

A life of Influence

“Behold the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them” Isaiah 42:9

I believe that God is presently doing a new thing. And I’m convinced that this “new thing” has to do with **influence**. The Oxford Dictionary says, *“Influence is the power or ability to effect a person’s character, beliefs or actions.”* God is strategically placing His people in positions of notable influence. He is giving birth to very influential individuals - people who’ll have a significant effect on the character, beliefs and actions of others. It is a dispensation wherein God has prepared a unique collection of human vessels (new wineskins). And these vessels are believers who have been supernaturally equipped to distribute the Good News throughout every aspect of today’s society.

We have just entered an era where the church will display one of its primary functions (as mentioned in **Ephesians 3:10**), *“...To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places.”*

God intends to display the Church before all evil powers as the instrument He uses to dispense, throughout the earth, what He has already accomplished in Christ Jesus. It was the wisdom of God that defeated the devil (**1 Corinthians 2:7,8**). But notice, the wisdom of God has many shades and tints and colourful expressions. When ever God enters the human arena He is multifaceted and very demonstrative. Therefore, whatever He does through “the church” should reflect the same varied and powerful expression.

The “new thing” that God is doing is never stayed or boring, it is vibrant and expressive, saturated in His divine manifold wisdom. It’s the very thing that the devil cannot read or understand; otherwise he would not have crucified the Lord (**1 Corinthians 2:8**). We can never positively affect people’s character, beliefs and actions without it. So, to be truly influential we must rely totally on God’s diverse wisdom. But you must understand the principle of “the old and the new.”

Turn with me to Luke 5 and let’s read verses 36 to 39...

There are two Greek words translated “new” (kainos and neos) and it’s interesting to see where they appear in this passage of scripture. In verse 36 we only find the use of the word “kainos.” This word denotes that which is unused and of a different nature from what is contrasted as old. It implies, that which is totally different in character to what existed before. A patch taken from an old garment spoils the new one. Also, it does not match the old one, either in appearance or strength. Likewise, the garment of grace and the garment of law will never mix. The new garment picture, the era of grace (a new and better covenant), and grace has a totally different nature to the law.

In *verse 37* we only find the use of the other word - “neos.” This is a reproduction or continuation of the old in quality and character. It has existed before but is now “new” with regards it being recent - in a timeframe that is current. Therefore, the fermenting action of the new wine causes pressure on skins that are no longer pliable enough to bear it. Consequently the skins burst and the wine is spilled. The outdated forms,

ordinances, traditions and rituals of orthodox religion are too rigid to hold the joy, exuberance and energy of any new move of God.

The last verse (verse 39) pictures the natural reluctance for man to abandon the old for the new. Always declaring that, "The old is far better!" Primarily because this is what he has tasted and is familiar with. Religion gets people accustomed to distinct forms and human protocols or arrangements so much so that they are reluctant to accept the new principle and power of the kingdom. Remember, the kingdom of God is now! It is new (kainos) and fresh and operates in the imperative present!

Finally, let's examine verse 38... Here we find the use of both "kainos" and "neos." The new ("neos") wine must be put into new ("kainos") wineskins for both to survive. Notice, what God is doing right now (the new thing), is a continuation of the old in quality and characteristic. But the vessels through which God is doing the "new thing" are totally different - both in nature and character (to what existed before). Yet, without each other neither can be preserved.

If you desire to be **influential**, to be one of today's 'new wineskins', you cannot be a maverick. You cannot be like a calf without a "branding." You must belong to, and flow out of, something that God Himself has established. An ongoing work that is recognisable and distinct. It is a move of God that's been founded and grounded on His infallible word.

The Book of Hebrews centres itself entirely upon Him [Jesus] who was appointed Heir over all things (**Hebrews 1:1-3**). He is the brightness, the express image and character of the Father, upholding all things by the word of His power. He has a more excellent, or superior, name and ministry (**Hebrews 1:4; 8:6**). And we, as believers, are to be drawn toward Christ and Him alone. Hebrews talks about two distinct types of believers - those who draw near and those who draw back (**Hebrews 10:22 and 10:39**). Which are you? The new wineskins (God's people of influence), will always seek to draw nearer to Him. They want today's new wine to be poured into them. And in fact, they are continuously thirsty for it!

Note, God is always in motion and if you are desirous to draw near to Him you too should be in constant motion! Those who draw back are not necessarily going backwards, they are stationary. They have ceased to expand or increase in order to accommodate the pressure and energy of the new wine. The old is always static and inflexible, while the new 'goes with the flow' and moves to the region beyond - to the region where God is doing a fresh **new** thing. The "new" keeps drawing near - this is what distinguishes it!

Just as God brought the Old Testament "church" Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the promised land, so now God the Father is taking a new generation of believers across the river Jordan to conquer the city of Jericho - a stronghold of affluence and self-indulgence, where the sinner's wealth is being laid up for the just. The manna has ceased, and you cannot live on miracles alone. You must now be filled with new wine! God has divinely and sovereignly beckoned you to this place - it is a place of destiny! What's behind has got you here, and it has laid the foundation for what God is doing right now, but it's past tense - it's history! I believe that your diet has changed, no longer do you enjoy the taste of old wine.

What has worked for you yesterday, will not necessarily work with you today! The old order, like the Law, has brought nothing to its conclusion; it has only brought you to this place - a place of advancement a place of influence.

You must now draw near and receive strategy from the Captain of the Heavenly Host. Jesus Himself is beckoning you to come and take possession! He has called you to positively affect the character, beliefs and actions of a lost and dying world. But this may not always roll out the way you expect it. Herbert J. Muller, the great American historian said this, *"Few have heard of Fra Luca Pacioli, the inventor of double-entry bookkeeping; but he has probably had much more influence on human life than has Dante or Michelangelo."*

You too can become an unsung hero. You can have great **influence** and impact on those around you. However, it may not be through your own designs or speculations. God created you with a definite purpose in mind, so you should allow Him to work it all out. Realising that anything that God's leads you into will already contain the power and ability to influence others.

A word of caution! Asking to be filled with new wine is far more risky. New wine is still in the fermentation process and it can therefore produce explosive energy. So you cannot ask for it if you have not already decided to become a **new wineskin**. Are you ready for explosive influence???