

## Separatists, Conformists, and Transformists – 09.20.09

**Intro** - For last 2 weeks, we've been considering what Requel church means. (Talk about definition of Requel, Sequel and Prequel)

**STATE:** Consider that the church is at its most attractive and its most effective when it is Requel and not Prequel or Sequel. Let me explain.

- Prequel - the 1500 years before Christ when relationship with God and relationship with man is defined by law keeping and regulations
- Sequel - the 2000 years since Christ when church has added other things to Christ's and the apostle's teachings. We might call it Christ PLUS. PLUS tradition. PLUS culture. PLUS philosophy.
- Requel - we return to the very earliest church, when "church" wasn't even always used as a word to describe the body of Christ, which met from house to house and in the temple courts.

Last week, we looked at the Requel church in terms of its finances. Talk about the Matthew 25 Fund. GMP - Giving, Modeling, Partnering church.

This week we want to talk about the Requel church and its relationship with culture. **We want to be a church that's known as being IN THE WORLD while at the same time not OF THE WORLD.**

**READ John 17:11-18 ESV** ... To be "in the world," but not "of the world" means that we must be like Jesus. Not SEPARATED from world, not CONFORMED to the world, but TRANSFORMING our world, our culture. To be a change agent, we can be neither separatist or conformist. **To be a transformist, we must examine our underlying worldview.**

Worldview	Fragmented/ Dualistic Greek / Western	Connected/ Holistic Hebrew / Eastern
Relationship of Christianity to Culture	In Opposition	Integrated
Motto	Some things are spiritual.	All things are spiritual.
Concept of belief and action	What I believe can be different from what I do.	What I believe is defined by what I do.
Concept of Categories	For Christians there are two categories: Sacred / Secular	For Christians there is only one category: Sacred
Concept of Priesthood	Professional ministers	Priesthood of all believers

Worldview	Fragmented/ Dualistic Greek / Western	Connected/ Holistic Hebrew / Eastern
Concept of Prayer	Material is bad and immaterial is good. Our prayers sanctify the material	All things, material and immaterial, can be good. Our prayers bless the God who grants us the material.

Kudos to Kary Oberbrunner, "The Fine Line." (Offer audio version.)

**Reminder of our Mission:** "To be a community loving God and loving people!" Jesus said that all the teachings of the law and prophets hangs on these two things: To love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. The second - to love your neighbor as yourself.

Combine The Greatest Commandment (our mission) with Jesus' prayer that we should be in the world but not of the world. This is where RELEVANCE comes in. This is where the idea of being a TRANSFORMIST, a change agent like Jesus, comes in. We cannot be a transformist if we are irrelevant to the world. In order to be RELEVANT, we must recognize that everything we do is connected. We live a holistic life, not a fragmented life.

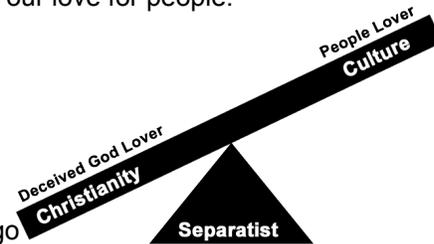
**Reference the Sermon on the Mount Bible Studies.** Just finished this week with teaching of wise man who built house on rock. "The man who hears my words and does them!" To live out the sermon on the mount is to live out the connected/ holistic life. Not for the kingdom of God that may come some day in the future (heaven), but the kingdom of God that is lived out in the lives of Christians and the church. Lord's prayer - "thy kingdom come, thy will be done!"

**We Must Be Balanced in our Mission!**

The Greek has a word for balanced. It's the same word for self-controlled or sober! "The grace of God... teaches us to live self-controlled... lives in this present age." Titus 2:11-12. The word for self-controlled is *sophranos*, which also means sober. The ability to temperate, moderate lives. **Example of COPS show making DUI suspects walk a line to see if they are sober.** In same way we must be balanced in our love for God and our love for people.

**SEPARATIST**

To desire to love God and live out Christianity, we separate out from world and culture around us. Examples of Eve - boundaries that go further than what God has asked of us. What about personal convictions? Necessary, but personal. Not to be placed upon everyone else. Holy Spirit's job, not ours. We teach and live out the Word of God. **Example of the "church manual + Bible."**



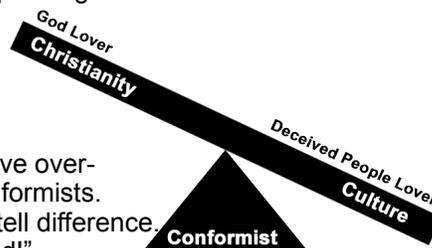
Ever hear, "Don't put me on a pedestal?" **Story of Simeon Stylites.** Ascetic sat on stone column for 36 years! We can become proud/callous.

