

## **Collective Burden, Personal Transformation**

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Our nation (and our world) is swirling, as dizzying news cycles attest. No need to recount—we are living them. For those of us sensitive to “feeling” our communities, the intensity can feel like a riptide, a fierce pull away from the shoreline into unstable waters.

In this sensitivity, we can risk interpreting our world too personally. When I do this, I risk condemning myself and others. We can also risk depersonalizing these global realities by refusing responsibility for neighbor and brother. We may lurch from super-responsibility, as though the weight of every life rests upon our shoulders, to shirking responsibility entirely. When we do this, we numb our call to be salt and light—stabilizing forces amid upheaval.

I believe God is provoking His Church (you and me personally) to awaken and find the narrow way. He invites us to re-engage with Him so we can share His heart and carry His burden—a collective burden—for the world He loves and the people He yearns to make His own.

He is calling us to neither harden our hearts nor grow weary in well-doing but to be healed, both personally and collectively. He wants this collective burden to personalize into deeper transformation at core areas of our lives.

We must respond to His invitation in real-time. That means giving Him room to sensitize us to His conviction. Might we take time to heed His call to shift and sort what needs reordering in our lives? That requires humility and surrender in ways we have not yet known. Yet Jesus came to do this deep work. Seasons like this expose our need for it.

In His book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (2001), Robert Gagnon speaks of Jesus' attitudes around healing and transformation. When Jesus encountered sexual sinners, exploitive tax collectors, and the like, He did not hesitate to direct them to a narrow way. Healing was more than a 280-character tweet; it was a life-altering change. For Jesus, “Healing implies transformation; transformation implies repentance [and] without reform of one's prior sinful conduct there can be no recovery” (p. 211).

We ought not move through times like this without personal and collective reform, repentance unto transformation and healing. No part of our individual life is excluded—our Church and world cannot change until we do. And because of that, I believe that individual transformation matters most to Jesus.

At Desert Stream, we invite each person into this personal transformation. We are unpopular, as we insist that Jesus transforms deep sexual and relational brokenness. We proclaim what we have seen and experienced. We know the freedom and challenge of living out our reform. Whatever way

the swirls of 2020 are hitting us, may you and I respond with a “yes” to the transformation that Jesus seeks to do in each of us.