

8

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL



PREPARATION

- Read Romans 7:24–8 and 13 and Matthew 5:17–48
- Watch Henri Nouwen's sermon "Being the Beloved 1", available via YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFwfYpd0F18
- Also watch via the Europartners' YouTube channel -> conference 2015: about Identity and Calling, "**Struck by Grace**" by Arie de Rover (long version)

SESSION OBJECTIVE

- Learn more about the core of the Christian life
- Learn more about and gain insight into how God and the Holy Spirit work in people's lives
- Learn more about the influence this has on your actions and your work
- Learn how you can find renewal

Ask people to write down the things that touched on the previous evening. These points can be used during the prayer session this afternoon.

WELCOME

Saturday programme

- 08.00 am Breakfast
- 09.00 am Chapter 8 'Spiritual Renewal' incl. film and discussion
- 10.45 am Tea and coffee and a short walk
- 11.30 am Chapter 9 'Spiritual Renewal'
- 12.30 pm Lunch
- 01.30 pm Prayer time
- 03.30 pm End of weekend

PRAYER

STATEMENT

Unless someone can change human nature, we will face more crises.
(Alan Greenspan in a debate about the causes of the 2009 economic crisis)

What are your thoughts on this statement? Briefly share your thoughts.

THE INTERACTIVE INTRODUCTION

ETHICAL LIFE AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

When we speak about Christian influence on society and the economy, we are often referring to behaviour and values. These Jewish, Christian and humanist values are a blessing to society. The roots of these values can be found in the Bible and in our Christian culture and tradition.

But we are not speaking here of something that is pre-eminently Christian. The values find their roots in God and are therefore biblical. But if this is limited to a change in outward behaviour only, the 'window dressing', then no real renewal has taken place.

AN EXAMPLE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The 'Corporate Social Responsibility' title is often used only to create a sympathetic market profile and to generate more profit. There is no actual renewal within the company or the company's involvement in society; it has merely become a 'tool' to secure the original purpose of good returns and profit. The company itself has not undergone any renewal, but merely created a new outward image.

What it should be about is renewal of the heart and God's guidance; only from this perspective can we truly find renewal. This is also true for us personally as human beings. Alan Greenspan understood this and was referring to the origin of human nature.

Jesus did exactly this in the Sermon of the Mount. (Matthew 5-7). He says:

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

The Pharisees had laid everything down in laws and regulations: 613 laws and commandments. Each aspect of society had been included in these laws and commandments, and people knew exactly what was expected of them in each and every situation. However, Jesus says: If this does not reach further than commandments and outward show, it has no meaning.

Jesus subsequently cuts to the heart of the commandments, to the mainspring of human motivation; It is here that change must take place.

Living and running a business according to biblical values and regulations could certainly be described as ethical business practice, but this does not touch the heart of Christian renewal.

CHRISTIAN LIVING AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

The person Jesus Christ wants to participate in our lives and work through the Holy Spirit.

We do not become new beings by focusing on a change of behaviour and values. The road to change and renewal of the heart through behaviour and values is impassable. Under pressure or after time, the old heart will reappear and once again influence our decisions.

A renewal of the heart is needed. It is this heart – our inner beings – that Jesus wants to renew, a process which in turn will bear its fruit.

By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. (Matthew 7:16-18)

This refers to the nature of the tree (human nature), not the fruit. We do not change the tree by hanging different fruit on it. An apple tree does not become a pear tree just because we hang pears on this tree. It may look like one, but it will never be a pear tree.

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND VALUES

Our businesses and cultures change through a change of values, values which for a great part determine our behaviour.

A popular theory among behavioural scientists says that a minimum of 95 percent of our behaviour is automatic. This means that, at most, 5 percent of our behaviour is planned or made consciously. Our unconscious behaviour is determined by our upbringing, frame of reference and/or experience.

