

The Power of Hope

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Having experienced the blessing of being raised in a Christian home, with sincere Christian parents, I have never been able to imagine living out my life any other way. The other ways never made sense to me; the longer I live, the more I see that God's plan for how to live has proven to be the best. But what about Canadians who are raised without the benefit of a Christian home and who have very little exposure to God's plan? Many of them—by default—go down different paths and experience much different outcomes.

One of the books I am currently reading is entitled *Peace and Good Order*.¹ It was written by Harold R. Johnson, author of several other books, including another excellent one entitled *Firewater – How Alcohol is Killing My People (And Yours)*.² Harold (recently deceased) was a Cree Indian, born and raised on the Treaty 6 Lands of Central Saskatchewan. After working in various occupations, including mining at the age of 35, he decided to become a lawyer. He first earned his Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Saskatchewan, then later a Master of Laws degree (LLM) from Harvard University. He really put in the work to achieve these degrees.

As far as we know, Harold never became a Christian; he was pretty clear about that in his writings. Still, some of the thoughts he expressed from his years of defending—and sometimes prosecuting—some of his own people in the courts spoke a lot of truth to me. One topic in particular was the importance of hope and its relationship to crime and self-harm. Child poverty in Canada is an issue he tied directly to the absence of hope. Although statistics show that one in five Canadian children live in poverty,³ Harold believed that poverty alone is not the problem.

Reflecting on the connection between poverty and its causes, he wrote this:

"The problem seems to be about hope. People living in impoverished conditions tend to have less hope anything will ever change. In the famous marshmallow test⁴ (PDF) conducted at Stanford University in the 1970's, children were offered either one marshmallow now or two if they waited 15 minutes. Follow-up studies showed that those who chose to wait did better in future years, with lower body mass indexes and higher SAT scores. The marshmallow test was more predictive of life outcomes than IQ tests.

What the marshmallow test shows is that people will postpone gratification if they believe they will later be rewarded. People who do not believe a reward is coming, who do not have hope, will take the certainty of immediate gratification. People without hope will smoke the cigarette now knowing it will shorten their lives, will eat the cake now knowing it will affect their waistlines and their health, and will drink the alcohol now knowing it causes heart disease, stroke and cancer and will impair their decision-making, resulting sometimes in severe problems.

When you have no hope of finding a job, why bother to look for one? When you have no hope of a college or university degree, why go to high school? When today holds no more promise than yesterday, why bother to get out of bed?"

Essentially, what he's saying is, "Where there is no hope, there is no desire." This may describe the state of mind and soul of many Canadians as they have looked to Christ-less families, teachers, counsellors, politicians and political parties.

I recall, at numerous times in my adult life, after hearing so many times the cliché 'Jesus is the answer', asking myself, "What was the question?" I believe that is a question that many in the world would ask as well. Christ is the answer, but to what question or what situation...and how is He the answer? The solutions to so many troubles in today's culture are in fact found in Christ's teaching, and they go beyond the plan of eternal salvation; they apply to living here on earth. If society were interested in sincerely listening to the answers, there would be hope, but for the most part, it seems that much of society prefers to do things their own way rather than have to be accountable to Christ. In other words, as it says in Romans 1:28, they are " . . . given over to delusions and do what they ought not do." It is a sad and desperate situation driven by the master deceiver.

At CHP Canada,⁵ we offer biblically based policies and solutions to the mess that Canada continues to wade into, not to gain votes, but because those solutions are based on the one true hope for mankind. This must be our reason to keep at it. When we have done all we can and all we have been called to, then we must stand firm on God's promises, trusting him to give us the strength we need. Our hope is in Christ. No matter how bleak the circumstances, we know that Christ can make a way for us. With Jesus, ALL things are possible!

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Footnotes

¹ www.amazon.ca/Peace-Good-Order-Indigenous-Justice/dp/0771048726

² www.amazon.ca/Firewater-Alcohol-Killing-People-Yours/dp/0889774374/

³ www.ctvnews.ca/canada/article/1-in-5-children-live-in-poverty-national-report-card-says/

⁴ www.apa.org/topics/willpower-gratification.pdf

⁵ www.chp.ca

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