

4th June 2007



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## Tearing Down

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Have you noticed that God has a habit of tearing things down? It is just a feature of His workstyle. He hates barriers, divisions, walls and ceilings. We, on the other hand, seem to make a habit of building and designing these same things. So I am going to invite you in this piece to examine your thinking and workstyle with this in mind.

God hates divisions between men and women. So Jesus goes out of His way to meet a Samaritan woman, restore a woman framed by bigots and develop an inner circle of friends which includes both men and women. His Spirit is poured out on men and women, sons and daughters with equal generosity. But He also makes a point of meeting a deranged man, a diseased man and a blind beggar. In these actions (His work) God is demonstrating that He is obsessed with all people of both sexes to the point of creating equal value, roles and equipping for action. In Christ there really is neither male nor female - we are all rescued in the same way.

We on the other hand like to build glass ceilings where women cannot rise to the top. We create pay scales where women are treated poorly. We also typecast and caricature male and female tasks, roles or responsibilities. Men can be vilified, mocked or devalued by women and women oppressed and ill treated by men. History tends to balance the inequality in the favour of the male.

In churches we hide behind theological slights of hand in order to justify valuing one gender above another so leadership tends to become male and parenting becomes female. But Jesus will have none of it. God detests it and tears down gender barriers and smashes glass ceilings.

God hates divisions between racial groups. So barriers between 'Jew' and 'Gentile' symbolising racism in general are torn down. 'Dividing walls' according to Paul are literally things of the past. If anything the majority are challenged to welcome, care for and empower the minority (stranger) in the community.

But we tend to prefer discrimination on the basis of skin colour, background or origin. We like to reserve the best places for our own kind (whoever our own kind may be) on the pretext of gifting, expertise or qualification. God hates that. So He invites the Jew, Samaritan, Greek, Roman or even the English to join the great adventure called the Kingdom.

God hates distance and ritual separation. We, however, like to think in terms of holy days, sacred and secular jobs, holy places and special people. I am not just talking in religious terms here. How many large companies have floors for senior staff only, special car parking spaces and bigger better offices for some? We love to separate,

Bible Reading

TopTips?



see below

discriminate and categorise. We love to make information available to the privileged few. We like to build systems which exclude and devalue.

Jesus would explain however to anyone who had the sense to listen that it was neither in Jerusalem or any specific mountain or any holy place, day or occasion that God was to be contacted. It is much more to do with power and accuracy than it is to do with ritual and rules. It might be worth reflecting on how many conflicts would cease if we dropped our belief that one place was particularly sacred to one particular group at the expense of any others.

To challenge this approach that humans have of dividing genders and races or separating people on the basis of their status, position or beliefs is extremely dangerous. It creates hot debates and attacks vested interests. It inevitably attracts a backlash. Eventually the powers that be will rise up to destroy the challenger.

This brings us to the cross. This is a place where all walls fall, barriers crumble and divisions die. There is no private viewing box here, everyone has to kneel.

When this piece of work was done God ripped the temple curtain down - splitting it in two from the top. He really does hate divisions.

So I repeat my challenge. Which type of workstyle do you want to pursue? Tearing down or building up? No one is so naïve as to believe that all distinctions are divisions, but nevertheless, there is quite a lot of work to do.

Work well,

Geoff Shattock

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## **Here is some Biblical background for this week's Wake Up Call**

### **Ephesians 2 v 10-22**

<sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

#### **One in Christ**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— <sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

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- **New 'WorkTalk TopTips' pages.** We are inviting you to share your TopTips this month on coping with 'Pressure and Stress'. At the end of each month we will be working on a new resource to create a series of WorkTalk TopTips combining WorkNet members' insights with Geoff Shattock's WorkTalk TopTips. Click [here](#) to post your TopTip.
- **WorkNet is ten** years old this year we are now planning celebrations and will invite your input -more to follow
- **WAKE UP CALL [ARCHIVES](#) HAS BEEN UPDATED THERE ARE NOW OVER 230 PAST EDITIONS**
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Also remember to have a look at the Bible sections for the biblical background to your Wake Up Call

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