If we wish to come to a more structural change of behaviour in business and society, we will need to mutually endorse the importance of the intended plan with open hearts. There are two aspects here that we cannot easily bring about on our own:

Mutuality

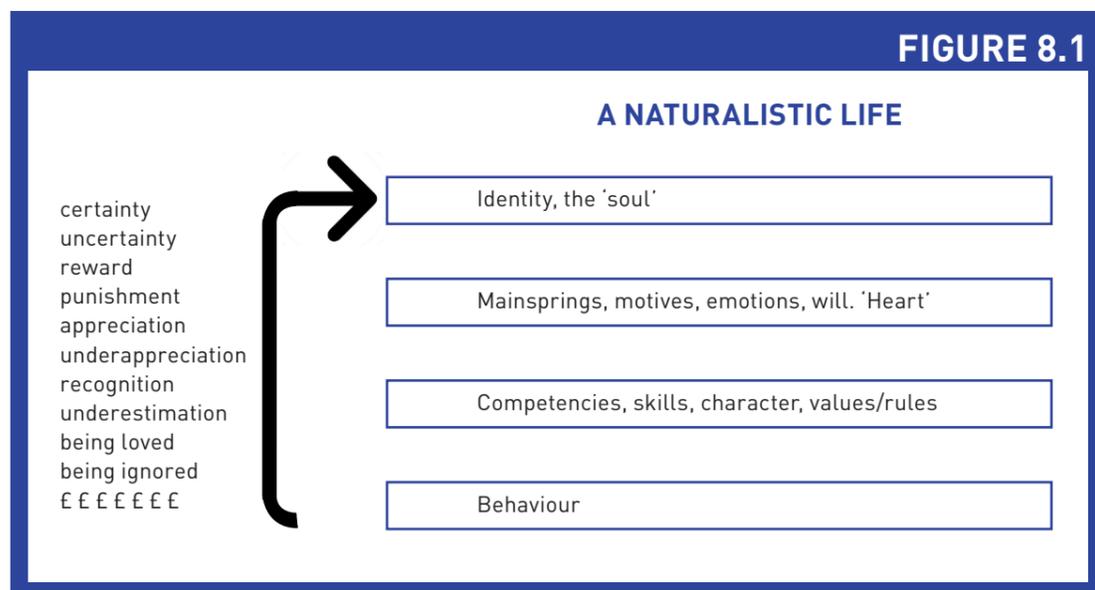
- Because we often have different interests.
- Because we do not have a common objective.
- If there is a common objective, then we often want to be the ones in charge, which consequently colours our motivation for achieving this objective.

Endorsement with an open heart

- The ideal is often endorsed, but we find it difficult to pay the price that it requires. Other desires of the heart often weigh heavier.
- [The heart has its reasons, whereof reason knows nothing \(Blaise Pascal\)](#). Some people believe that outward changes suffice: As long as people do what they have agreed on together.

To encourage the desired behaviour, we often use the following instruments:

- as much as possible, we allow people to work in areas that they are skilled in, where their talents lie and where their character best fits;
- training and equipping: We equip people and make it possible for them to act in line with our visions by training them;
- we teach people 'healthy' Jewish/Christian/humanistic values and show them the benefits of these values for themselves, society and the economy. If this proves insufficient, we reinforce our 'values' with rules;
- we reward adapted behaviour with bonuses, status, possessions, esteem, love, attention and/or recognition. We reward people in ways that encourage them and strengthen their identity.



This system is used to mould people into the type of human beings that we like to see, and we use their own desires to achieve our desired goals. People themselves are not renewed; it is only their behaviour that changes.

There is no renewal here, because we merely make use of the existing nature of humankind to motivate people to behave differently. In other words, we confirm the status quo.

Behaviour rather than the human heart has become the reference point, and we have made specific behaviour the objective rather than God's glory, thereby confusing the goal and the means. This change in the original and essential reference points will have consequences.



EXAMPLE, THE FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 2008/2009/2010

(See also Session 2 'Healthy Ambitions')

A financial economy that is an end unto itself is destined to contradict its goals, since it is no longer in touch with its roots and has lost sight of its constitutive purpose. In other words, it has abandoned its original and essential role of serving the real economy and, ultimately, of contributing to the development of people and the human community. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 369-2004)

The twisting of values for the wrong motivation has led to the current financial crisis, where profit and profit maximisation became more important than

servicing and commitment. The loss of love, commitment and joy that were gained through service to others, in turn, led to emptiness and futility: Material possessions, numbers and performance became more important than love.

We are trying now to fix the crisis by implementing new values, rules, inspections, governments, etc. But another new crisis is threatening, because our hearts have not really changed.

Unless someone can change human nature, we will face more crises.
 (Alan Greenspan in a debate about the causes of the 2009 economic crisis)

THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR HEARTS AND OUR MOTIVES

Christ and God did not strive for behavioural change, but for a new humanity. This 'new' humanity is humankind as God had intended, as it was reflected in Jesus Christ, God's son.

By believing in Jesus' life, death and resurrection we give Jesus the opportunity to remould us in His image. This happens when the Holy Spirit descends into our hearts.

