

Return to Basics

The Rev'd. Dr. John Roddam | www.pleromaininternational.ca

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The Fall brings a new cycle of activity for most families with school starting up. Often there's an array of other activities that marks the end of the summer season. Our lives are characterized by different seasons.

Ages and Stages

Piaget delineated stages of early childhood development and Lawrence Kohlberg noted stages in moral development. What about spiritual growth and development? Jesus mandated the Church in the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16ff) to "make disciples." What does that look like today?

Since the Methodist Revival in the late 18th C. a good portion of the Church has been centered on conversion – our personal response to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. However, efforts to see Jesus' followers move on to maturity and Christlikeness have largely been abandoned.

Maturity

This parallels the emphasis in our tradition to get folks confirmed. Commonly when this occurs, they disappear... like they've graduated! However, the original vision of this sacrament is an adult commitment to our Lord, personalizing the promises made by the parents and godparents at baptism. This is a transition into a deeper walk with God with the bishop's laying-on-of-hands for "strengthening in the Holy Spirit."

When Jesus called upon His Church to "make disciples," he was talking about the process from no awareness of God through conversion to Christ to a mature disciple. Churches that are revisiting this mandate with an eye to see strong followers of Christ are thriving.

Return to Basics

This is simply a return to basics. Like any business, sport, or activity – if you have the basics covered and see people do these elementary things well, they will thrive. The same is true of the Church.

Many assert that the Anglican Church in the West is not in decline but in free-fall! How does this stop? Simply by returning to basics. The four core disciplines of the Christian Life are – Bible Study, Prayer, Fellowship and Witness. As we consider each from our Anglican perspective we realize there are many biblical models, historic precedents, and contemporary examples that we may explore and emulate.

A simple Google Search can yield many sources, even within our own Anglican Family. There are many ministry and growth ideas from other mainline traditions as well!

Make a Plan

See what's out there and make a plan to grow in your walk with God. The revivalist Charles Phinney of mid-1800's fame stated that a person needs simply to draw an 18" circle, step inside and ask the Lord to work deeply in his/her life. Corporate growth comes from simply joining the circles together!

This does not require a Ph.D. Many turn to Alpha as a starting point and find other rich resources to draw a person to maturity.

One of the crazy statements I use that seems to work is, "I give you permission to do this!!" It's amazing what can happen with a bit of vision, resources and motivation. Go for it!!