

Gonna Change My Way of Thinking

Right before I was in high school in the early 80's an amazing thing happened. Bob Dylan got saved and put out three "Christian" albums, his last in 1981. Finally, I could listen to Bob Dylan and not have my Mom get mad at me. The edge of his lyrics and social commentary were still much the same, except he was now singing about Jesus and a deep relationship with him that seemed to happen overnight.

What was really interesting is if you look a little deeper, Bob Dylan was saved in the Vineyard Church Movement, a Christian ministry with a mission statement that reads, in part: "We lean toward the lost, the poor, the outcast and the outsider..." Bob got saved into relationship and used his platform as a social icon to put out music about his relationship with Jesus.

What's more, Dylan's late seventies conversion to Christianity pre-dated the emergence of America's "religious right," and the post-1980s Republican coalition that brought together big-business conservatives and pro-life moral values Christians. This religious right came to publicly embody, for most Americans, the modern Evangelical movement. But it was not the movement that Bob Dylan had joined, and not the brand of faith most often reflected in his music.

Gonna change my way of thinking
Make myself a different set of rules
Gonna put my good foot forward

And stop being influenced by fools - *Gonna Change My Way of Thinking / Slow Train Coming Album*

The cultural shift that took place is very interesting. It shaped my view and is what formed my Christian identity as a teen in the early 80's. The emphasis shifted from a relationship with Jesus (the Jesus Movement) to a relationship with the rules (Evangelical Christianity). Culturally things shifted from "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) to sin management. There was a separatism that I grew up in, Christian vs. Carnal and you better not be carnal. Somehow the transforming power of Jesus got lost and got replaced with fear. We have learned to view the Christian life through the lens of sin management first rather than relationship. Jesus dealt with sin on the cross, it is finished. His priority is relationship.

When Jesus came on the scene and started His ministry the first thing He preached was, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17). Looking through the lens of sin management we were taught that this verse was talking about repentance of sin so you can go to heaven. You must repent so you can get to heaven, which is true. But in reality Jesus was saying something radically different here. He was saying you have to change how you think because I brought my world (Heaven – the King's domain and His rule and reign) with me. Repentance was always taught in reference to turning from sin, which is part of it, but here Jesus is saying' "you guys need to think differently, because I brought my world with me. Heaven is in stock, it is at hand." If we are focused on sin and looking through the lens of powerless sin management, we miss what is available and get stuck living a life focused on the enemy's torment. If we are focused on relationship with the King and His domain, we get to crush the enemy and his torment and begin to tap into the partnership that gives us access to life abundantly.

The enemy only has power where we agree. This should be motivation enough to change what we agree with. As for me, I'm Gonna Change My Way of Thinking!

Blake Schellenberg - Co-Labor Ministries