

# **MAKING DISCIPLES IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY**



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# MAKING DISCIPLES IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

We live in a world that constantly presents new challenges as society perpetually transitions from one global community to another. Societies change when bombarded with new information. And we live in the information century. No longer is the world citizen confined to ignorance. With the click of a mouse on a computer, even the most remote villager is launched into this new world order. The world has suddenly become a neighborhood that transcends national borders. With these changing times, come tremendous opportunities for those who can flow with the current of ever changing civilizations. As disciples of Jesus, it is incumbent upon us to seek for new and better opportunities to preach the gospel. Change, therefore, must not be seen as the loss of something, but the emergence of new possibilities to reach the souls of men. Because of our spirit of adventure for the future, we do not wail over the past, but seek with vision ways to take the gospel into a world that is destined to end. In our quest for opportunity, we are thus not enslaved to relics of the past that have run their course. On the contrary, we are excited about taking the fundamentals of the faith to a new world that has presented to us new and exciting open doors for world evangelism. If we would be productive servants of our Lord, therefore, we must continually bring ourselves in tune with the changing world in which we live. Only by doing this will we be able to produce the most fruit possible to the glory of God.

## INTRODUCTION

When Jesus said to go into all the world in Matthew 28:19, He actually used the Greek word *ta ethne*, the word from which we derive the English word “ethnic.” He did not use the Greek word *cosmos* (world). Because He did not use the word *cosmos*, His meaning was specific. He wanted His disciples to go to every ethnic group of all the world. His mandate was to go to people (*ta ethne*), not simply cross national borders in order to enter nations.

In the first century, the disciples lived

in a world where no visas were required. It was a global world produced by the expansion of the Roman Empire. Going was not complicated by national borders, and thus, the going was not beset by endless lines (queues) at an immigration office. Though the world evangelist is burdened today with such legalities, and often rejected from entry into a particular country, our world today is again becoming a global community. Borders still exist on maps, but they are becoming dim as the world is struggling to unite in trade

and communication. It is as if God is doing in this century what He accomplished through the Roman Empire in the first century. He is laying the foundation upon which the mandate of Matthew 28:19 can once again reach a zenith in fulfillment.

Even in Africa a new U.S.A. is developing. Several years ago I joked with some Malawian preachers about the letters U.S.A. that I saw on the hat of one of the preachers. I asked everyone what the letters meant. They responded, "United States of America." I said, "No." Of course they were puzzled at my response. I said the letters stood for "United States of Africa." They laughed. Not long ago, however, the government leaders of Africa started talking about the possibility of a United States of Africa. The European Union has given them a concept for the future. Though it will be many decades in the future, there is the desire among young African government leaders to work toward a United States of Africa. Regardless of how long it will take, they have the dream because they see the sense in such unions as the European Union. Will God move the African continent faster to this U.S.A. than we think in order to freely move evangelists from one area to another on a continent that is as diverse as Africa?

The rapid expansion of Christianity in the first century happened because of easy travel and immigration from one end of the Roman Empire to the other. Today, however, there is a vast difference between the world in which we live and the world that was the background upon

which the early church was born and grew. The church was born out of "the Jew first," and then the Gentiles. There was a common historical culture that was the religious foundational culture upon which early evangelists moved from one synagogue to another throughout the Roman Empire. Add to this the fact that the Gentile culture of the Roman Empire offered some continuity for the travel and work of the evangelists. At least Paul on more than one occasion resorted to his Roman citizenship rights that were common throughout an Empire that reached from western India in the east, to Spain in the west, to England in the north, and to north Africa in the south. Luke's recorded history of the expansion of the church in the first century explains that the growth of the church was based regionally on Jewish culture. But eventually it was into Gentile culture "into all the world" within the limits of the Roman Empire.

Today, it is somewhat different, but times are changing. There is no longer any common religion as Judaism was to use as a springboard for world evangelism. There is no "whole world" government to maintain common legal rights for world citizens and traveling evangelists. We must acquire visas to cross borders. We live in a complex world that is far more diverse than the world into which the early church was born. It is in this world, therefore, that the disciple of Jesus is challenged to preach the gospel to *ta ethne*. It is in this world that the evangelist must pass through the enormity of legal, civil, religious and ethnic

barriers in order to reach the hearts of men.

