

EVERYDAY LIFE

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

"No one pours new wine into old wineskins." Mark 2:22 NIV

"You will settle for less until you make room for what's best."

My thoughts today are about **"room for improvement."**

My friend, Campbell McAlpine, has often said, *"The largest room in the world is the room for improvement!"* I think everyone of us could agree with the reality that we have plenty of things about ourselves to improve, in about any area of everyday life. And yet it seems that so little progress is made. You may know where you need to go, where you need to give attention, and what it would take to do that - but delay doing those same **things that would bring measurable improvement.**

Writing this devotional last evening, I realized that I had not written what I wanted to say. **It needed editing, more thought for better focus and clarity** (which I leave you to decide if I achieved or not). I think the **life that is successful needs frequent editing**, taking the time and making the effort to be more clear, more purposeful, more authentic, better than you were. There is always room for improvement, if you realize the need to do so.

In the places you live and work everyday, **where is your room for improvement?** Could it be in your **friendships**, needing to pick better friends or your being a better friend - your **family relationships**, how you relate with mutual appreciation and respect - your **personal habits**, edifying conversations, regard for others' time and schedules, reliability of your word, honesty, modesty, trustworthiness - your **work habits**, giving your best effort with excellence.

Improvement requires making room for positive changes. **You can't hold on to the old, and still have room for the new.** You may say that you want changes in your life, but nothing can happen until you make substantial and meaningful efforts for positive change to occur. You may want to be new - to be different, better - but not be ready to let go of the old. Yet doing that is always the spiritual prelude to anything better. The very places you have room for improvement are the same things that restrain you from becoming what you want to become. See John 1:12.

Paul understood this necessity, *"The one thing I do, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead, so I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call to the life above, through Christ Jesus."* Philippians 3:13-14 Today's English Version. What are you allowing to retard your progress to move forward? To improve where you need to improve? To reach the *"goal . . . which is God's call to the life above"*? That ultimately is what life is really all about.

The greatest hindrance to your becoming what you want to be is the **natural tendency to hold on to what you've always been.** Ever wonder why some Christians do not grow, or grow so very slowly if at all - struggling with the same foolish habits, making the same mistakes too many years? See Romans 7:15-25. They repeatedly fall back into **their same, old patterns of behavior.**

In today's verse, Jesus used a familiar picture from the everyday life of His audience to teach this principle. *"No one pours new wine in old wineskins. The wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the wineskins. New wine needs new wineskins."* Mark 2:22 NLT. In primitive winemaking, the new, fermenting wine had the properties of expanding in the old, dry wineskins that had lost their ability to allow expansion.

You will not successfully contain the vibrant, new life of the Spirit until you are sufficiently dissatisfied with what you've been. *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old has gone, the new is come. All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ . . ." 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 NIV. See Ephesians 4:22-32.*

My prayer for you is to allow Jesus to make all things new! Can you make room for that?

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