

Title of Sermonette: Working together as a body!

Thank you for this opportunity to visit with you and share some thoughts from a sermonette I delivered in Toronto a few weeks ago.

We all share one thing in common, and that is, we've all been children or are still children. As children, we were totally dependent. We depended on parents and other caregivers to fully support our fragile lives. We cried for food even when it was prepared and ready for us. It's all because we could not do it for ourselves.

It did not take long for us to start asserting ourselves. For example "I want to do it myself, "Don't help me" With those expressions, we began walking the road of doing some things for ourselves until we did not need any support to meet our basic needs. Becoming fully independent, we eventually move out of home, start working life, raise families etc

Unfortunately, it does not take long for us to realize that we cannot do it all by ourselves. By then it is too late to find anyone we can be dependent upon as it used to be in our childhood days. We have to grow! So, we reach to other independent individuals in a new life of interdependence (we buy cooked food, childcare services, cleaning services etc).

These three stages (**dependence, independence and interdependence**), in essence, are the core of Stephen Covey's bestseller book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." Stephen Covey shows how we go through paradigm shifts: Dependence (paradigm under which we are born, relying upon others to take care of us); Independence (paradigm under which we can make our own decisions and take care of ourselves); and Interdependence (paradigm under which we cooperate to achieve something that cannot be achieved independently).

Other quotes by Stephen Covey:

'Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own effort. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success.'

'The first three habits surround moving from dependence to independence (i.e., self-mastery), the next three habits have to do with interdependence (i.e., working with others):

'You cannot continuously improve interdependent systems and processes until you progressively perfect interdependent, interpersonal relationships.'

'Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make'

What can we learn from these concepts in the light of Scriptures? That's the goal of this sermonette. We strongly put forward that our Christian calling is a call of interdependence fully complemented by a life of dependence and independence. The more we appreciate our call to interdependence lifestyle, the easier it would be for us to be effective in the mission of the church.

Let's take a look at the following scriptures:

I Cor 12: 12-20; 25

Eph 4:11-16 (note 16)

¹ Sourced from <http://challengingcoaching.co.uk/stephen-covey-interdependence-the-deeper-facts/>

Let me share with you something I read on Thursday (June 26th) in the "Our Daily Bread" devotional. It captures 1 Cor 12 more succinctly than I wanted to do. (Read from *Our Daily Bread*)²

Our calling in Christ and our participation in the work of the church is a call to Interdependence as clearly shown by Paul in the church as body analogy. Each one of us is given gifts for the edification of the other members of the body. There is no one who can achieve "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" being alone (independently).

We notice that interdependence is indispensable but we also need to have a heavy dependence on God, and strong independence. **In our case, we SIMULTANEOUSLY act in dependence, independent and interdependent.** Covey teaches graduating from one paradigm to the other! We don't!

How are these concepts related to one another?

Dependence (in dependence on God)-- when we are called by God, we should be TOTALLY dependent on him (Remember the story of the Vine: John 15; Gal 2: 19-20); rely on God for life and sustenance and staying in the vine (John 15), he is the giver of gifts (we do not own anything, do we own anything he did not give?), we pray to God, follow his direction in the Word, being led by the Spirit

Independence (he has endowed us with unique gifts even if two persons function in the same type of gifting; We are independent of one another in the sense that God will hold us individually accountable for the gifts he give us (2 Cor 5: 10), and reward us individually (recall the parables Christ gave about the rewards), equipping ourselves in the Word (studying and following the Word)

If our interdependence will be optimal, we need to dependently implore the Father to show us our roles, help us to be effective in our gifts (play the roles to best of His ability), take full responsibility for our roles as Christ has given us, avoid envying, rivalry, competition. There is the need for ongoing interaction between our dependence on God and our individuality in order to impact our work together. Our work together in turn strengthens our individual lives and helps us focus on our dependence on God at all times.

This is counter-culture! Our culture promotes strong independent private life. Wake up and let's work together!

Concluding Thoughts

In the body of Christ, who are you?; what are you?; how do you impact others with your gifts and how do other's gifts impact you?; how/where do you fit in the building of the Body of Christ?

*'Life (in our case **The Body of Christ**) is, by nature, highly interdependent. To try to achieve maximum effectiveness through independence is like trying to play tennis with a golf club'—Stephen Covey (italics and emphasis added)*

“Certainly, independence is vital (dependence is essential); however, in the church we live in an interdependent reality. Our most important work in the church requires working and collaborating with other people in a high-trust, synergistic way. Having an interdependent mindset, we need to put our gifts at each other's disposal unlike anything most of us have ever seen in our life time.”³

² <http://odb.org/2013/06/27/lets-stick-together/>

³ Adapted from a blog post at <http://www.stephencovey.com/blog/?tag=interdependence>