Nevertheless, I see the emergence of a new world wherein global communication of the gospel will penetrate restrictive borders. It is imperative, therefore, that we understand this new world in order to capture the opportunities that are presented to us for the preaching of the gospel.

Since we live in a world where evangelists can be sent from one government (nation) to another and from one culture (*ta ethne*) to another, it is imperative that sending churches and going evangelists better understand the world to which they are going. This world is constantly changing under the influence of a flow of information that has never before existed in the world. This flow of information is producing another common world culture as was characteristic of the Roman Empire. If God used the common-

ality of the Roman economic, government and culture to expedite world evangelism in the first century, then He can be doing the same today. If He is—and I firmly believe He is—then it is a time for the global church to arise and educate itself for the opportunities that are arising over the cultural horizon of the world. It is a time when the church must not divide itself into autonomous bits and pieces, but work as one universal organism in order to take the gospel to a door that God is opening for evangelism.

If I were a prophet, I would say that God is doing something for us to populate heaven enormously before the end of time. If we fail to realize this opportunity, we will be held accountable. However, if we are perceptive to the work of God in present world events, we will have eternity to rejoice because we were wise enough to take advantage of the work of God to save souls.

## Chapter 1

### Social Globalization

*Because of an accelerated information flow,  
we are transitioning into a new world,  
a world of citizens who will sacrifice the past  
for the sake of the future.*

A society of people determines for themselves the course of their own history. No foreign society has the right to establish either the destiny or the principles by which other societies must live in the present or determine their direction for the future. Social change is al-

ways a group decision from within. Therefore, the politic of one cultural group cannot become the standard by which every world group must be measured. At least in theory, this is true. But we are now moving into the next world, a world that is increasingly networked

into a global community by the communication of information.

We now live at the brink of another historical direction. Global communication, and subsequently, the flow of information that has been made possible by the mass electronic transfer of information, has changed everything. There now exists a strong global electronic community that is networked by the click of a mouse. It is a community that is developing its own culture. It is a culture that is presently running parallel to the individual societies of nations and often in conflict with the regional dynamics that determine provincial communities. Nevertheless, this global electronic and business oriented culture is taking the world into a new dimension. This is not an era for mourning over the past, but a time of wondering concerning the future.

In the future, social globalization will follow on the back of economic globalism. The Internet society that is based on the international flow of information will produce a world citizen who is not confined to the norms of either local or regional customs and culture. The new world citizen seeks to be a part of a global community that meets at a Starbucks coffee shop for a sip of the new world order. He or she is a world citizen who can identify an international corporation by the insignia of a swoosh and the jingle of an advertisement.

Throughout two centuries of history, Africa has illustrated a continental example of social globalization and cultural transition. Africa was, and in many African countries still is, a mixture of tribal

cultures that were and are represented by over three thousand languages and dialects. However, when colonial powers in the past drew lines across the African continent, borders were formed and nations were born that were destined to emerge from millennia of tribal separation and conflict. Though in the beginning this movement was at a snail's pace, tribalism is now amalgamating into nationalism as new generations move from rural to an urban setting. The transformation is now in hyper drive. Not only is a renaissance happening in Africa in reference to this amalgamated mosaic of culture and economics, a new continental society is rising, which society seeks to be a part of the new global community. It is this new postmodern African who will take Africa out of the isolation of the past and into the community of world fellowship. This new urban generation has learned the skill of change in order to become and remain a part of the new world.

Social globalism often frustrates local and regional social structures. The postmodern African generation is light years away from their village parents. When a forty-year-old African business person returns to the village to visit parents and grandparents, he brings his computer along with enough battery life to last only a few hours. When the battery on the computer is dead, it is time to return to the city. There is no time for long hours around the fire, no time for extended visits with relatives. The urban renaissance African has lost contact with his or her roots. He or she has become a

part of a global urban community that has new desires and visions for the future. There is no desire to go back to the village, back to a life that is often fatalistically locked into an economic and social time warp. The new urban world has broken the traditions, dispelled with the voodoo dolls, and become a member of a scientific age that has given birth to a technological heritage for their children.

This is one reason why the old mission methodology of going to the cities in order to evangelize a nation no longer works. The global citizen of Nairobi, Kenya is not going back to the village, back to tradition, superstition and tribalism. His visit there on weekends is only “battery life” in duration before he wants to return to his new world civilization in the city.

