

## TALL RED WALLS

Deep in the center of Beijing, far from the ordinary people, was the Forbidden City, where the emperor resided and carried out affairs of the state. Spread out over a large area were audience halls, libraries, and theaters, all covered in tile roofs glazed in a yellow reserved solely for the emperor. Surrounding this area was the Imperial City, with granaries, temples, residences for high officials, and workshops of artisans who provided services and goods for the imperial household. Circling that was the Tartar City, occupied by Manchu bannermen; and to the south was the Native City, where the Chinese resided. Each of these cities within cities had its own wall, which clearly organized and defined the status of its residents.

The whole Forbidden City represented the lifestyle of its ancient emperors. Their life was isolated from the outside world by the tall red walls; their knowledge about the outside world was merely from the ministers nearby; their views about the outside world were only formed by reading the books written by the old generations. The height of the red walls surrounding the palace are almost 6 people tall. Thus, living a luxurious life in the city was like being bound in shackles—shackles of isolation.

It is a common happening for individuals to end up behind tall red walls, whether intended or not, that cloisters a select few and close out all others. The CEO of one of the major auto makers of this nation may have begun his corporate climb somewhere on a much lower rung of the ladder but once having ascended into the lofty tower of executive powers there begins a building of tall red walls. Soon management and up-stream offices and board room cohorts become the focus of immediate attention and the assembly line and torque-wrench handlers become lost in the fog of business.

Presidents love staged photos posing themselves with the common man however the reality is that their life is seldom joined with the average Joe at all, no, the president's life is behind tall red walls where temples of politics are the eating, sleeping and entertaining abodes of their true lifestyles and "Joe Average" is far away beyond the tall red walls. It was reported that ex-president George Bush once was visiting a National Grocers Association and was so unfamiliar with the common scanner process of the checkout that it showed how out-of-touch he was with the ordinary American that uses the process on a regular basis in real life.

The "Tall Red Walls" of isolation is not just a syndrome of the business and political world—they also are common among religious organizations. The same chemistry which makes the business and political world create selective isolation also performs its selfsame work among the organizations of religion. Tall red walls begin to rise around those that meet behind the close doors and associate themselves almost exclusively with the "inner crowd."

One of the fallacies of having elected officials that resign their churches to function as an administrator in an organization is that they suffer the loss of touch with the everyday reality of people and church related functions and are cloistered with individuals that suffer from the same malady—the result—tall red walls soon isolate the very ones that were supposed to have had the insight about the people and functions that they have now become isolated from. Soon the gathering and environment of those thus sequestered is one that is desperately lacking grassroots' concerns and vision. This scenario

continues until the “real” issues and problems are forbidden to enter the inner sanctum behind the tall red walls.

Once, as with ex-president Bush, the common affairs and actions of the local pastor and the local church are no longer understood and their struggles and warfare are irrelevant to the members of an out-of-touch administration and the voice is no longer upward toward the administration but has become downward from the administration then it can sadly be concluded that the tall red walls have indeed created a “forbidden city.”

When the stands for holiness and pure doctrine are at issue among the rank and file of the local pastors and over the tall red walls the conference tables are concerned only with political expedience and appeasement—then the isolation is truly complete. This situation spells doom not of principled and dedicated men but rather of a forbidden city dying behind tall red walls.

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