
In America, we see ourselves not collectively, but rather as separate individuals. We are unique. A few years ago I remember seeing the new branding for the army. The billboard read, welcome to the army of one. It had a lone soldier standing at attention. Well, when you think about it logically, who would want to be in an army of one? It defeats the purpose of national security! The army was rebranding itself to a culture that celebrates uniqueness and individuality. And while I'm part of this culture of ours in America, we have been brought into another culture, Kingdom culture.

Some of our American ideals need to bend to the culture of our Leader and Head. He sees the individual response of the heart, AND He sees us as a collective whole. As ambassadors, we represent generations, regions and nations. When our spirituality extends past the borders of our own heart, we will come into the fullness of our God-given role in the earth.

I. THE LORD SEES THE REGIONAL CHURCH

Revelation 1

19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

- A. In Revelation 2-3, Jesus releases specific messages to the regional church. There were specific validations and rewards, specific things to overcome and specific judgments for not following through. Jesus sees the church as a corporate whole. He sees the church according to region, not denomination. (All of the churches listed in the Revelation 2-3 are in present-day Turkey.) My point is, that He sees you and me as part of the regional church. Yes, we have our own issues to overcome... but we don't live in a vacuum. We are responsible for the region, not just stewarding our own hearts.

Matthew 10

12 As you enter the house, greet it. 13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. 15 Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Luke 10

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

- B. We will stand with our generation. We will stand before the Lord with our region. This is an incredibly sobering thought. You represent more than you!
- C. Over and over again the scriptures tell of men and women who were righteous in their generation. They were righteous according to the light that they had. We are judged by the light and revelation that we have, not by what we don't have. This is why teachers will be judged with more scrutiny. Jesus said we would be judged by the judgments that we declared.

Matthew 7

2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

2 Peter 2

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

- D. In Noah's day, making a boat was righteousness. In Abraham's day, believing God was righteousness. In Lot's day, wrestling with distress was righteousness.... In Peter and Paul's day, being martyred was righteousness. We don't get to pick our day, or our race. But we are required to respond to the call of the Lord. Every generation has a call, and every region has an assignment. We must set our hearts to say yes.

II. MAKING COVENANT WITH THE LAND

Isaiah 62

1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. 2 The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. 3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

- A. I was reading different commentaries on Isaiah 62. And then I was studying the concept of marrying the land. One source I read said that the idea of betrothing oneself to the land came from ancient Ireland all the way back to the druids. The text sited that before a king could begin his reign he had to literally marry the land. He had to make covenant with his territory. The truth is that making covenant with land goes back much farther.
- B. When God first calls Abraham, the very first choice God ever makes of any man from any man, he calls him to and for the land.

Genesis 12

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ... 7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 15

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

Genesis 17

9 And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised."

- C. God's covenant extends beyond Abraham. It reaches out for generations, claims regions and marks the flesh. It's more than just upward... it's outward. It's progressing. We don't live in a vacuum! We don't live a life of spiritual retreat, but rather spiritual advancement!

III. REAL SPIRITUALITY ALWAYS EXTENDS OUT NOT JUST UP

Isaiah 58

6 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. 9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, 10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. 11 And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. 12 And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in."

- A. There is a story that goes all the way back to Germany during WWII:

"I lived in Germany during the Nazi holocaust. I considered myself a Christian. I attended church since I was a small boy. We had heard the stories of what was happening to the Jews, but like most people today in this country, we tried to distance ourselves from the reality of what was really taking place. What could anyone do to stop it?

A railroad track ran behind our small church, and each Sunday morning we would hear the whistle from a distance and then the clacking of the wheels moving over the track. We became disturbed when one Sunday we noticed cries coming from the train as it passed by. We grimly realized that the train was carrying Jews. They were like cattle in those cars!

Week after week that train whistle would blow. We would dread to hear the sound of those old wheels because we knew that the Jews would begin to cry out to us as they passed our church. It was so terribly disturbing! We could do nothing to help these poor miserable people, yet their screams tormented us. We

knew exactly at what time that whistle would blow, and we decided the only way to keep from being so disturbed by the cries was to start singing our hymns. By the time that train came rumbling past the church yard, we were singing at the top of our voices. If some of the screams reached our ears, we'd just sing a little louder until we could hear them no more. Years have passed and no one talks about it much anymore, but I still hear that train whistle in my sleep. I can still hear them crying out for help. God forgive all of us who called ourselves Christians, yet did nothing to intervene." (This story was recorded by Penny Lea)

- B. We also have a holocaust. And as for me, I cannot just sing louder. I cannot, I will not do nothing under the guise of my religion. Rather, love should compel us! Rather, Christ's love in us should make us all the best kind of activists. Those who Stand4LIFE, and those who Stand4LOVE.

Numbers 35

33 You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

Psalm 106

37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; 38 they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.

Leviticus 18

21 You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. 22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. 23 And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion. 24 "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, 25 and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you 27 (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), 28 lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.

- C. I understand the need to withdraw at times to recharge with the Lord. We all need times to get away with Him. We all that! Jesus is our example in this. However, I want to speak into a spirituality that pulls you out and away from the very ones Christ is sending you. We are part of a Body. We are being fitted together with other believers. We are no longer just our own. We belong to Christ and to one another.
- D. We do not live in a spiritual vacuum or bubble. We are part of something in time (your generation) and space (your region). Here's my council: Sing as loud as possible... but then go stop the train. Real worship is worth more than a sore throat!
- E. Jesus was and is compelled by love. He saw our state and did something. He came for us. He didn't come to condemn. He came to save. Will you answer the call? Will you Stand4LIFE?