

Living as Foreigners

- * English poet, John Donne, in his 1624 writing, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and Seuerall Steps in My Sickness*, said this:

“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

- * It is said that Donne was expressing the idea that human beings do badly when isolated from others. Rather, we need a community in order to thrive! We need each other!

- * Not only is this concept very poetic; but it is a spiritual principle of life!

1 Peter 2:5-11 (NIV)

5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.

- * God’s design is for us to be “built together” as a sanctuary for Him!

I. For the Christian, we are called to be A PART, BUT YET BE SEPARATE!

John 17:14-17 (NLT)

14 I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to this world any more than I do. 17 Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.

- A. We have often heard the phrase “in the world, but not of it!”
1. “Of” is a strange little expression!
 2. There is no question that we are to live our Christian faith in the midst of the world!
 3. This is part of our testimony, influence and even evangelism!
 4. It is as if we are “living our new lives...into the world!”
 5. Notice that Jesus said, “I send them into the world!”
 6. You can “only be sent to somewhere you are NOT!”
 7. So it is clear, we ARE NOT of the world!

B. The little word “of” is the “biggest little word” Jesus could use!

1. My standard of life is not “of” the world!
2. I do not measure my worth by the standards “of” the world!
3. My morality is not like that “of” the world!
4. The behavior I have toward others is not the same as those “of” the world!

C. One person put it this way:

“A boat is designed to float in water, to be in the water and surrounded by water on all sides! But, there should not be any water in the boat! Our goal as followers of Christ is to actively engage our culture with the Gospel without allowing cultures morals, values, attitudes and behaviors to infiltrate our lives. Unfortunately, many sincere Christians struggle to get this right!”

II. Throughout the Scripture, The Lord and others, encourage us along these lines!

John 15:19 (NIV)

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

1 John 2:15 (NIV)

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

2 Do not conform 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 and perfect will.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (TPT)

9 I wrote you in my previous letter asking you not to associate with those who practice sexual immorality. 10 Yet in no way was I referring to avoiding contact with unbelievers who are immoral, or greedy, or swindlers, or those who worship other gods—for that would mean you'd have to isolate yourself from the world entirely! 11 But now I'm writing to you so that you would exclude from your fellowship anyone who calls himself a fellow believer and practices sexual immorality, or is consumed with greed, or is an idolater, or is verbally abusive or a drunkard or a swindler. Don't mingle with them or even have a meal with someone like that. 12–13 What right do I have to pronounce judgment on unbelievers? That's God's responsibility. But those who are inside the church family are our responsibility to discern and judge. So it's your duty to remove that wicked one from among you.

A. I know that I'm NOT going to get "high marks" for this, but...

1. It is high time for us to expect a righteous standard from fellow believers!
2. It is high time for us to "hold each other accountable" to being like Jesus!
3. It's time for the Church of Jesus Christ to live in community and be a part of each other's lives to the point we can hold each other accountable for our behavior!
4. Yes! We are responsible for each other's behavior! Paul said so!

B. According to Paul:

It's one thing to be located "in" these environments; it's another thing to draw "from" them as a source for information and behavior.

1. The reason this type of life is so difficult to live is because it is by nature a "foreign lifestyle."
2. Jesus said, "Give expecting nothing in return" but yet our question is, "What's in it for me?"
3. Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek and don't retaliate" but yet we say, "You better watch your back because I WILL get even!"
4. Jesus said, "love your enemies and pray for those who do you wrong" but we had rather "attack back and show them who is boss!"
5. Jesus said, "Lay up treasure in heaven" but we realize "you only go around once in life, so get all you can!"
6. Jesus said, "Don't spend your time worrying about this life to the point it consumes your thoughts and energies" but rather "live a life trusting in God to take care of you" as you walk through life!

C. Throughout the writings of scripture we see HOW our faith is sustained, matured and protected! The secret: TOGETHER!

Hebrews 10:11-26 (NLV)

11 All Jewish religious leaders stand every day killing animals and giving gifts on the altar. They give the same gifts over and over again. These gifts cannot take away sins. 12 But Christ gave Himself once for sins and that is good forever. After that He sat down at the right side of God. 13 He is waiting there for God to make of those who have hated Him a place to rest His feet. 14 And by one gift He has made perfect forever all those who are being set apart for God-like living. 15 The Holy Spirit tells us this: First He says, 16 "This is the New Way of Worship that I will give them. When that day comes, says the Lord, I will put My Laws in their hearts. And I will write them in their minds." Then He says, 17 "I will not remember their sins and wrong-doings anymore." 18 No more gifts on the altar in worship are needed when our sins are forgiven. 19 Christian brothers, now we know we can go into the Holiest Place of All because the blood of Jesus was given. 20 We now come to God by the new and living way. Christ made this way for us. He opened the curtain, which was His own body. 21 We have a great Religious Leader over the house of God. 22 And so let us come near to God with a true heart full of faith. Our hearts must be made clean from guilty feelings and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold on to the hope we say we have and not be changed. We can trust God that He will do what He promised. 24 Let us help each other to love others and to do good. 25 Let us not stay away from church meetings. Some people are doing this all the time. Comfort each other as you see the day of His return coming near. 26 If we keep on sinning because we want to after we have received and know the truth, there is no gift that will take away sins then.