Only indirectly will churches in the cities evangelize rural settings. They may seek to support financially a “missionary” in rural settings. But we must relegate to the archives this notion that a first or second generation individual in the city will sell his computer and townhouse in order to return to the village of his grandparents. This will not happen. Discard those old 19<sup>th</sup> century books on mission methods that taught we will evangelize a nation by evangelizing the cities.

Our thinking on the methodology of sending a national postmodern urban evangelist to a rural setting must be revisited. This methodology does not happen in the West, and neither does it happen in the developing world. The difference between the urban and rural settings

of developing countries is more extreme than the Western context. There is a McDonalds in Dallas and also one within a short driving distance of middle rural America. One can buy petrol in Los Angeles, but also in Stafford, Kansas, a village of 1,500 people. But in China and Africa, it is 97 octane in Beijing or Nairobi, but lamp oil in most interior villages. It’s a Whirlpool washing machine in Cape Town, but a river bank in a Transkei village. The difference between rural and urban environments in developing countries demands that we change our thinking about sending an urbanite evangelist from Accra to an interior village by the river. Developing world urbanite Christians are not going to pick up their families and move to the village. The proof of the argument is in the fact that this supposed migration does not happen.

It is this new developing world urban social order that will take us into the future. What is exciting about this new urban social engine is that it is not driving us forward with a culture that is slow and comfortable. We are in hyperdrive. We are accelerating beyond the transition speed of normal social change simply because the youth want a university education in order to have a greater piece of the economic pie. And herein is a source of advantage, as well as much conflict and discomfort. The old wine-skin culture that is often filled with a rural setting is being burst with an urban postmodern generation that will never go back to the village. The information highway has sculptured a new generation to accept rapid change as a way of life.

New web pages of information are only new opportunities to learn more, and thus, remain ahead of a competition that is online at thousands of megabytes in download speed. In a globalized economy, the 2.6 gigahertz computer will survive over the 2.4. And the urban postmodern business person knows this. He must, therefore, change in order to beat the competition. He must change business practices, change market strategy, and if necessary, change his business culture. He has adapted to change, but the village culture of his roots will not accommodate this new world of a rapidly changing urban life. It is for this reason that he will not make the transition from urban to rural life.

One of the principal cultural cues of the postmodern generation, and thus the citizen of the new world, is change, rapid change. The easier it is for one to change, the better he or she will survive and the better economic gain there will be. The better one's business assimilates new information into the operational function of business, the more successful one will be. It is no longer a world of traditions that cannot be sacrificed. It is a world of transitions. And thus traditionals and transitionalists are in conflict. Postmodern and moderns (the older generation) will never solve this issue. They do not have to. As moderns relinquish life in the next twenty years or so, the postmoderns will usher in a new world. As urban postmoderns become the norm for establishing the generations to come, the Third World will never be the same again.

And it shouldn't. We are always fas-

cinated by those anthropologists who seek to guard and save some existing primitive culture of a former century. One such South African zealot lived for six months with the Himbas in the north-western part of Namibia. Her book chastised the modern world for violating the homogenous culture of these people whose life-style had not changed for centuries. But we would ask, When a Himba baby becomes sick, must the body die. Must a baby have the opportunity to receive an antibiotic for the sickness from the modern world? Our answer to the question is that if the First World antibiotic will save the baby, bring the Himbas into the First World hospital and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Himbas also have a right to a better and easier way of life. They have a right to a radio and a pair of First World shoes to put on their feet in order to walk across the sun-scorched sands of the Namib Desert. What gives us the right to have, but at the same time, deprive others to the "have nots"? What selfish humbugs we often become in the cocoons of our own luxury. I think some anthropologist simply want to keep some cultures in a zoo for historical studies.

If you are afraid of change, you are probably screaming and yelling at the change that is now taking place in the world. Your world possibly seems as if it is coming apart. It is. But this is world history in the making. The rate of change is much faster than it was in the past. It is much faster because the flow of information in our telecommunicative world travels at light speed, not by the pounding of signals on a drum. We must not

let this upset us. It is a part of nature to change. How fast changes are made is determined by the amount of new information that is communicated and assimilated into society. The greater the emphasis on education, the faster the change.

