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A Cut-Flower Civilization

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Please read carefully this quote from Elton Trueblood (written, by the way, in the late 1960's when the social order in America was being challenged even more severely than it is today). Read it a couple of times and let it sink in before reading my comments below.

"A quarter of a century ago a few of us began to say that faith in the possibility of a cut-flower civilization is a faith which is bound to fail. What we meant was that it is impossible to sustain certain elements of human dignity, once these have been severed from their cultural roots. The sorrowful fact is that, while the cut flowers seem to go on living and may even exhibit some brightness for a while, they cannot do so permanently, for they will eventually wither and be discarded. The historical truth is that the chief sources of the concepts of the dignity of the individual and equality before the law are found in the Biblical heritage. Apart from the fundamental convictions of that heritage, symbolized by the idea that every man is made in the image of God, there is no adequate reason for accepting the concepts mentioned. Since human beings are often far from admirable in their actual behavior, men's dignity is fundamentally derivative in nature." (*A Place To Stand*, p. 14-15).

What a great illustration for the consequences of our society separating itself from our historically Biblical roots. When flowers are first cut and put in water, they will continue to be beautiful for a few days. But eventually, having been disconnected from the plant, they will die. Our country was founded upon faith in God and recognition of the Bible as the unchanging moral code of civilized society. When we, as a society, separate ourselves from the word of God, we will die just as surely as a cut flower. Sadly, the secularization of our society has already started, and it will not be easy to turn is back around toward faith in His Word. The beauty of the flower is not totally disappeared, but I fear that we are fading fast.

But the cut-flower illustration goes beyond an application to our society. It can be applied to us as individuals as well. Many have been raised in godly homes, with parents instructing them in the ways of God. They know the Bible, the principles, and the inspired teachings. As they grow into adulthood, they continue to study their Bibles, worship God regularly, making sure their children are exposed to the truth. But often they get busy, and become consumed with job or recreational activities. In time they fail to focus on time with God through prayer and Bible study. They may go weeks or months without cracking open their Bibles. Through the modern media, they are bombarded with the philosophies, opinion, and myths of the modern world. Unknowingly, they have been severed from the root, and the result is predictable. They may continue to attend worship services out of "tradition," but their spiritual beauty before God is fading fast. Like the thorny soil of the parable (Matt. 13:22), they will be choked, bring forth no fruit in their lives.

But even more at risk are their children. If the parents have become consumed with the world, the children will follow their example (even if "taken to church"). The likelihood of strong, spiritually minded children coming from a weak, materialistic home is rare indeed. The parent's actions speak louder than words (even if they are still saying the right words). The child is at an even greater disadvantage, because being raised in such a spiritual desert they were never connected to the root to begin with. Later the parents will bemoan the fact that after leaving home the child never darkens the door of a church building. "Worldly friends," or "that liberal university education" are blamed, but at the heart of the problem lies the fact that the child was never truly converted to Christ to begin with. They were never really connected to the true spiritual root that can make the flower beautiful.

Churches often go down the same path. As a congregation of God's people, we must constantly strive to remain connected to the "root" – the authority and headship of Christ and His truths which are revealed in the New Testament.

Many congregations have drifted. Old time fundamental principles start to be ignored. Principles of authority are no longer emphasized. Simple New Testament preaching is deemed "old fashioned." There is a push to replace the old fashioned preacher with one who has a more modern approach. Folks want one who will entertain and tickle the ears. But all the while no one notices that the fundamental problem is that the church has been disconnected from the root.

There is only one root that can provide the foundation for our nation, our families, and the Lord's church. "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" (Matt. 7:24-25).

ONE BIBLE

by David Diestelkamp

It's the mid 1990's. Rick Liggin and I (with our families) are living and preaching in the newly freed and newly formed Slovak Republic in Eastern Europe. Communism had banned the production and sale of Bibles; therefore they are a hot commodity in the context of the new found freedoms. With the help of many of you, hundreds and hundreds of Slovak language Bibles are given away. It is a blessing to put God's word into the hands of tearful recipients who dreamed their whole lives of having a Bible. However, most of those Bibles are never seen by us again.

We fight off discouragement with the words of Isaiah 55:11: "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

Fast forward about 25 years to 2019. A man named Akos sends me a Facebook message, which I reluctantly open, suspecting it is spam. He introduces himself and says he is looking for the David and Rick with whom he studied the Bible in Slovakia in the mid-nineties. When I acknowledge that it was us, he says, "I'm very happy to find you..." and tells this story:

I was approximately a 25-year-old Jehovah's Witness. We met several times to discuss the Bible. Now I have to say in many ways you were right. At this time I'm not an active JW."

I'm fascinated that he remembers us. Then he tells me something extraordinary that happened sometime around 2003:

You gave me a Bible and there was your name stamped in the front. I had it in my bag, which was stolen at the end of the 1990's. It also contained my address and many notes. Many years later, one day, I got a letter from a guy from Germany. He wrote: "Only this book (your Bible) is what saved my life. I was a gambler. Now I am a believer. Thank you Mr. Akos and Mr. Dave and Mr. Rick."

We plant. We water. God gives the increase (1 Co 3:6). I don't have more details of this story and don't need them. God's word in the world can and will do what we cannot – save the souls of men and women, many of whom we will likely never meet in this life. Give someone the Word. You don't know where it will end up, but God assures us, "...it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose..." (Is 55:11). *Think on These Things August –*

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