

# FOCUS ON FAITH

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## UNDER ATTACK

A couple of weeks ago I was listening to someone talking about how nearly all our long established public institutions are under attack. Think about it:

- The monarchy has lost much goodwill over the years with people questioning their value for money and the way in which they are (supposedly) detached from public opinion, for example in the aftermath of the untimely and sad loss of Diana, Princess of Wales
- Parliament has been rocked by the expenses scandal and other instances of sleaze and its reputation has probably been so tarnished that it will take years for any semblance of respect to be given our ultimate law-making body
- Marriage and family life is another area that has lost much of its former gloss and many people prefer not to make a life-long commitment to relationships that were the norm in previous generations
- Teachers aren't held in the high regard they used to be when I was at school and in the workplace employers often have different rules for themselves than their employees and perpetuate the "us and them" attitude
- And yes, even the Church has had its fair share of criticism for being old fashioned, out of touch with reality and present day norms because of traditional values and methods, not to mention the horrendous activities of some "men of the cloth".

### ***.. we have the choice to affect the way our lives turn out***

And now we have the Media in the spotlight, notably the News International publications, with the phone hacking debacle that has drawn another institution – the Police Force – into its murky orbit.

Now I have to declare an interest here. Whilst I'm certainly not someone who avoids change – in fact I quite like it and I never want to just rest on my laurels or maintain the status quo – there is something in me that admires some of our quaint old British institutions and idiosyncratic behaviours. After all where we would we be without Morris Dancers; parents races at school sports days; queuing patiently at the bank or post office counter and not throwing a tantrum when the position closes just as we get to the head of the line?

But seriously, much of what our forefathers and mothers took for granted has changed out of all recognition and whilst I

don't want to go back to the class system, or have to "doff my cap" to those who are supposedly "better than me" I am more than a little uncomfortable with the way some of our old values have at best been marginalised and at worst abandoned.

Values such as respect; loyalty; honesty; faithfulness; integrity aren't just "nice to have's", they are the bedrock of society and community living as well as individual relationships.

And you know these are all fundamental Christian principles and values. I appreciate many people think the Ten Commandments are just a list of rules and regulations designed to stop us enjoying ourselves but I like to think of them as spiritual, moral and ethical guidelines that will enable us to get the best out of life. After all the News of the World journalists and executives who sanctioned the phone hacking in effect stole personal information to which they had no legitimate right and those who have taken bribes acted out of greed and covetousness.

But even sadder in my view is that we, the great British public, lapped it up. The News of the World was the biggest selling English language newspaper in the world, so there's a case for arguing that we need to take some responsibility too. Why? Because many of us liked to hear the latest gossip about the celebrities and to covertly pry into other people's lives and so we ended up with the press we deserved.

Jesus said, "**Treat others as you want them to treat you**" (Matthew 7:12) because He recognised that we have the choice to affect the way our lives turn out. If we're forever moaning and groaning about our lot in life or being over-bearing, rude and disrespectful it's more than likely it will come back to us somehow, somewhere. The apostle Paul comments that "**we reap what we sow**" (Galatians 6:7) and it's a salutary lesson that consequences follow the choices we make.

Someone once said, "*The choices you make, makes you*" and each moment of each day we have the opportunity to make honourable choices that will benefit others.

Choosing to live God's way may just be the best form of defence against attack after all!

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on services at local Churches together with contact details, please log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk).