

Refusing Self Containment

A few weeks ago we discussed the topic of containment. It was a sort of wake-up call about how churches can impose limits on Christians regarding what we are allowed to believe and practice. Some of you told me that it was a revelation for them on how easy it is to fall into containment. Some of you even told me how containment was hard sold to them under the guise of correct theology while denying many liberating scriptures.

I would like to talk about another form of containment regarding your walk with Jesus Christ. **We can be contained by negative, limiting words and opinions of others, as well as by our own thinking or mental processes.** Actually, containment in our minds is one of the biggest problems we face because we live in a negative and demeaning world. That kind of containment must not be a part of Breath of Life Tabernacle – if anything, we must be a church that liberates not confines.

Principle – When we focus on this world and its values, we are focusing on the natural realm with all of its limitations, rather than on God's supernatural realm where the only limitation is eternity, and the result of that can be to become mentally contained.

I want to just kind of blurt this out to all of you. It is something God told me when we started this church ~~ We are entering a season where everyone (no exceptions) are going to discover that our habits and patterns of thinking – our allowed possibilities with God – are going to be enlarged as we choose to live within the realm of the Kingdom of God. We are entering a year of incredible breakthrough.

Read Luke 8:22-25 -- Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and

marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" NKJV

I know that I have taught in a previous lesson that the storm was calmed because Jesus released the peace that was in Him upon the storm. But where did that peace come from? And do we realize that this was only one lesson in the training of a disciple? So fasten your seat belt – we will see where that peace came from – as well as where other things can come from – if we step out of self-containment.

Are you ready? Jesus saw through the storm to the peace that was on the other side of the storm. He called it out – JUST LIKE THE SCRIPTURES TEACH US THAT WE AS HIS FOLLOWERS CAN DO AS WELL!

Read Romans 4:16-17 -- Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed — **God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;** NKJV

The disciples were still contained by their understanding of the natural, and they disqualified themselves, in the process, to experience a breakthrough.

Principle – Breakout, whether in the mind or anywhere else, involves learning to think the way Jesus thinks; to see from His perspective, and not depend on our own limited vision.

Paul contrasted between “natural” unsaved people and “spiritual” born again believers in the book of 1 Corinthians.

Read 1 Cor. 2:14-16 -- But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. NKJV

Note the last statement – “But we have the mind of Christ”! In other words, when you were saved, you were given the ABILITY to think “out of the box”,

like Jesus, to see from His perspective in all facets of life, but we have to release it – practice it – until we are no longer contained by our own ideas of what God could do in us.

If we have the mind of Christ, we should be developing into a person that will think like Jesus, talk like Jesus, and act like Jesus. When we start doing that, a scripture will become more than a nice verse, it will become a life description of you as a new creation –

Read Phil 4:13 -- I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
NIV

Hey, with Jesus way of thinking in us, with His mind in action in you and me, there is no reason all of us can't experience breakout living and minister breakout living to others!

Definition of Christian Containment – To have the mind of Christ and still think and act like men and women of the world with its limitations.

What are the symptoms or evidences of self-containment? They include the limitations of impossibility thinking, narrow-mindedness, mediocre existence, compartmentalizing your life and just plain BOREDOM!

There is a form of containment that the training class of the first disciples had to learn – it is called “It can't be done!” It is a part of an apparent impossibility being your reality. It is one of our personal focuses on obstacles, not seen as opportunities or problems, and not seen as possibilities. Let's look at one of the lessons Jesus taught His disciples in the school of experience ~~

Read Matt 14:13-21 -- When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. **You give them something to eat.**" And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and

looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. NKJV

The scriptures teach us that Jesus went to a deserted place to be alone with His Heavenly Father. He felt the need to get away by Himself – away from the crowds, the clamor, the sickness, the opposition – to pray and get the mind of His Father on the assassination of John the Baptist.

There is a tremendous practical lesson here for every Christian – If you wish to be a powerful man or woman of God – a “breakout person” no longer self-contained, there must be times when you get alone with God and seek His voice, wisdom, and plan for your circumstance or situation or impossibility mind-set that says, “There’s no hope; it can’t be done!”

Principle – Until you learn God’s perspective on your particular problem or need, you will always be overwhelmed with impossibilities and unable to handle life’s situations.

Read Ps 16:7-9 -- I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. NKJV

Read Isa 28:29 -- This also comes from the Lord of hosts, Who, is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance. NKJV

You are self-contained when you try to battle through life’s difficulties without asking God for His perspective on your problems. The least we can expect, then, is to major on the negative and dwell in impossibilities.

An impossibility thinker would have pushed the panic button when He saw the large crowd in front of him. Instead, Jesus looked beyond the reasons He couldn’t deal with such a crowd of people and saw before Him an incredible opportunity for ministry and a chance to reveal the ability of His Father. A person who has broken free of self-containment looks for reasons he can do something. Well, at least, that was Jesus!

Jesus' disciples were another matter. They had limited themselves with "common sense" and lack of imagination which is a common problem of impossibility thinkers.

