

THE STUCK SYNDROME

ARTICLE 5: INTUITIVE BREAKTHROUGH

Have you ever been grabbed by a strange sensation that at the same time something is happening you have seen it before, somehow, somewhere? Have you ever had a dream that gave insight into a problem? Have you ever oddly known something was right even though all the data showed otherwise? Welcome to the realm of intuition, the wild card of the mind. Intuition defies our reason, and exists beyond evidence and explanation. Exactly what it is is uncertain. Could it be a sixth sense that all humans possess? We are not sure. It is a strictly human ability or otherwise? We cannot say. We do know, however, that both Christian and pagan alike make use of intuition. Therefore, the main criteria for looking at intuition becomes: Is it God focused or not? For certainly, there are diverse and dangerous spiritual forces that can lead us astray.

There is much to indicate that God has given mankind special powers of discernment that cannot be understood rationally. Some societies are much more aware of the intuitive sense. Some ancient cultures may have depended heavily on intuitive insights for survival. It could be that the vast knowledge of the particular use of herbs and plants for medicinal purposes came from intuition. Trial and error methods would have been practically impossible, if not very hazardous. Perhaps then, our modern society has forgotten the power of intuition. It has unbalanced itself in favor of rational thought. Our education has shortchanged us and made us narrow people. It may be wise to heed the advice of Mark Twain; “Never let formal education get in the way of learning.”

Of course, Christians should not be fearful of realm of intuition, on the contrary, the Christian life is designed to be intuitively centered. We, more than anyone, should be open to mysterious and odd leadings apart from ourselves. The Bible is full of examples of strange urgings and leadings of God. But where do we find similar examples of intuition now? There is one odious example that we might not consider. At nighttime little booths appear, here and there, near the train stations. Of course, I am referring to the fortunetellers. These people supposedly offer spiritual counsel and advice to a huge percent of the population, especially to young women. Certainly a great number are charlatans, but they are filling a void in society where perhaps the church should be. People are looking for intuitive spiritual counsel. One of the best examples I have found of spiritual counsel in the Christian world is strong among Catholics and Anglican traditions. Since at least the days of the Desert Fathers, there has been the practice of spiritual direction. It is a holistic approach to counseling a soul, and it is highly intuitive. The director keeps a special sensitivity to the leadings of the Spirit, seeking guidance

and promptings from God for insight. Evangelicals could benefit much from the intuitive nature of spiritual direction.

But what specifically is the benefit of intuition for a stuck church? First, we must consider that our world is changing at bullet-train speed. Opportunities arise and are gone in a flash. Timing is everything. Stuck churches are often behind in recognizing opportunities and moving with them. Stuck churches generally look for other models to copy, instead of intuiting, that is, sensing the Spirit's leadings themselves. Barna states that, "ministry by mimicry almost always invariably results in deterioration, rather than growth" It is because of this slothfulness, that a stuck church misses God given opportunities. An example that is close to home for me is the ministry to the contemporary family. Looking back to the neglect of homes in the 70's, it should not have taken much imagination to anticipate the problems we are facing now. Parenting has been a hot issue in recent years, but the church has only recently begun to realize this. However, a year ago, Nichiren Shoshu was reported to have over 80 counseling centers and 600 trained lay counselors for distraught parents struggling with children who refuse to attend school. A very smart move, considering today's climate.

So how do we take advantage of intuition? I recommend a balance of understanding and then letting go. First, we get sufficient background on things, then before God we set this information aside and look to Him. He will often use the background of information; sometimes He will go a totally new direction. This balance of understanding and letting go, acknowledges that we are not brainless, but it also dashes our self-reliance.

Does use of intuition seem dangerous? A number of years ago Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, believed God was leading to build a university in southern California. Millions of dollars were invested in this project, but it eventually flopped, and everything was lost. Dr. Bright still does not know why. But I will vouch for the fact that Bill Bright is a very humble man, despite the fact that he founded the largest mission in the world and has been one of the most influential people in history. We may think that Bill Bright's intuition was off, but then it is possible that God led him into the failure. After all, what is more important, another university, or a humble leader?

Now a person who does not use intuition could rightfully be accused of either fear or pride. Fear that God will not follow through, or pride that they can figure things out for themselves. Either option is guaranteed to get a church stuck. So how can we begin to be more in tune with our intuitive side? Here is a list of activities that may help us replace our usual patterns of reasoning and begin to discover new ways of sensing.

Play with paradox.
Consider dreams.
Listen to unfamiliar music.
Keep from clutter and busy people.
Fast and pray for extended periods.
Read poetry over and over.
Become sensitive to nature. Listen.
Envision walls of your mind falling.
Cancel appointments God has not specifically ordained.

If our churches are stuck, it is likely our minds, and patterns of thinking are stuck as well. If we are at a dead end, we may find totally new ways to look at our problems through intuition.

Much of my understanding of intuition has come from my father's life. Although he was a great thinker, he also lived on a somewhat mysterious plane. One example of his intuition was in relation to the death of my brother. Although there were five children born to my family, my father must have intuited something about my brother, Steve. Strangely, my father took out a life insurance policy on Steve and Steve alone. Within that year, my thirty two year old brother was killed when a truck dropped a spare tire in front of him on the freeway. The very next year my invalid father died after a long battle with diabetes. After his death, the insurance money arrived. So even though my father was a poor retired missionary when he died, he still provided for my mother. How did my father sense all this? God alone can say. But I think God wants to tell us many things. Daily He speaks. Can it be that we are ignoring the Voice, sometimes even with busy prayers? Ignorantly asking for Him to give us wisdom and deliver us from the stuck syndrome. A silent stillness may prove quite revealing.

Resources:

Barna, George *User Friendly Churches*, Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1991

Rowan, Roy *The Intuitive Manager*, Boston MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1986

Weintraub, Sandra *The Hidden Intellegence*, Boston: Butterworth & Heinemann, 1998