### 3 Most Common Flaws of Separatists:

1. *Rules to replace relationships.* We cannot hide our hearts for God behind our lists of do's and don'ts.
2. *Microscopes to Replace Mirrors.* Microscopes examine things closely. But shouldn't use microscope to examine everything. Jesus: "Why do you see the speck but not the log?" We need to use mirror for ourself.
3. *Performance to Replace Passion.* Stop acting for one another and own up to our deep need for Jesus!

## CONFORMIST

Today, some Christians and churches have over-reacted to Separatists, by becoming Conformists. They love culture so much that we can't tell difference. Hard to see how they are not "of the world!"



### 3 Most Common Characteristics of Conformists:

1. *Allow media to Replace Meditation.* Fall into pattern of being amused, which means to "not think."
2. *Liberty to Replace Love.* Paul writes to the Corinthians (Chapter 8/9) not to place a stumbling block, to surrender rights for the Gospel
3. *Tolerance to Replace Truth.* We need to remember that Orthodoxy (right belief) never become **Anydoxy**.

### What does it mean to be a TRANSFORMIST?

- the alternative, the exception - live in the paradox, living in the world but not of the world
- Characterized by balance and relevance. Teeter-totter to embrace both God and People, Christianity and Culture.
- This *invites* tension, because we're always working on the balance, recognizing that only Jesus can keep us on that Fine Line!

### Fab Five Fears and Transformist Life-styles.

Let's examine the biggest five fears and how we live out the Transformist life-style with one another in the Requel church as well as before others people outside the church, but within our culture.

1. *Fear of Death.* Everyone is afraid of the unknown. People in every society want to protect themselves and their children. Christ-followers have a faith that informs them of a life after death. The separatist denies the fear. The conformist can deny the absolute faith (especially in a tolerant society that Jesus is way to eternal life). But transformist embraces both the hope and the fear. As one person said, "I'm not afraid of death, but I'm mightily afraid of dying!"
2. *Fear of Outsider.* Each extreme defines who is inside and who is outside. We teach children from early age to avoid strangers. But the price of avoiding other people in either Separatist camp or Conformist camp is to become irrelevant! The Transformist break both sets of rules and thus, are looked upon by both as Judas figures. But the transformist would rather be relevant than popular.
3. *Fear of Future.* Although Separatists and Conformists don't know the future, their irrelevant systems give them the illusion that they do. Separatists reject all things. Conformists accept all things. Thinking they love God, Separatists declare their loyalty to Christianity. Thinking they love people, Conformists declare loyalty to culture. Both

think they are in control.

Transformists accept the reality that they are not in control. They don't know the future any more than Separatists or Conformists, difference is they admit it. Embracing adventure, Transformists have privilege of being a part of God's story than trying to write their own story. "I don't know the future, but I know Who does. I'm placing my future in His hands!" *"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Isaiah 46:10*

4. **Fear of Chaos.** Both camps are afraid of BIG CHANGE that might impact their loyalty to God or to people. Deep change means surrendering control, walking into the land of uncertainty.

The beauty of being a Transformist is actually depending upon God. Loving God and loving people looks different under different circumstances - NO PREPACKAGED ANSWERS. So we follow Jesus into the unknown. *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." Hebrews 12:2.*

5. **Fear of Insignificance.** Natural that we want the affirmation of others. There is comfort in being part of a "camp," whether Separatist or Conformist. Transformists also want to make their mark on the world, but we don't have to separate from the world, nor conform to the world to do it. Transformists have nothing to lose by walking the fine line of balance... they have already lost everything by following Jesus! *"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." (Mark 8:35)*

#### **Conclusion: What Did I Expect (Joe Boyd / Mark Palmer)**

- Expect pain
- Expect to be misunderstood.
- Expect to be persecuted and expect it to come first from those who follow Jesus.
- Expect to be maligned, attacked, and ridiculed from all sides.
- Expect to grow tired and weary.
- Expect to want to give up.
- Expect to lose many old friends. Expect to lose all of your friends where the "church" is the central reason for your friendship. Only your deep and Christ-centered friendships will endure.
- Expect to be labeled (a freak, a hippie, a cult leader, a quitter, a fraud, an idealist, a purist, a heretic, a divider, a communist, a jerk, an egomaniac, a devil worshiper.)
- Expect to weep ... deeper and stronger than you ever have.
- Expect to doubt your calling, your convictions, your path, your faith, and your life.
- Expect to be lonely.
- Expect to be seen as utterly unsuccessful.
- Expect to die... nothing will be left of you. You will cease to exist. The last things in you to die will be your desire to be great for God and your desire to be happy. And then, you will finally...
- Live. Expect life. Expect meaning. Expect to finally understand the prophets and apostles. Expect to know Jesus and his life... for that is all you will have ... and that is all that you need.

Pray and Communion - Only "At the Cross" can we truly be a Transformist. Verse 2 - "You go before me, You shield my way."