

God's Expectation for His Creation

Lifelong Growth and Development

The overriding theme running throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation covers the origins of creation through to the fulfilment of God's purpose for his creation. This overarching panorama includes the creation, fall, redemption, and ultimate perfection of creation through the mediation of Jesus' perfect ministry on behalf of and from within his creation via his incarnation, and the collaborating transformational ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Big Picture

The vision that God revealed in his gracious action of creation places humanity at the centre of his purpose as his collaborating representatives on earth.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image... ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it..." (Gen 1:26, 28)

In short, a creation of abundant provision along with the commission to fill the earth, making it habitable, and harnessing its resources for sustainable growth and development.

And it culminates in the Book of Revelation:

"After this I looked and there was before me a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." Rev
7:9

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth...I am making everything new!" Rev 21:1-5
– the renewal of the entire creation – global transformation!!!

In between these two seminal events we have whole length and breadth of human history encompassing our fall through Adam's disobedience followed by repeated approaches over the centuries offering redemption and relationship through godly individuals who had encountered God's grace and whom God had called to speak for him.

This led on to the nation of Israel being chosen to represent and proclaim him to the nations, then through Israel, the Messiah, Jesus, Son of God and God the Son, was incarnated in human form to announce, reveal and demonstrate the kingdom of God to the whole world.

What this means for us humans

I want us to explore God's expectations of us as humans; God's image-bearing representatives on the earth; and the processes he has put in place for us to fulfil his expectations.

Our greatest example of God's expectations for human lives is Jesus himself. Scripture tells us on a number of occasions, that **he is the image of God (2Cor 4:4; Col 1:15)**, and whose image we are being transformed into: **"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."**
(Rom 8:29)

The fascinating thing is that Jesus, in his humanity as the Son of God, still needed to grow and develop just like any other human being – to learn what it meant for him to be human:

"And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."
(Lu

2:40 & 52)

In other words, he developed intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially, just as we need to! In fact, this is intended to be a lifelong expectation - we are always meant to be growing and learning. The Hebrew culture that Jesus grew up in was built on this understanding.

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. ² I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. ³ For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. ⁴ Then he taught me, and he said to me, 'Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live. ⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. ⁶ Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. ⁷ The beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
(Prov 4:1-7)

An Example in King David's Life of Growth in Ministry

David received three anointings - what did they represent and reveal about his life?

First anointing – as a shepherd boy by Samuel among his brothers I Sam 16:13

¹³ *So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.*

It involved David gaining an established faith in God, mastery over his own self, and a clear understanding of his own identity and destiny.

On the basis of this anointing David killed a lion and a bear defending his father's sheep; and was brought into the King's palace to serve the King. He also overcame Goliath and gained a reputation as a fearless and effective leader.

Second anointing – as King over the house of Judah

2 Sam 2:1-4

³ David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. ⁴ Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah.

This anointing involved David gaining leadership over Judah, and then gradually over the whole of Israel. He had to contend with and overcome enemies *within* the nation, such as infighting and jealousies that needed to be exposed and settled before that could happen.

Third anointing – as King over all Israel

2Sam 5:1-3

³ When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

This third anointing involved David in leading a united Israel against their *external* enemies, establishing their national identity and enlarging their boundaries in the whole region.

There is no doubt that David's success in subduing the nations around them, would never have happened had he not first learnt the lessons of personal growth and development.

Practical Applications for Each of Us

There are multiple levels of application of this godly expectation of lifelong growth and development:

- Personal - we are all expected to be *"growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* 2Pet 3:18
- Corporate - the church is to be a demonstration of the love and wisdom of God to our community and its leaders and spiritual authorities Eph 3:10

Chelsea Community Church of Christ is part of God's global purpose of reconciliation and transformation, which means he is in no way finished with us yet. There is the need to be open to new challenges that God will bring our way to advance his kingdom in our region that will require fresh steps of faith and new areas of ministry for us as both individuals and as a congregation.

This church has a history spanning over 100 years, and has had a succession of pastors who all added their gifts and capacities to its growth and development. Paul tells us that *the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable* (Rom 11:29), meaning, they have lifelong purpose and impact on our lives.

As a congregation, we need to rediscover our identity as a local church in the Chelsea community, and then find the right leader to lead this church into the fulfilment of its destiny.

So, get ready for further growth and development, fresh steps of faith and challenge, and new areas of ministry opportunities, both in Chelsea and the surrounding areas.