

## **“LOOK AROUND”**

### **NOTES FROM THE NORTHWEST, Dec 1, 2002**

Time for my latest musings. After a somewhat frustrating Sunday, I was sitting down to a triple shot caramel latte at the Caboose Lady, a local coffee spot, considering that the world was not conforming itself to my blueprint and pondering what new input on my part would change that. Being a reasonably good self-observer, it no longer surprises me that the world seems to refuse to rotate around me, considering all the harangues and sermons on humility and human frailty. But, from time to time I still find myself irrationally anxious over that fact (and don't even try and tell me that you don't ever experience this.) So I took a little time for some centering, letting go of the things over which I have no control, which is basically anything other than myself. Anyone in program recognizes these as “other people, other places, and other things.” The next step was to consider the admonition from Matthew 6:25-34 concerning the futility of anxiety, which basically comes from concern regarding that over which we have no control. Interestingly, as beautiful as the 33<sup>rd</sup> verse is “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you (KJV)” it is also extremely difficult to follow when you don't let go of the anchor of anxiety.

The following is somewhat theoretical, and yet I have found it amazingly true as a feature of the occasional irrational behavior of many individuals. From the traditional psychological perspective (slightly embellished by me) most children reach a moment of revelatory awareness, which Freud termed the “Rapprochement sub-phase”. This event occurs in children somewhere between the age of 18 and 24 months and is marked by the sudden realization that the universe is not complying with their wishes. At this juncture a child will ordinarily return to his or her mother demanding that she set things in order. Mom, after spending nearly two years with her demanding infant is neither capable nor willing to comply with this demand. The universe of the child will not return to its former compliant state, and will ultimately demand the submission of the child to a new and complex set of rules. After some frustration (you mothers can read; shrieking and tantrums) the child normally reaches an agreement within his or her psyche to conditionally accept this new state of chaos. But despite this conditional agreement in the infant state of our development, we humans still fight with the frustration of being dethroned as the god of our little universes.

Now don't get all worked up if you don't like the idea of this theory. It's only theory, after all. But look around your world and consider the behavior of your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and mates. Perhaps you might even take a look in the mirror and consider your own behavior. I did. And what I became aware of was what I was not really noticing when I was too busy trying to control those things in my personal life over which I really have no control. I try to stay informed, paying reasonably close attention to world events and changing conditions, skipping over the meaningless news such as the personal lives and problems of sports stars, media personalities, and any other glamour types. Yet, as a rule, I am also too insulated from these events to really let them sink in. I spend so much time vainly absorbed in the irritations of my own life that I fail to pay valid attention to the rest of the world. And what a failing this is, for one who seeks to be conformed to the mold established by Jesus, who was acutely aware of the world around him on both the macro and micro scale, and who was also aware of his true role in this world.

What happens when we come to terms with our arrogant condition, stop looking at our little self-defined world, and take a clear look at the world at large? What do we see and how do we respond? After checking out the sports and celebrity news on AOL did you notice the latest statistics on the HIV virus? Did anyone happen to catch Ann Coulter's op-ed piece on the latest rampage of violence by the "Religion of Peace", which resulted in the deaths of over 200 people in Nigeria during the now-relocated Miss World pageant? Are we moved by the news that in Rio deJaniero hundreds of thousands of children, both orphaned and exiled from their homes, are clandestinely targeted by police for extermination?

Obviously we would respond with concern over these news items, though with the question of what possible good could we do in these cases? After all, it's hard enough trying to manage our well-insulated little lives, isn't it? Oh my goodness! Homework, garbage pickup, groceries, bills, lawn mowing, car washing, holiday planning, kids fighting, etc. This is not meant to trivialize our lives, we are all important. Yet, there will soon be seven billion of us on this planet. Think about this. How many more people would send money to a fund for the preservation of orphaned puppies and kittens than to funds set up to help with these worldwide atrocities and epidemics? And after considering the glaring difference between these two options I'll bet most people would simply put this information into the "so-what" file and go on with their insulated lives, slightly more frustrated than before. Exactly where the prince of this age wants us to be, frustrated and apathetic.

But, and here's the big "aha" that we need to come to terms with, somewhere between the "micro" world which constitutes our personal daily life, and the "macro" world with problems far too big for any one of us to help with, lies the world within these boundaries which we can, in fact, touch and impact. But, when we let go of the frustration of trying to "control" our own lives and get a hard, long look at the "macro" world, the sudden shock of seeing so much that is in need can be even more frustrating than all our failures at managing our own "micro" lives. This may even occur on a daily basis to some people, for whom the television news with all its portent and disaster occupy one end of their mind, while the mounting anxiety of an out-of-control family life occupy the other. They frenetically switch from one extreme to the other without any resolution. "Oh great," you say, "so if we let go of the frustrations of our personal lives we are just met with larger frustrations when we encounter the really big world?" Once again, exactly where the prince of this age wants us to be.

Where then is the world within the boundaries? How can we find that place where we can have impact, where we are no longer frustrated and apathetic? Here's the rest of the "aha," its like a big funnel which we hang over, with one hand clinging to our personal anxieties and the other to the anxieties created by the great big world. Let go and you're there. Give up; quit staring at all the broken stuff you can't fix. This is a real faith move. Suddenly, the world you see around you appears differently. It is no longer an obstacle course keeping you from your personal life. All that you formerly ignored or thought disgusting is instead a world filled with chances to behave as Jesus would. Where did Jesus hang out, and with whom did he spend most of his time? Where would he be today and with whom would he be? Remember Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God. . ." Guess what? That world around you is the kingdom of God. Jesus brought the kingdom to earth with him, he drew in those most in need of him and he is still drawing them to himself. Unless we get there we cannot serve God, we just spend our days saving ourselves over and over, fearing that we will lose our grip on what little we have.

Now here's the kicker. The rest of verse 33 reads "and all these things shall be added unto you." In other words, if we give up the anxiety associated with our everyday existence, and if we seek the kingdom of God by looking outside our insulated lives, then God will meet all the needs we had previously been anxious for. How many times have we heard this in one fashion or another? But its like letting go, a faith move, and we have to risk and trust in order for the promise to become reality in our lives. I'm not going to belabor this point by suggesting what we do when we get this look outside. You'll figure it out if you let the Spirit lead you there. Finally, this comes back to where I started this afternoon. The question is "are you willing to give up being the god of your own life?"

Easier said than done, but do-able. **BillZ**