

Societal heart surgery needed

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"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life" (Psalm 139:23-24). It is a rare person who will put themselves onto the surgeon's table when things are going relatively well. And why would you? Isn't it usually out of a desire to eliminate pain or fear of something worse that forces people to schedule surgery? Desperate circumstances usually force the appointment. And yet the heart of this prayer is one that desires to be clean for the sake of oneness with God.

It is true that the process of dealing with the "unbeautiful" things in our life is not always a comfortable experience. Most people would rather deal with just about anything else than spiritual "heart surgery." Statistically, going to the dentist and speaking in public are among the biggest fears people face. They are right up there with death itself. What is interesting is that some people would sooner schedule their root canal or televised public address before diving into a prayer like the one mentioned above. What is it about complete vulnerability before God and total exposure of all that is hidden that is so frightening to us? Most people have built up elaborate and well-ornamented facades that prevent others from seeing what is inside. What is interesting is that modern psychological experts say that most people don't even know what is inside them; what motivates their behaviors and the like. More fascinating is that the Bible has been teaching that all along — but with answers.

There has been a strong movement in recent decades to blame-shift just about everything. Whether as individuals or as a society, we tend to pass the indictment to someone else in order to shield ourselves from the culpability of our decisions and actions. While this tendency has always been in the human heart, this paradigm shift in cultural acceptability has put each of us in a challenging position. We all know that drug abuse, domestic violence, homicides, gang victimization, robberies, school shootings and a host of other tragic societal indicators, are on the rise. It is also generally understood that a generation has grown up with a whole lot less belief in God and a whole lot less hope for a bright future. These two factors create desperation in life without a bigger sense of accountability for choices. As a result, choices are made to just tune out, give up, or take what I want today. These trends are well studied and there is very little uncertainty as to the root. What is interesting is our response.

Have you ever heard someone complain about today's youth? But very few are ready to help. How many people are willing to change their own negative behaviors because they admit it trains young people into the wrong way? As a society, we will blame the schools, the media, the politicians, and the world, but not take any responsibility for ourselves. As long as we do this, we can avoid the scalpel. But the Scriptures teach us that confession and repentance lead toward healing, not avoidance and denial.

We would rather fund more rehab centers than leave that six-pack at the store. You see, funding rehab centers shows that I want to help other people with "their" problems. For me to recognize a need to change my behavior implies that I have a


problem. That is a place most people won't go.

Many people are willing to talk about safe sex, but few are willing to pray with their children and talk about what the Bible says. The discussion on safe sex falls in line with our own self-protective facades. Ultimately, I am saying, "Here is how you can enjoy the pleasure without facing any negative consequences." We are teaching the next generation what our generation does; try to avoid any responsibility for our own actions. If they buy into it, we remain safe. If they do not, then they will look to us as being responsible for the mixed-up culture that they have to live in. The interesting thing is that many young people can see right through our facade and are rejecting society as we offer it. The problem is that because very few have any real foundations, their responses are unpredictable.

Shelley and I woke up at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday to the banging on the door of our neighbor yelling to us that our van was tagged. It was true, orange paint all across the side of our vehicle. We spent the next hour and a half scrubbing until all traces were gone. It wasn't just us, the whole neighborhood was hit by some group trying to make a statement of their existence and importance. What do you think? Rogue renegades breaking off from the peace-filled culture to forge a unique statement of individuality and creativity or a product of a depraved society that has acquired a learned behavior from others? It's not as easy as that is it? It is so easy to shift blame. They must face the consequence of their actions. Also, we must realize that we have made choices leading to accepted norms in our society that raise very confused people. We all need "heart surgery." The key is to select the right surgeon who knows what he is doing. It is encouraging to know that also in Psalm 139 it says, "nothing is hidden from God." We need corrective action to be taken by the one who is not blind. Let's make it our prayer: "Search us, O God, and know our hearts, test us and know our thoughts. Point out anything in us that offends you, and lead us along the path of everlasting life."

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