

"Disillusionment"

by Gayle D. Erwin

I love the idealistic world of a child. I've experienced the challenge of watching my children discover that the world outside is not a loving, caring and honest world. To see my own children cheated or bullied causes me as much grief as it does them. I hate the process of disillusionment, but I know it to be necessary.

Disillusionment is the loss of hope and trust in those things that had made promises but don't deliver. I propose that maturity is being disillusioned and reacting properly. Idealism is the belief that all things or people are, or can be, good and right. Idealism, fragile at best, is a dozen eggs facing a steamroller. Dreams and expectations die so easily. Visions fade. A horrible thing called cynicism set in. Cynicism is disillusionment with a total loss of idealism. Maturity is being disillusioned by those things that ought to disillusion but retaining hope in those things that ought to foster hope. But what are the "oughts"?

I am a disillusioned man filled with idealism. Mature? Not yet. Maybe when I am 80. Idealistic? Incurably so. Perhaps disillusioned and idealistic sound like mutually exclusive terms. So I offer explanation.

HOPE DEFERRED

There was a time when I thought traditions offered hope. They seem to foster such stability and, often, beauty. Then I discovered that traditions are not intelligently begun nor are they formed for common good. They are for some smaller group's convenience or else they accidentally happen.

Does politics deliver? I seriously considered, at the urging of some friends, a run for public office. Then I realized that politics is basically the decline and fall of anyone who chooses to get involved. Could I withstand the powerful pull of money and power? Could I maintain a true choice of what is good and best, or would I be just another slave of the self-interests of a political party or wealthy company? I knew that my flesh was too weak. In the heat of political campaigns, as I watch and decry religious identification with certain parties, people often ask me, "Then just who do you like?" I tell them that I have yet to see a president that I thought deserved my vote. By the time you reach the top, corruption is a given.

Amazing isn't it how we are so readily fooled into thinking that political parties and politicians are truly interested in our ethics and goals. The gates of all capital cities should post this rule of politics: "Get in power. Stay in power. Increase your power. Power corrupts."

There was a time when I thought a religious system/denomination was the source of all truth. As I moved deeper into its inner workings, I discovered that it operated with the same rules and corruption of power and money as the world systems. By that point, I was much quicker in spotting hopelessness and giving up on those things I considered hopeless. At one point, I felt that scientific knowledge and intellectual development would ease the tortured path of mankind, but it seems only to develop gadgets we can live without and instruments to kill more people at once than ever before.

THE RESUCE

How, then, can I maintain any sort of idealism. The answer is simple: Hope and Grace. I live with the constant hope that Jesus will soon return and the government will then be upon His shoulders. Scandals and corruption will end. I revel in the hope that more and more people will

come to know Jesus and by that become people of good will. I live also understanding that this messed-up humanity, by its degradation, nominates itself for Grace. I lie realizing that Grace exists for no one unless we are its conduits.

So, one can live idealistically and realistically at the same time, recognizing the hope we have and not being fooled by the world's actions that come from its hopelessness and at the same time, acting toward the world with Grace as if we were ambassadors for Christ.

"Attitude"

Here is an excellent quote by Dr. Charles Swindoll

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on my life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than what other people say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude that we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitude..."