

Notes on Bishop's 2015 Regional Gathering talk

Intro:

A. "What happens when Jesus takes his followers to a window, opens it and asks them to look out and to listen?"

'The early Christians did not say in dismay, "Look what the world has come to," but with surprise and energy said "Look what has come to the world".'

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV)

Today we are going to stand with Jesus and look out four windows at four groups of Canadians:

- "Church attenders" who need to be disciplined to be passionate Jesus-followers
- Children, teenagers and young adults who need to be introduced to Jesus and disciplined to follow him
- Members of the Gay community who need to be introduced to Jesus and disciplined to follow him
- The neighbors of our churches and ministries to their needs (spiritual, physical, relational, economic, etc.)

Four windows in the New Testament

- The need for spiritual passion and power: John 20:19; Acts 4:23-31
- The feeding of the Grecian Jewish widows: Acts 6:1-7
- The evangelization of Jews: Acts 13:1-5
- The place of the Gentiles as Jesus-followers: Acts 11:1-18; Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 15:1-21

1. **The need for spiritual passion and power:**

- a. John 20:19
- b. Acts 2
- c. Acts 4:23-31

Comments:

- They were afraid of the Jews, uncertain about what to do, in hiding
- They "waited" in the upper room Pentecost
- "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they are all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." (4:31)
- As in Acts 2, they went out into the neighborhood

2. **The feeding of the Grecian Jewish widows**

- Acts 6:1-7

Comment: "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

3. **The evangelization of the Jews:**

- Acts 13:1-3
- Acts 13:5
- Acts: 13:14
- Acts 13:46-48
- Acts 14:1

Comment: Follow the beginning of the first missionary journey and one notices that they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues (to people like them), but God had a surprise and the Holy Spirit opened a door into the Gentile world (13:46-48).

4. **The place of the Gentiles as Jesus-followers:**

- a. Acts 11:1-18
- b. Acts 15:1-6; 12-14; 19-20
- c. Galatians 2:11-13

Comments:

- Note the pains that Jews went to distance themselves from Gentiles. But, Gentiles are human beings.
- **Acts 11:1-18** – the presence of Gentiles was a very divisive issue – the Holy Spirit helped them - “when they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, so then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”
- **Acts 15:1-21** – the issue still wasn’t settled – note the Jewish believers wanted the Gentiles to become Jews first before they became Christians.
- **Galatians 2:11-13** – Peter, in spite of receiving the vision, had still not overcome all his misgivings – he was still self-conscious around Jewish Christians

B. How did we get today’s “Four Windows”?

At the 2013 Regional Gatherings we, as the people of God asked the Spirit of God to show us “What’s Next?” In other words, we went to the windows to look out to see what the Lord Jesus was looking at within our ministries and our neighborhoods. Four topics rose to the surface.

At the 2014 General Conference, we set aside time again to think about the four topics:

1. Reviving Passionate Christian maturity among us – faithful in prayer and action

- a. If we lack passion and power we need to wait upon God.
- b. When God gives passion and power, we need to leave our “upper rooms” and go...
- c. The Holy Spirit came; they went

In his sermon “**On Zeal**”, John Wesley wrote: “*Every Christian ought, undoubtedly, to be zealous for the church, bearing a strong affection to it, and earnestly desiring its prosperity and increase. He ought to be thus zealous, as for the church universal, praying for it continually, so especially for that particular church or Christian society whereof he himself is a member. For this he ought to wrestle with God in prayer; meantime using every means in his power to enlarge its borders, and to strengthen his brethren, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.*

But he should be more zealous for the ordinances of Christ than for the church itself; for prayer in public and private; for the Lord's supper, for reading, hearing, and meditating on his word; and for the much-neglected duty of fasting. These he should earnestly recommend; first, by his example; and then by advice, by argument, persuasion, and exhortation, as often as occasion offers.

Thus should he show his zeal for works of piety; but much more for works of mercy; seeing "God will have mercy and not sacrifice," that is, rather than sacrifice. Whenever, therefore, one interferes with the other, works of mercy are to be preferred. Even reading, hearing, prayer are to be omitted, or to be

postponed, "at charity's almighty call;" when we are called to relieve the distress of our neighbour, whether in body or soul."

2. **The feeding of the Grecian Jewish widows:**

- there were hungry people in their neighborhood (actually in their church) without the means to have enough to eat
- they were limited in manpower
- there was favoritism (racism) in how they were administering the resources
- there were capable people available – the vision had to be cast and they had to be identified and empowered

Possible Parallel realities

- **Discipling the next generation: ministry to Children and Youth:** Are they overlooked in favor of adult ministries because of limited resources?
- **Missional engagement:** Are there capable people ready to serve but are we as leaders blind to their potential?

3. **The evangelization of the Jews**

- They thought that God wanted them to reach the Jews with the news that Jesus was the Messiah
- God wanted the message to go to both the Jews and the Gentiles – this is complicated

Possible Parallel realities

- **Missional engagement:** When we go out to engage with people in the community, **we** may have a target group, but in our going, we may meet other people (Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Gay people) and then what are we going to do?

4. **The place of the Gentiles as Jesus-followers**

- They kept their distance from those people because they were unclean
- Some of them were being awakened by the Holy Spirit and were coming to Christ
- They must become like Jews in every way or they can't be Christians!
- To what degree must they become Jewish in order to be Christians??

Possible Parallel realities

- **Ministry among members of the LGBTQ community**
 - There are gay people in our communities and in our families.
 - Do they need the gospel?
 - What do we do when gay seekers come ... are being awakened by the Holy Spirit and coming to Christ?
 - To what degree must they become "heterosexual like us" before they can be accepted as Christians?

"What happens when Jesus takes his followers to a window, opens it and asks them to look out and to listen?"