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"The Sound of Reformation is Coming 'Outside' the Church"



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**Restoring Original Truth**

A reformation has begun in the Church. This reformation will be known historically for the sound it makes – the sound of truth spoken in love. What is coming will be simple, so simple it could be missed if we expect it to create another top-heavy and complicated way of living out our faith.

**Major reformation in the Church must take place from time to time in order to restore original truth and to help us keep pace with the expanding revelation of God.** It is never a one-time event. A living faith must reform if it is to grow and have a continual Kingdom impact in every sphere of culture.

Most of our thinking about reformation has been influenced by our collective Church history, especially the Protestant Reformation that took place 500 years ago in Europe. (In fact, as I write this, it is the year of the 500th anniversary of that Reformation.) When Jan and I lived in Berlin, Germany, we took several day trips to Wittenberg and stood before the door upon which Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses. I always appreciated Luther's boldness in proclaiming what he discovered in Scripture: forgotten truths lost to the Church. Luther had to nail his thoughts to the outside of the church door because those on the inside were not yet ready to welcome the Reformation.

Luther could not know the long-range outcome of his actions. From where he stood in history, he would experience a great deal of upheaval and backlash. And he didn't get everything right; he only had snapshots of a much larger picture. But with the revelation Luther possessed, he was able to set in motion the historic Reformation that would change how we see the Church.

**Our Mission in Culture**

Two alignments in the Church have been unfolding over the last several decades. The first is a renewed understanding of our mission in every sphere of culture. The second alignment has been a revisiting of the purpose of the five-fold gifts Jesus gave to the Church to equip each person for the work of ministry.

In 1975 two men, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ and Loren Cunningham of Youth with a Mission (YWAM) met in Colorado Springs. Each of them had, independently and while many miles apart, received the same word from the Lord. The word had to do with the spheres of cultural influence and the role of the Church in those spheres. The same word was also given to Francis Schaeffer at L'Abri in Switzerland. Each of these three men began to train thousands of young men and women, who are now in places of leadership within the global Church.

During the Colorado Springs meeting, Bright and Cunningham identified the following seven spheres of cultural influence: government, religion, business, education, arts & entertainment, family, and media. Recently, writer-thinkers like Lance Wallnau and Johnny Enlow have unpacked and defined these spheres in greater detail. We now refer to them as the "Seven Mountains."*(Photo via Unsplash)*

God is reminding the Church to reconsider the place of her mission in culture. **Our voice has an assignment on each of the Seven Mountains.** What would it look like to equip and commission the Church to go into every sphere of society and bring a positive influence for change? Some of us thought we were doing just that, but we were mistaken.

**What if we have been camping on the summit of the mountain of religion, not understanding the greater opportunities that await us on the other six mountains of culture?**Take an honest look at our culture. Who is influencing and reforming society? Right now, it is not the Church.

As this reformation unfolds we will also rediscover the simple assignment of the five-fold ministry gifts given by Jesus and listed by Paul in Ephesians 4. These gifts are given for training and equipping the Church for the work of ministry. The five-fold gifts are made up of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. To approach any of the Seven Mountains improperly equipped and without exposure to these gifts is a recipe for failure and irrelevance.

Paul wrote in***Ephesians 4:13*** that the ministry of the equipping gifts would continue *"...until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."*

The Scripture implies that without these five equipping gifts, without their example and instruction, the Church cannot mature and measure up to the full and complete standard Christ has for His Church. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers equip us to do the work of ministry. So, what is the work of ministry we are being equipped to do?

I would guess that most of us think this equipping is done to enable people to run local churches, denominations, or other ministries. The five-fold can include that, but to limit our understanding to the mountain of religion at the expense of the other six mountains would be to limit the scope of the Church's impact on earth.

Paul revealed the result of this equipping in Ephesians. Notice two important words: then and instead.

*"Then, we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the Head of His Body, the Church* ***(Ephesians 4:14-15,***emphasis mine).

Here is the primary concept I hope to convey about the nature of this reformation: speaking the truth in love is the primary evidence that we have been equipped and matured as Believers. **This ability to speak the truth in love within our assignment on a particular mountain of culture is the evidence that we are experiencing the fullness of what it means to follow Jesus.**

**The Truth of God's Love Will Be Heard**

We will hear the sound of reformation when the voice of a matured Church becomes one with the unique frequency of God's love expressed on the mountains of culture. When this begins to take place, the truth of God's limitless, all-consuming love will be heard with wonder and amazement in every sphere of society. It will be like the Day of Pentecost when those who came running to the event said, **"And we hear these people speaking in our languages about the wonderful things God has done!"**

What if all the complicated definitions of a five-fold ministry are really about a function and not a style or system? What if these gifts of the Holy Spirit, with their multiple expressions, actually came down to one simple thing: helping equip and train us to know how to speak the truth in love in our unique life-assignment in culture? I'd like to suggest it is that simple.

**No one will be left out of this process if they are willing to let their voice be empowered by the breath of the Spirit.** This will not be a reformation produced or defined only by professional theologians. It will flow from each of us working and living within each sphere of culture.

**Reformers are nailing the demands for transformation to the door of our current expression of the Church. These reformers are not the enemy. They are prophets announcing the way forward. Leave the sanctuary of the status quo and bravely go to the front door of your spiritual experience.**Read what the reformers have posted. What they are asking us to consider will reveal our future and eventually, it will become the record of our history. *(Photo via Unsplash)*

**It is becoming clear to me the next reformation of the Church will have its greatest impact outside our current church structures and institution.**The reformation will take place across all the mountains of cultural influence – between people in moments of human interaction in the marketplace, in homes, in city council chambers, in corporate board rooms, in big-box store break rooms, and every place where a follower of Jesus walks.