



Peninsula City Church

The Radical Christian

**The Radical Idea of a Firm Centre and
Soft Edges of Good Faith**

Michael Podhaczky

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The Radical Idea of a Firm Centre and Soft Edges of Good Faith

An Introduction

Q. How do we hold to the firm centre and keep the soft edges as we radically relate to those around us?

Here we will briefly look at what is at the firm centre (that is our non-negotiables) of a radical faith; and what needs to be at the soft edges (our ideas, opinions and things that we are really not sure about). In our daily walk with Christ, we need to be more open to talking with each other or maybe even forgoing somethings that we have set in place as essential that maybe really are not. What is the fundamental and radical essence of being a Christ-follower today and has it changed from days gone by or is it still the same? Do we even know what does it mean to radically follow Jesus Christ in Australia in this day and age?

1. An individual faith

Q. What is meant by the radical thought that, there needs to be a together faith?

Now that is a radical thought that there needs to be a together faith. Do you realise that there is only one church? Well if so why do we try to live our faith as individuals? This is especially since the church was the people in the community and not just an individual or a group of individuals. We have a tendency to let this kind of mindset rob us of a Kingdom of God way of living.

As part of being part of one church, we need to have a firm centre (our faith non-negotiables). These are core beliefs and values that we live our faith by each day. These can be beliefs like,

- Salvation is only found in Christ Jesus
- He came to earth died for sin was resurrected and went back to heaven
- The Bible is His only authoritative Word for things about faith and life
- There is only one God who has revealed Himself as three-persons
- Going and making Christ-followers
- This is some of the main ones

However, there are also some Kingdom values that we need to hold to and continually put into practice. It might be asked 'What are some of the main Kingdom values?' These are things like love + believe + new life = radically good faith together. We could include the Fruit of the Spirit, and even a continual dying to self and serving God and others etc. Some of the soft edges (our ideas, opinions and things that we are not sure about), like when, is Jesus coming back, which translation of the Bible is better, which is the best worship style, hospitality and community, and how to preach the Bible etc.

The idea of the firm centre is to have something solid and immovable for the Christ-follower to stand on as part of their faith. The soft edges are things that those around us Christ-followers or not can grab on to so that they might reach the firm centre. If we are not careful, we can end up having this back-to-front. That is, we have had hard edges and a soft centre. We do not have a solid footing since we do not know what we believe. Then we make it so hard for others to grab onto what we are about since the edges are too hard. Jesus had a firm centre, but soft edges and He encourages Christ-followers throughout the ages to do the same. However, a study of Church history will tell us that we often have gotten it the wrong way around.

Consequently, one of the first things that is not part of the firm centre or soft edges is the issue of the ‘Big Me’ syndrome. For many, it would appear that the church and faith are about what we can get out of it by being together. It appears that in a selfie world that life’s all about our rights and needs, rather than His will and our serving. Sadly, the church has swallowed this lie, and we live the ‘Big Me’ life. It has rightly been said that,

“The sooner good faith Christians renounce me-me-me belief, the sooner we can offer others a way out of their own self-centeredness. This is the church at its best: healing sinners of our self-inflicted wounds so we can become healers too.”¹

This is not a new thing, as Jesus said this to those around Him,

“Then He said to the crowd, ‘If any of you wants to be My follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow Me’ (Lk 9:23 NLT).

Notice that Jesus mentioned three things to being a true Christ-follower:

- You must turn from your selfish ways (own interests): This is a command, which needs to be obeyed once and for all for your own good.
- Take up your cross every day: This is also command, which needs to be obeyed once and for all and then continued to be lived out.
- Follow Me: This is a command, which needs to be obeyed as Christ-followers continually.

Imagine if we did this with others in mind. We might have more of a chance to love, believe and live as we are meant to do so. Then and only then can we have any chance of a radically good faith together. Notice that Jesus prefaced this by saying “If you want to be My follower,” do these things. Well, we are Christ-followers, so why aren’t we doing these things as we should? Just look around the world today, the church is being moved to the fringe, and one reason is that we are not doing these things as we should.