The only problem with some is that the existing cultures of today are being transformed so quickly. The older generation is thus in culture shock. Acculturation is difficult for the young. When we place it in the world of the old, it is often very unsettling. But I would remind our older developing world citizens that our children and grandchildren cannot be stopped. They are taking the world into another global society wherein nationalism is turning to globalism. Our children and grandchildren want to be citizens of the world, not just Nigerians, or Ghanaians, or Indians, or even Americans. If you are still hung up on tribalism, or even nationalism, you are light-years removed from the new urban post-modern generation of the world that is being born out of this present generation.

As global citizens, the next generations will deal with international conflict in different ways. The 21<sup>st</sup> century citizen will not be in conflict over the ideologies of nation against nation. It will be a conflict of one global culture against another. An example that illustrates this is the invasion of Latin American culture into the western culture of the United States. For the past several decades legal restrictions have sought to stop the migration of Latin Americans from coming across the southern border of

America, but to no avail. Resistance to this cultural flow has waned to the point that legalized “illegals” have now become a part of the American legal system. A resignation to the new social future has become a way of life.

The same has been happening in South Africa since the early 90s. The South African culture has been bombarded with millions of illegal immigrants from the northern countries of the continent. It is not just the “new” South Africa in a political realm, but a new cultural South Africa has developed by the influx and saturation of the cultures that millions have brought with them from the northern countries. And this is good. Every country is blessed by immigrants. They are blessed because the immigrant brings hope for a better life, while the resident too often has taken for granted what he has. There is a greater work ethic among immigrants, for they are a culture of survival.

What is globally happening with many nations is historical and natural. Cultures simply cannot remain isolated in their own time capsule. They change, adapt and modify. Outside cultures force us to adapt and change. From now and into the future of the rest of the history of the world, we will be living in nations that are constantly invaded by “foreign” cultures. We may seek to stop this new wave of immigration at the borders, but there are no visas needed to access the Internet. This is the new way of life. During these invasions of ideology there will always be cultural conflict. Sometimes severe conflict will occur, as in the battle

lines between the Islamically defined cultures of the middle East and the Christian defined cultures of the West. But regardless of the conflicts, the invasions will continue. It is best, therefore, to learn how to be acculturated and accommodated as we are invaded with cultures from outside our cocoons. We must accept this, for this is the way of the new world community.

It is inevitable that social globalization will continually generate cultural conflict. As the postmodern generation takes us into a different global culture, a new global society will continue to emerge. It is not what this society will be, but how it will continue to develop. Built within the culture itself are mechanisms for change. And thus, as a culture of change it will never be stagnant in order to be identified by a specific name. We are only in the beginning of a series of new world cultures. There will be many more “new” worlds to come simply because culture has now developed the ability to rapidly change with little pain.

But we can be sure of one thing. Conflict between parallel cultures will sup-

plant ideological conflict. Or at least, parallel cultural conflict will be the main driving force that will determine ideology. Out of this conflict will develop new cultural world views. We have already identified a new cultural ideology. It is the culture of political/religious terrorism that we identify as fundamentalism. There will be more to come as the world becomes a smaller neighborhood where different, but parallel cultures, will seek to impose the norms of their existence on others.

I would surmise that the desire of the postmodern generation and its ancestral offspring generations will sacrifice ideology for conformity. The desire to be community moves into second place the desire to stand for idiosyncrasies in ideologies. Ideologies will be “whatever,” while culture will be determined by a Western competitive arena wherein global business people will seek to economically better themselves in a free-market that has globalized many businesses. Ideology will be sacrificed on the altar of a better way of life. So buckle up. Here we go.

## Chapter 2

### Religion In A Global Culture

*Faith that is truly global  
and able to produce a better world citizen,  
is a faith that originates  
from the omnipresent God of all.*

From a strictly philosophical and apologetical point of view, religion must make better adherents. True religion must direct God-created individuals to

live together in peaceful coexistence. If the elemental principles of two coexisting religions do not produce this, then either one or both are maintaining principles that are not in tune with God. One or both are false, and thus religions that have been created by the adherents.

Humanity is the creation of God. We correctly assume, therefore, that our Creator would not relegate us to our own devices to sort out our own beliefs and behavior. Only a cruel god would deistically create man, and then subjugate his creation to the confusion of depraved minds and sorted ways as He took a vacation in some far off galaxy.

