

TOWARD A PROPER PERSPECTIVE

Today we hear much ... we read much .. about the church. Some say the church is outmoded-out of date-and will soon be a reflection on the pages of history.

Others say the church is good...and necessary...but it's not relevant. The key word in their vocabulary is change! The world is changing, and therefore the church, too, must change.

Then there are those Christians who are afraid of change. Change is threatening. Change is a bad word. Their thinking, attitudes and life style are firmly entrenched in the past. They have developed security in doing things in a certain way.

In one sense all of these groups are speaking some truth - important truth! But in a broad sense, all are wrong. They've missed the mark.

THE "BIG PICTURE"

Christians must have the "big picture" if we are to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord.* We must not develop tunnel vision. We need to develop a contemporary strategy that grows out of at least three sources. We must carry out our task by looking through three lenses - the lens of Scripture (the Bible), the lens of history(the past), and the lens of contemporary culture(the present). To do less will result in a blurred vision regarding many aspects of our church and its mission.

In a day when everything is changing-from natural surroundings to life styles-thank God for something to believe in that doesn't change. The Bible provides us that absolute foundation.

To avoid tunnel vision we need to view the church today through a second lens-the lens of the past-the lens of history.

To us Armenians, we have "God-breathed" history - a church founded by Christ. Our faith has been tested and proven to be strong. Throughout centuries our spiritual and cultural values were nurtured and produced many dividends.

Today we need to study history with a new perspective, for it is in knowing history that we can make more intelligent decisions in this present world.

There is a third lens - the lens that gives us a sharp and clear look at the world around us. The world is changing, and so are the minds of men. People think differently today than they did even five or ten years ago. We are living in a new era.

The church must not close its eyes to contemporary culture. We must understand it, penetrate it, and by God's grace, use it as a bridge to reach people for Jesus Christ. We must also equip Christians to live in the world without becoming "a part of it."

*Great Commission of our Lord:"You, then, are to go and make disciples of all the nations and baptize themTeach them to observe all that I have commanded you and, remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."(Mat. 28:19-20)

Once Christians have a clear view of biblical principles, significant lessons from history, and the most important cultural implications, our next move must develop greater perspective for church renewal. We consider five important steps:

- 1) To determine current needs in our own church;
- 2) To formulate and set up both immediate and long-range objectives and goals;
- 3) To change, reshape, and develop functional forms and structures;
- 4) To discover and utilize all relevant and legitimate resources; and
- 5) To constantly evaluate to see if our total perspective is in focus biblically, historically, culturally, and functionally.

The word evaluation is a threatening word, but it is a biblical word. St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "prove" themselves (II Cor. 13:5): to put themselves to the test, examine.

Evaluation should be carried out by the whole body of Christ. It is only as all are involved in this process that all will want to change. When every member of the body of Christ is involved in the process, it also provides assurance that we are arriving at a correct perspective on our problems.

Though evaluation is threatening, it is ultimately rewarding. We are afraid of evaluation, because we are afraid we will discover that we have done something wrong, and that reflects on us personally.

But let's face reality! Not one of us is perfect. We all make mistakes. This is why we need the "body." When all are involved, all are "to blame" when we make mistakes. "Together" we must evaluate; and "together" we must plan; and "together" we will become what God wants us to become.

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