

## CGGC eNews: Recalibrating to a Kingdom Focus—Part 6

July 1, 2016

*What is the role of the church in the kingdom of God?*

Generally speaking, I enjoy learning. Whether it's through reading a book, taking in a seminar, conference, or some other type of experience that stretches my thinking and expands my understanding; life-long learning is a high value of mine. That being said, there are times when learning is hard, toilsome and even difficult. I sometimes struggle with learning. There are times when concepts or ideas are hard to grasp or understand and it's almost always harder to actually apply or live out what I learn than just merely understand it.



As difficult as learning may be at times, I'm more and more convinced that "unlearning" is the most difficult type of learning. There are things I need to "unlearn". Are you familiar with "unlearning"? Unlearning is the need to discard previous learning (often times a bad habit or outdated information) or to stop doing something because it's either bad or incorrect.

Every January 1 I'm forced to unlearn writing the previous year on my checks because the information is now outdated and it's time to write 2016 instead of 2015 (which is much easier to cover up or fix than the shift from 2013 to 2014). If I want to lose weight and embrace a healthier lifestyle, I have to unlearn my well established belief that donuts are a healthy breakfast, lunch or dinner food. If I want to utilize a computer to do my work, I must set aside or unlearn my training on the Radio Shack TRS-80 in order to embrace Windows 10. Unlearning is really hard for me.

Over the past several weeks we've looked at some of the misconceptions and misunderstandings we often have of the kingdom of God and what that means for us as disciples of Jesus. We live in a day and age where there are lots of people throwing rocks at the church. We live in a time when it's relatively easy to talk badly about the church. Even in our discussion around the idea of the kingdom of God, some might think that I've forgotten about the church. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Remember that Jesus himself stated in Matthew 16:18 that "...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." The church has an integral role to play in Jesus' mission and His kingdom here on earth. In recalibrating, we are unlearning what we thought was true about the nature of the church and the kingdom of God in order to embrace the fullness of what Jesus intended the church to be. To fully embrace Jesus' mission, we've got to unlearn some things: Sunday morning worship attendance is not what Jesus meant by "take up your cross and follow me", but it's what we tend to emphasize.

I ran across this beautiful piece by the British missiologist Leslie Newbigin (with thanks to Brad Brisco from Forge America, [www.forgeamerica.com](http://www.forgeamerica.com) for bringing this to my attention). In his book, *The Household of God* (page 167), Newbigin shares the following:

The Church is the sign and first-fruit and instrument [of the kingdom]. If this is done, the Church will be delivered from the tendency to turn in upon itself and will always be turned outward to the world. It will know itself to be wholly committed in every part to the task of witness to the world in word and in service. It will understand that participation in Christ means participation in His mission to the world, and that therefore true pastoral

care, true training in the Christian life, and true use of the means of grace will precisely be in and for the discharge of this missionary task.

Speaking in terms of the experience of the village church in India as I know it, this will mean that a newly baptized congregation will not be trained first in churchmanship and then in missionary responsibility to neighboring villages. It will receive its training in churchmanship precisely in the discharge of its missionary responsibility. "Consolidation" will not be the alternative to advance; on the contrary, advance will be the method of consolidation. "Consolidation" for the Church of Christ ought not to mean becoming solidly settled on foundations which belong to this world; it should mean accepting and embodying in its life complete solidarity with Him who had not where to lay His head, and agonizing with Him for the whole world.

For the next several weeks we'll take a look at how we move forward as we unlearn some of our previous understandings of the church and kingdom.

I'd love to hear some of your insights on unlearning. What has been most difficult for you to unlearn in order to step more fully into kingdom living? What are some of the vital pieces of unlearning that need to happen for the church to embrace its vital role in God's unfolding kingdom?

Christ's Peace,

**Lance**

**Special Note:** My family and I will be in the Chambersburg/Harrisburg area on July 24th and July 31st as a result of the General Conference Sessions on July 25th – 27th. If you'd like to utilize me as a guest speaker for your worship service on one of those Sundays, I'd be thrilled to do so. Please email me at [lance@cggc.org](mailto:lance@cggc.org). It will be first-come, first-served.

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