The Holy Spirit wants to renew us in the image of our Lord Jesus. He does this by aligning our personal motives, desires and emotions with those of Jesus Christ.

CHANGES THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ask people from the group to share examples from their own lives or share examples from your own life.

Winning > Service through love

A strong sense of competition can lead to great human achievements, but does it lead to service through love? In the economy too, service through love is the basis and the heart of good performance. Do not provide service just to win from competitor X, but rather provide your service because you care for the customer. This leads to better service, benefits your company's profit and serves the benefit of society. Jesus came to serve, not to win. But because of His service through love, He came out the winner.

Power/influence > Serving the truth

We are often looking for power and influence. After all, we need to convince the world of our ideals, products or services. The more people who embrace

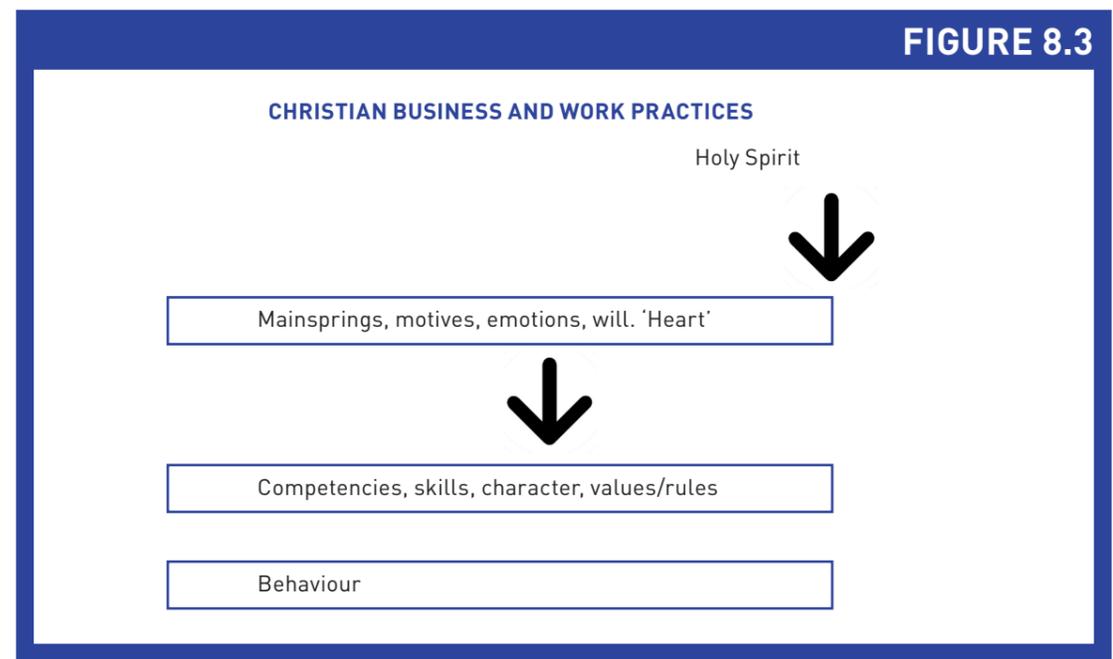
our ideal/product the better. But does this lead to a better society? Power has a dark side, with a loss of freedom and love. Jesus tried to convince the people of the truth, without trying to exert power over them. The impact that He had on society was enormous and still today His words are embraced as the truth. People are inspired by Jesus daily. His influence and power proved to be greater than all of those in power at the time of His life.

Control > Surrender in love and freedom

Control gives us the feeling that we can predict and control the future. But what future are we talking about? A business where there is no room for responsibility and freedom belittles its staff and destroys initiative and creativity. Control also requires a lot more time and effort on the part of managers and leaders, it kills people's spirits and people end up doing little beyond what is specifically asked of them.

Appreciation > Called to justice

We often look for recognition from other people. We like to hear others speak well of us. We please others and do what they want us to do, so that they will like us. Jesus did not allow Himself to be led by these motives, but was led by His desire to obey God. The steadfast choice that Jesus made for obedience led Him to victory and God gave Him a name that stands above all others. Know that God's appreciation is for eternity and is of more value that you could ever obtain from people.



People in our society who have 'good' vision are also highly respected. Steadfast leaders with good vision bring prosperity to companies and societies. Have you ever seen a leader take his company to the top merely because he wanted to be popular?

