word.

Extended Or Marketplace Church

This is the body of Christ that operates outside of the four walls of the Nuclear Church, not separate in any way but in application. The Marketplace Church is distinctive but also supportive of the Nuclear Church. The Nuclear Church, for the most part, gathers one day a week, and the Marketplace church is in operation 6 days a week. They are still one church, but they are to a degree, two distinct cultures. They operate out of two different sets of cultural rule books. Before you cast any heretical stones, let me explain.

There are many things that we perceive that others may do or think of as wrong, simply because it is different from the way we may do it or the way we think. I have some Chinese friends that do things differently than I do. When they come over, they always take their shoes off because that is part of their culture. When they are conducting a business transaction, there always is an exchange of gifts. In my business world here in the USA, it would be looked on many times as bribery, perks, or a lack of integrity to try and win in business. The reality is, either way of thinking is neither right nor wrong.

The same thing goes with the Nuclear Church and the Marketplace Church. Both operate for the glory of Christ and His kingdom, but they do not necessarily function in the same way of bringing salt and light to the world. The Marketplace Church is here to stay, although we are continuing to learn the rules of engagement in the marketplace. We have apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists, intercessors, and others serving in the Nuclear Church.

Many of these and others are being raised up and released to function in the marketplace or Marketplace Church. Many have been out there over the years but have been looked upon as a para-church, or second tier ministry, rather than equally viable Kingdom ministries.

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." --Ephesians 4:11-13

The New Wineskin Attitude

The bottom line is this: 100% of the body of Christ is in ministry. Every saint must continue to seek the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, regardless of where the Lord places you in society. The word ministry also can be exchanged with the word service or servant. So we are to be servants, as we provide service to our families, employers, local churches, governments, etc. This is the new wineskin attitude and language we must be communicating. The big issue is that much of the Nuclear Church leadership and counsels are stuck in the mindsets of the systems that have raised them, supported them, and formed them.

It is hard for them to see or to understand how to support and partner with the Marketplace Church. I see the Marketplace Church as a bridge as well--to link up the various denominational cultures as the Holy Spirit leads, to break through the religious mindsets. Keep in mind as I share this that the religious mindsets are across the board in denominationalism, non-denominationalism, the Nuclear Church, and the Marketplace church. The denominational, democratic Church of today is more difficult to turn simply because of the many layers of tradition and governing entities. In all cases, only those that are led by the Holy Spirit of the Lord will lead the charge towards breakthrough in these areas.

Many Nuclear Church leaders still ask of those in the marketplace, "Are you considering to go into the ministry?" Of course the answer is, "We are already in ministry." Though, all are called to serve the cause of Christ, God calls certain persons to serve the Church as pastors and other ministers. It is still an old wine skin thought and language to consider only the pastoral staff as having viable ministries.

Ed Silvano identifies four lethal misbeliefs that minimize the impact of believers in the workplace:1. There is a God-ordained division between clergy and laity.
2. The Church is called to operate primarily inside a building, often referred to as the temple.
3. People involved in business cannot be as spiritual as those serving traditional Church ministry.
4. The primary role of Marketplace Christians is to make money to support the vision of those "in the ministry."

We Need to Understand the Kingdom of God!

This is where we affirm that the Kingdom of God is not confined to the four walls of the local church. Where is the kingdom of God? Jesus said in Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you." With that in mind, the Kingdom of God is not a kingdom of this world and has no territorial boundaries. The Kingdom of God is present wherever individual men and women have agreed that Jesus Christ is their Lord.

God's people are His people seven days a week in many different functions and jurisdictions. This wonderful and engaging seven days a week, 24 hours a day, church--with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ--can transform lives, families, communities, and nations. We can bring the Kingdom of God, His presence, into every workplace, home, and church. We must continue to illuminate His love and grace to the world--in every jurisdiction of society, in Jesus name, amen!