

From Reaction To Action

God shows us the way to live and make a wonderful difference in the lives of others in the sending of his son Jesus to earth. His kind of love is an action, not a reaction to something done to us.

It is also the way we are called to live our lives. We are called to set the pace for all time. We are urged to follow a higher ideal. When we do this, and God prompts and empowers this kind of living, God smiles.

I always get a lift from the way Moses was able to lead his people out of 500 years of slavery. Not by reaction to the power and cruelty of Pharaoh, but by following the leadership and plan of God that is higher than any human action or any nation on Earth.

Yes, there are many things that we must react to. Illness. Criticism. Pain on the dark side. Miracle. Love. Blessing on the good side.

The real question about a Christian's faith is, so what to do about it? Whatever might happen can be appreciated as something much more meaningful and full of blessing no matter whether it seems to be good or bad at the moment. This takes away the power people, society, and evil hold over us and makes it irrelevant to what must happen next.

Charles Swindoll, a noted writer and pastor puts it this way. "Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it."

How right he is! There is so little power life has if we are in Christ. And discovering, then putting into practice a wonderful and powerful reaction is a great process for today's believer.

In fact, we must discover that there are many different reactions to every situation. Breaking the mold of sin, of selfishness, of human bullying is something God loves to put into action on a regular basis.

"Have we not come to such an impasse, writes Martin Luther King, "in the modern world that we must love our enemies - or else? The chain reaction of evil - hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars - must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

Spending time setting the pace, planning action that is good and Godly is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. That is the secret to being a fruitful Christian. That is the secret to being a growing and world- altering church.

It is not easy to change that cycle. So many do reaction every day. Television shows, political campaigns, even wars are designed to elicit a reaction that the receivers are sometimes powerless to stop.

Chris Hayes, an American journalist, writes “Successful prime-time television of any genre produces some kind of emotional reaction in the viewers. There are a lot of different emotions to tap into. The emotion of the reward of discovery, the feeling of righteous anger, the feelings of pathos and sadness, or sentimentality of being moved by something.

We can watch television for the good it might bring us rather than mindless entertainment. We can design ways for television to be good and helpful. We can change the technology so that we are broadcasting in the direction of national media instead of their continually bombarding our homes. Or simply turn off the tv and talk to one another. It’s all about action rather than reaction.

Whether we seek to move people to laughter or faith, love or hate, resignation or empowerment, the process is happening in every generation. It is the elixir of the greatest generals, the hope of the greatest evangelist, the dream of every politician.

Recognizing that power the world holds over us, and being freed from it, is the most spectacular insight for us all. “Our age,” preaches theologian Reinhold Neibuhr, “ knows nothing but reaction, and leaps from one extreme to another.”

Jesus says not to worry about what we will eat, drink, or wear. He says not to worry about tomorrow, for today has enough worries of its own. He tells us to go into the world and tell others about him.

Those are all actions. Choices put in place by God who puts his money where his mouth is day by day in the form of love which is full of action. Instead

of worrying about what might be, we feed the hungry, repent of our sins, do church, and love others no matter what. This is action of the highest caliber.

Wayn Dyer writes “One of the greatest lessons of my own life was learning to turn the inner rampage of hatred and anger toward my own father for his reprehensible behavior and abandonment of his family into an inner reaction more closely aligned with God and God-realized love.

He might well describe what happened as an action which makes what came before irrelevant and empowering at the same time. This is what God does. He teaches us to be people of action, not reaction. And what a world it will be when we all learn what that means!