Egocentrism > The other

A Dutch example from 2008: ABN/AMRO was brought down by egos with a primary focus on shareholder value instead of the client.

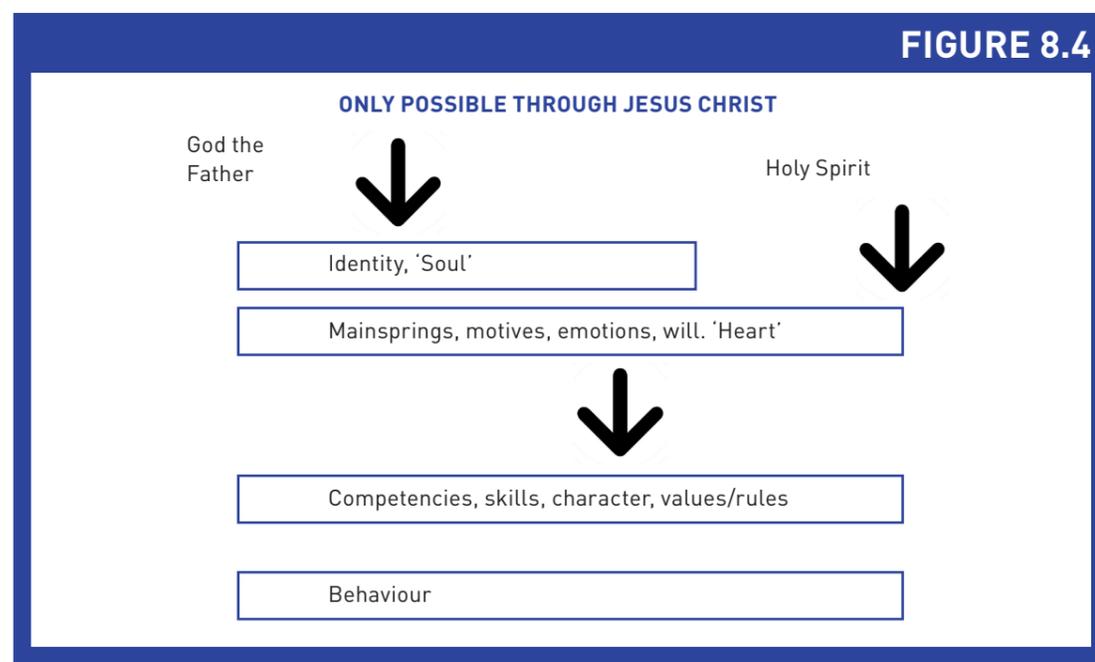
The DSB Bank was also brought down in 2009 by a bad earnings model. This model served primarily the interest of profit and not the interests of the client. The wrong products were sold with extremely high margins to people who had no room to manoeuvre.

Possessions > Sharing and joy

Those who have a lot know the restrictions of belongings and possession. Joy and fulfilment are only partly found within our belongings and possession.

Sharing brings smiles, happy faces and joy.

However, we seldom seem capable of jumping over our own shadows. Think for instance of development aid, the international agreements on aid and the WTO negotiations (and the consequences for developing countries).



Fear > Love

Fear is one of our strongest motives. It spreads like fire and makes people lonely, cold and hostile towards others. Only a love that is open and fearless allows us to bloom as we were intended to. But this love can only grow if we have first learned to experience love. God loved us first and is the source of all love. Love is the best motivation for passion, commitment and the provision of good service.

Suspicion > Mercy

Suspicion leads to a legalistic society full of bureaucracy, agreements and rules. If we cannot trust each other and there is no mercy, how do we do business?

With each accident or breach of rules, great punishment is meted out by society or other parties involved. As business owners/entrepreneurs we are sometimes busier safeguarding ourselves against risks and liabilities than we are running our businesses.

This afternoon we look at the process of release and renewal.

IDENTITY

Deeper than our motives lies our identity.

What is our identity?

Is this related to our work, our possessions or to what others say about us? Or do we find our identity in God's love?

How does this work through our lives?

Now show Henri Nouwen's sermon 'Being the Beloved'.

Afterwards have a break or a moment of silence so that everyone can process the message of the sermon.

JESUS CHRIST

We can only receive God's Spirit through Jesus Christ: He opened the way to the Father. Only by believing in His words and trusting in His substitute life, suffering, death and resurrection does the possibility open up for us to communicate with God the Father.

Only if we, through Jesus Christ, entrust God with our lives can we be renewed by the Holy Spirit. Christian life begins and develops from the top down. The reverse is not possible.

