

3. Choices, Consequences, and Creativity – Part 3

In our last two topics, we have talked about “Choices, Consequences, and Creativity”. Today, we will be focusing on some other aspects of this topic. In our last topic, we mentioned that to help Christians restore their God-given creativity, we must focus on the mind. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Today, we want to look at some additional thoughts from this verse.

The phrase, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” points to the fact that one of the keys to creativity is to learn to think in ways counter to the culture. Children and young people learn very quickly to conform to the culture around them. As young children, they seek to gain the approval of their parents by conforming to the desires of the parents. As they grow, they begin to try to look like their friends in appearance, think like their friends in their thoughts, and act like their friends in their actions. In this way, they gain the approval of their friends, but they lose their creativity. By the time they become adults, most people have lost much of their ability to think creatively.

That is one reason why it is so important to help new Christians learn to transform their minds. Only as they choose to think in different ways, from the culture in which they live, will they begin to redevelop their creativity. A key Biblical principle, here, is to learn to see things from the viewpoint of others. Paul summarized this principle in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22, where we read: “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

In these verses, we see that Paul looked at the Jewish viewpoint when he was talking to Jews. He looked at the viewpoint of those under the law when he was talking to those under the law. He looked at the viewpoint of those without the law when he was talking to those without the law. He looked at the viewpoint of the weak when he was talking to the weak. In every situation, he tried to look at the situation from the viewpoint of those to whom he was ministering. In addition, he always tried to look at every situation from the viewpoint of God. His purpose in looking at situations from a variety of different viewpoints was to bring glory to God by leading people to Christ. He knew that to lead other people, he had to see and understand their viewpoint.

Christ demonstrated this same principle by listening to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. In Luke 24:17-24, Christ asked the two disciples to tell Him their viewpoint about the things that had happened in Jerusalem. Of course, Christ already knew their viewpoint since He is God. However, He chose to listen to their viewpoint, so they could tell Him what they thought and felt about the things that had happened surrounding the death and resurrection of Christ. Then, He could use their own thoughts and feelings to explain those same things from God’s viewpoint. Luke 24:27 says, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the

Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Because Christ had been willing to listen to their viewpoint, they were ready to listen to Him as He explained those same events from the viewpoint of the Word of God. We see their reaction in Luke 24:32, where we read: “And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’” That night, the Lord lit a fire in the hearts of those two disciples that burned for the rest of their lives.

Because Christ had taken the time to listen to their viewpoint, He was able to help them see those things from the viewpoint of God. It changed and transformed their thinking and actions so that they had to tell others immediately. Luke 24:33, 35 says, “So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together...And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.” Those two were probably never the same after that event, because Christ had transformed their thinking and stirred their creativity into action.

Although the culture of the world conforms people to the culture, another key principle is to learn to use the word “and” instead of “or” when we are helping people learn to develop their creativity. We should not tell people, “You should just study the Bible, not the culture” because that is an “or” statement. Instead, 1 Chronicles 12:32 says, “...of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...” Here, we see that the men of Issachar also had an understanding of the culture in which they lived, so they knew what to do. An example of an “and” statement would be: we need to encourage people to study the Bible and also the culture in which they live, so the Lord can give them understanding of what to do to bring glory to God in this particular culture.

Nehemiah gave us a similar illustration of an “and” statement. In Nehemiah 1, he prayed. In both Nehemiah 1 and 2, he planned. In Nehemiah 1, he prayed for four months about the situation in Jerusalem. However, at the same time, he also developed a plan, if the Lord would open the door for him to carry out that plan. In Nehemiah 2:1-3, we see that Nehemiah had the plan ready when the opportunity came. Those verses say, “And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.’ So I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, ‘May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?’”

The king gave a second statement in verse 4. We read, “Then the king said to me, ‘What do you request?’ So I prayed to the God of heaven.” Nehemiah had his plan ready, but he again prayed before presenting his plan to the king. Then, he gave the details of his plan. He asked for permission to go to Jerusalem. He told the king how long it would take. He asked for letters of permission to get to Jerusalem. He asked for the materials needed to rebuild the walls and the palace. Nehemiah 2:8b says, “And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.” Because Nehemiah both prayed and planned, God opened the door, through the

king, for Nehemiah to carry out the plan.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he spent three days looking around to see the various choices they faced. Then, he went by night and surveyed the walls to see what needed to be done on the walls. Then, Nehemiah presented the choices and the consequences to the people, and the people made the choice. Nehemiah 2:17-18 says, “Then I said to them, ‘You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.’ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ Then they set their hands to this good work.”

The people had been at the mercy of their enemies for nearly one hundred years because of the fact that the wall was broken down. In fact, Nehemiah 2:10 tells how the enemies felt when they heard why Nehemiah had come. That verse says, “When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.” The enemies were very upset because someone had a concern to help the people of Israel. In fact, in chapters two through six, we see that the enemies tried every possible way to stop the building of the wall.

However, we see the results of choosing to both pray and plan on the part of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 6:15-16 says, “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.” Because one man had the creativity to pray and plan, God gave Nehemiah that creativity. There were two results. First, a city that had been defenseless for nearly one hundred years now had a secure wall in only fifty-two days. Second, the enemies knew that God did this work, so all of the glory went to God.

It is a great privilege to help developing leaders develop their creativity by helping them learn to see the viewpoint of others, helping them learn to understand both the Biblical principles and the culture in which they are ministering, and helping them learn to both pray and plan, so that when the opportunity comes, they will be able to bring glory to God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to develop their God-given creativity.