Let me list a few of the common sense issues from our account in the gospel of Matthew that impossibility contained thinkers dwell on:

1. **This is a deserted place.** They had seen Jesus open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, loosen dumb tongues, and do all sorts of other miracles. Now they saw no way to feed the multitude because they saw no provision in the desert. They had confined themselves not realizing that when God is present, every provision is available.
2. **The hour is already late.** Talk about containment! God doesn't live in time! He is eternal. He lives in eternity, and if you are His child, so do you! Time is only here for you to use wisely for the glory of God and breaking out of self-containment so you can make the most out of every opportunity God gives you. Time is not to think "the store is closed".
3. **Send the multitudes away.** In the face of "impossible" circumstances, contained thinkers tend to do nothing at all. To them it seems better than trying and failing. Is that why many don't pray for the sick?
4. **Let them go into the villages and buy their own food.** Isn't that reasonable? At least that is what the disciples thought.

Read Matt 14:16 -- But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." NKJV

You know what happened.

You might ask, "How can I become a possibility thinker like Jesus?" The answer is, "Look up to heaven!" That is the secret. Depend on the Lord and His power and resources instead of your own.

Read Luke 1:37 -- For with God nothing will be impossible. NKJV

Read Matt 17:20 -- So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. NKJV

Read Phil 4:19-20 -- And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. NKJV

Let's talk about another form of self-containment. It could be called "narrow - thinking", but usually is expressed by, **"We have never done it that way before."** This kind of contained thinking is expressed by an attitude that assumes things must be done in the same way year after year. Narrow-thinking involves limited, if any, creativity or imagination and allows little to no latitude for change or disagreement. The thought is that anything could be different is usually not even considered.

How will I know if I am a person like this? If you are, you will bound up in habits, thought patterns, and attitudes about yourself and about others that limit potential. And most of the time you are not even aware of it until someone draws your attention to it. You are prone to going along with the status quo. You expect very little from God or your faith in the way of dynamic power or supernatural visitation because your expectations for the future are shaped by your experiences of the past.

One of the worst places for containment like this is in regarding the miraculous in daily Christian life. You don't expect to see miracles because you have never witnessed or experienced one before and that your church taught you that miracles ceased at the close of the first century.

Our church has begun to grow because there is a sense of expectation among us. Without that, people may come, and leave the way they came. Defeated! Worse, when people are like that, they cut off the CREATIVE flow of the Holy Spirit in their own lives.

Read Isa 43:15-19 -- I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King." This is what the Lord says — he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. NIV

Read 2 Cor. 3:17 -- Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. NIV

Satan, on the other hand, is a spirit of constraint, limitation, and bondage. His goal is to prevent you from recognizing and exercising your full freedom in Christ and fulfilling your entire potential in Jesus!

We must live up to the name – Breath of Life Tabernacle. We must refuse to be constrained by past concepts of what church life and structure ought to be without abandoning our Biblical heritage.

Another form of self-constraint is the saying, “**This is good enough.**” That is an attitude of mediocrity that is becoming more and more accepted as the normal life and expected experience.

When this happens, people take for granted the low, ordinary plane in which they live with no idea they could live on a much higher level. God has much more for His people than the mediocre level of the world.

Read Eph. 2:4-8 -- But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. **And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus**, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Look what God has given us: mercy, love, life with Christ, a seat with Him in heavenly places, the incomparable riches of His grace – with all the riches we possess, why would anyone want to live at the mediocre level of an unbeliever?

God wants to take His people to a higher plane of living at Breath of Life, but it will require of us a higher level of thinking. We must be constantly aware of the Presence of God among us. We need to develop our capacity that God has given us, and at the same time, maintain our dependence on Him. We must keep, and more deeply pursue, our passion for more!

Perhaps you would agree that as a church we need to be careful to redefine our expectations of worship. We must not be quick to limit what God can do. **Boredom is never from God**. Boredom usually comes to some because they have not prayerfully sought out the God who is the One

who changes lives. **If our services are boring, we have failed to meet with God's Presence.**

Perhaps you have seen today that some of the values and some of the attitudes that people carry are really the symptoms of self-containment. Also, you may agree that this kind of attitude can rob yourself of the dynamic life Jesus has for all of us.

As we close this lesson, I have a few suggestions that can remove any form of self-containment from your born again, Spirit-filled life:

1. Remind yourself who you are in Christ and rekindle your passion for intimacy with God. There is nothing this world can ever offer that can replace the fullness of walking with Jesus by faith, and hearing Him direct your life.

Remember, that as a Christian, you have a high and holy calling – an individual life mission that God has just for you. Nothing can replace it. No weapon formed against it can prosper unless we surrender to personal defeat. Discovering your life mission is really to why God made you and why He believes in you and wants to use you to further the Kingdom of God where He has placed you.

2. Examine your priorities and be objective enough to observe how the world may have infringed on your faithfulness to fulfill the call that God has placed on your life, and then deal with those things.
3. **Principle** – **a life that is self-contained is a life that has postponed or traded cutting edge excitement for just existing.**
4. Set your goals for achieving what God has called you to do and set up a schedule to fulfill those goals.
5. Live a God-planned life.
6. Realize that anyone who has experienced salvation has a personal responsibility to share with others what God has so graciously done for them.
7. Realize that the hunger in you for more of God has been placed there by the Holy Spirit. That hunger is correctly seen as a calling to step out of an impossibility mentality, narrow thinking, mediocrity, compartmentalized thinking, and boredom that will rob yourself of your own legacy in Christ.

Let the Breath of Life give you the mind of Christ to transform and renew your mind and take you to a higher plane.

Read Jer. 29:11-14 -- For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. NKJV