2. Growing together

Q. So, how do we grow together without killing each other?

Here is an interesting idea, what if we sincerely loved one another and those around us, instead of just loving ourselves. What if we believed what the Bible teaches and put it into practice and believed in God and really believed in the value of others. Finally, what if we really an honestly lived as Christ-followers wherever God has placed us to live, work or study and play? Wow, wouldn’t that be a novelty? People around us might even be moved by this and sit up and take notice. We might even have a right to say something within our community.

In actual fact, Jesus lived this way, and that is why there so much response either for or against Him. Either people loved and flocked to Him, or wanted to kill Him. Regardless,

“Jesus practised the sacred art of seeing people.”²

Wow the sacred art of seeing people, now that’s something original. I expect you know how it feels to be treated as someone’s pet project as they practice their latest religious fad on you. We are so good at using and abusing people for our own gratification and praises.

¹ Kinnaman, David; Lyons, Gabe. *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme.* (p. 228). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² Kinnaman, & Lyons, *Good Faith*, (p. 232). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

But what if we did this, no; really did this on a daily basis. As Christ-followers, we turned from our selfish ways, had soft edges for those around us to grab on to, took up our cross daily, and follow Christ on His path. Imagine if we began to stick to the main features of our faith and got rid of the cultural, harmful traditional and denominational baggage. That is, we stood securely on the firm centre of what is central to our faith and kept the side issues or debatable things as soft edges as we radically relate to those around us. Whether we like it or not and,

“Regardless of the circumstances, the principle is clear: what we do and say and how we do and say it are all critical to good faith.”³

Paul encouraged the Corinthians regarding having a firm centre and soft edges as he wound up his first letter to them. He said too,

¹³ “Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. ¹⁴ And do everything with love” (1 Cor 16:13-14 NLT).

It has been well said that,⁴

“A firm centre and soft edges mean...”

- We become more involved in the culturally unfamiliar
- We are creators of goodness and beauty
- We approach the growing opposition in our day by leading with humility
- We fear not when our grace is not met with humility
- We remain even more deeply rooted in biblical faithfulness
- Sharing our faith is at the heart of why we live this way
- We need to remember that Christ-centeredness means we will never be marginalised.”

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. How do we hold to the firm centre and keep the soft edges as we radically relate to those around us?

Is this even possible to live like this as we radically relate to those around us? Well, Jesus and the early church did, and the result of this was an explosion of those wanting to join them. Maybe we have it back to front and have a soft centre and hard edges. That is we have lost what we are meant to be and believe and put people off by becoming hard-hearted and unloving. The thing about having a firm centre and keep the soft edges is that Christ-followers have something solid to stand on and people have something grab onto in life. As it has been said,

“When we have soft edges and firm centres, we can see people as Jesus dearly loves. And when aided by the Holy Spirit, we see them; we can look beyond the trends and into real people’s hurts, hopes, and needs.”⁵

³ Kinnaman, & Lyons, *Good Faith*, (p. 257). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Corey, Barry H. *Love Kindness: Discover the Power of a Forgotten Christian Virtue*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2016), 201-219.

⁵ Kinnaman, & Lyons, *Good Faith*, (p. 232). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

We can say that it is hard in these days to be a Christ-follower. However, what about the days in which Jesus and the early church lived, it was a lot harder than today. We need to keep things in right context. Even if our surrounding challenges us,

“Living in a pluralistic culture means learning how to get along, understand the ‘other,’ build friendships, and communicate across divides. These are essential skills. Good faith Christians lead the way when we have confidence in what we believe and practice seeing those who believe differently.”⁶

So, do we know what it means to radically follow Jesus Christ in Australia in this day and age? It is not protesting, but reforming according to His Kingdom and will. It is not reacting, but acting from a Kingdom of God perspective. It may be said that we need to be,

“Led by love, grounded in biblical belief, and ready to live as a counterculture for the common good, we trust that our good faith will be used by God to renew the world.”⁷

⁶ Kinnaman, & Lyons, *Good Faith*, (p. 234). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Kinnaman, & Lyons, *Good Faith*, (p. 262). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.