

## Width & Depth Part Two

March 21<sup>st</sup> By Tony Higginson

Every pastor who speaks to his church speaks for a variety of reasons. Some speak because it's their job or role to feed you the sheep, others speak out of a sense of frustration with the way things are and should be. Some speak about what they see, others from what they want to see. Then there are those who understand the times and speak from an understanding and I, I guess, have spoken to you at some point of my ministry feeling all the above-mentioned. But I speak to us today out of concern, for I believe that if we do not put some effort into the width & depth of the body, then what ever goes up by nature will fall down just as quick as it went up.

**Now last week I tried to impart this concern of mine into you like the apostle Paul did with Titus in**

- **2 Corinthians 8:16** – *'I thank God, who put into the same heart of Titus, the same concerns I have for you'*.

### Intro

**Width** noun: Breadth, diameter, extent, girth, measure, range, reach, scope, span, thickness, wideness

### **Depth** noun

- 1 The extent, measurement, or distance downwards, backwards, or inwards
- 2 Intensity & strength or profundity of emotion or feeling
- 3 Profundity of moral character; penetration; integrity

We can see from the above explanations that depth and width are three dimensional. For us this three dimensional matrix **involves and affects** the *Spirit dimension* of the church. ***The soul, the way we think, how we feel emotionally about what we receive,*** then lastly ***the physical well-being of us as people.*** The word **profundity** means: ***the insight and intelligence and seriousness of our concern.***

- **The first obstacle to building width and depth in any church is cultural indifference**

**Galatians 3:28** *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

- **Culture says we have an identity and individuality, therefore we are unique and**

**if we mingle into becoming one body, then we lose who we are and who we are no longer matters.**

**Culture** can develop racism, indifference, intolerance. When people become born again, a Muslim sitting next to a Jew can become a major issue, for though they both belong to Christ, a deprogramming and realignment to the mind and behaviour of Christ must take place. Without this taking place people will continue destroying each other whilst proclaiming their love for the same God.

A current predicament found within much of the UK today is that much of the church is ethnically, culturally and biblically unbalanced in belief and behaviour. Much of today's church is divided in every sense of the word. Black people migrate to black churches, whilst white people do the same. Persian, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese believers are all using culture and language as a reason for separation. Though this sounds practical it is however apostolically unbiblical. Language is a minor issue, not a major issue and one that can be worked out through translation, but language must never become an undercurrent for keeping and maintaining one's cultural identity, for it is this flawed thinking pattern that keeps much of the body of Christ immature.

**Proverbs 13:17** *A wicked message falls into evil, but a faithful ambassador brings healing.*

- **Every culture has its own DNA**

### **Philippians 3:4-11**

*Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

NKJV

1. Paul has Culture
2. Paul has history which made him proud as he described of the stock of Israel
3. Paul has traditions
4. Paul has religious beliefs
5. Paul has a sense of inaccurate thinking pattern concerning what is justice.  
He has religious intolerance and religious racism as he thinks it's right when persecuting the church.
6. But what things were gain to me **Verse 7 I love a 'but' as a 'but' means he is now thinking differently.**

7. I have counted loss for Jesus Christ. Now he is asking a different question
8. **Paul has a new identity in Christ**

### **Paul has everything you and I have**

1. Paul had the same reasons as to why we should think and behave individually rather than think and behave as corporate believers.
2. He has the same prejudice, injustice, hurts, anger, frustrations, yet whilst having the same God as the one you and I profess.
3. **But he has a different Lord running his internal heart and mind and that's the difference.**
4. He has a submitted life, do you?

That's why Jesus could say to the Samaritan woman, "You Samaritans worship what you do not know but we worship what we do know." Worshiping is easy, as all you have to do is open your mouth and you are away. Do you have a submitted life? This is the real question.

**Romans 8:37-39** *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither **death** nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor **height nor depth**, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It's amazing how Paul uses the heavens and all the powers that try and separate us from the love of God, telling us we are more than conquerors. Though nothing can separate us from the love of God, what about culture and individuality, as it is these things that stop us from connecting with each other.

### **Ephesians 3: 14-19**

*I could be more than any of the above-mentioned but the only one that is important is For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the **width and length and depth and height** — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

### **Conclusion**

Culture will not divide us, instead it will ignite and enhance us. But culture does not mean we can sit in church and worship together though this maybe a start it's by no means the end.

You have one culture when

*Are you cheerful because you belong to Christ? Does his love comfort you? Is the Holy Spirit your companion? Has Christ been gentle and loving toward you? Then make my joy complete by agreeing with each other. Have the same love. Be one in spirit and purpose. Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud, instead be free of pride. Think others as better than yourselves. None of you should look out for just your own good. You should also so look out for the good of others. You should think in the same way Christ does. In his very nature he was good. **Philippians 2:1-6***

**Culture speaks of my personal individual identity:** Paul is settling this issue here. ***You are no longer*** Persian, African. You are a Christian who was born in the UK, Iran, Africa.

**Galatians 3:28** *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*