An elementary study of religious history proves one very clear point. Man is totally unable to direct his own paths. From the Crusades to the suicide bomber, men have only proved that they are inept authors of their religious behavior and destiny. We seek too much to create a god after our own imagination and a religion that conforms to our carnal desires. We are masters at the art of idolatry.

Without a constant standard to guide our ways, therefore, we are always changing our ways. If the new world that we are developing is a world wherein we seek oneness for the sake of economic development and a mutual share of the material pie, then will our religion pay the price? Will our culture of change also constantly change our religion?

Many in the postmodern generation are spiritually sterile, and thus are very amoral and nonreligious in culture. There are millions who have said “whatever” to any cultural norms that may have reli-

gious inclinations. However, I would presume that there is also within this new global culture the emergence of the primal instinct that is innate within every God-created human. We cannot escape our religious roots. It is the way God made us. And for this reason we will create some god or some religion, though it may be orchestrated after our own desires. We must have our religions, even though it may be environmentalism, or animal rights, or politics or whatever.

And herein is the curse of an idolatrous people. In all our distortion to create new religions, and thus we distort our ability to coexist. We culturally construct religions that will pacify our consciences when we seek to bring destruction upon another culture that has developed its own unique religion. How else can a young person strap on a bomb and blow himself and innocent people into a million pieces in the name of religion?

It used to be that the terrorist sought to bring sympathy to his cause by the death of a few examples in an opposing group. He sought to terrorize the few in order to affect the many. But he was wrong. Terrorism of innocent people can never be right. It can never be right because it is a cancer of a society wherein individuals make the innocent pay the price for their own political agendas. Nevertheless, terrorists in times of peace are seeking to either impose their beliefs or free themselves from those who seek to impose on them.

We have now moved into a new era of terrorism. We have a new breed of terrorist. He no longer seeks to kill a few.

He seeks to simply kill as many as possible in order to promote his religious/political agenda. The Islamic terrorist is not content with a few examples. He is at war with a society he believes is against him. In order to do this, he wants as many Westerners as possible dead. Period.

The Islamic terrorist—you might want to call him a fundamentalist—has created a god after his own agenda. The Islamic world has even given him another name. He is an Islamist. He can thus have links with his mother religion, Islam, and also go about with his hideous work without judgment from his mother.

Since he, the Islamist, is religious, he must formulate a religion that conforms to the hideousness of his goals. And in doing this, he has proved that his religion is false. Any religion that would cause a lack of harmony between God's created beings cannot be from God. It can only be demonic, earthly and totally of human origin. How can any religion that generates hate against the "unbeliever" ever claim to be from a God who is love?

Since the beginning of time, those who have forsaken a knowledge of God have always created social chaos. Such would only be expected from a humanity that has given itself over to itself, and thus allowed Satan to have the day. The world continues to manufacture twisted world views, and thus cultures are embedded with cues that move men away from God.

We are now living in a time when a new world culture is being manufactured after the desire of godless men. It is a

world of technological cultures that are in a worldwide confrontation (competition) with one another. Nations are against one another in an effort "to develop," another word that means materialistic cravings must be satisfied. This international struggle of developing nations against one another is the foundation upon which five world views are promoted. These are the world views of Churchianity, secularism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. These world views are represented by billions of people in regional geographical locations on the planet. Secularism finds its heartland in Europe and a great deal of America. Churchianity now finds its seat in Africa, though originally from Europe via America to Africa. Islam is supposedly "contained" in the Middle East. Buddhism is represented by China and other Far Eastern nations. Hinduism has the motherland of India. These major religious world views represent the majority of the human race. They are the foundation upon which culture is controlled in their homelands, and thus, will be determining factors for the clash of global cultures in the future of human history. It is incumbent on the disciple of Jesus, therefore, to realize that his work to populate heaven is a struggle against the world views of these religions.

### **A. Churchianity:**

In the remainder of the book, I have invented the term "Churchianity" to define those who have some resemblance to true Christianity, but have strayed from

a biblical definition to create a religion after sources other than the Bible. Under this umbrella term I have cast all sorts of twisted groups whose understanding of the Bible and behaviors are certainly not characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus. The traditional term, "Protestant" will not work in this discussion since a Protestant was one who originally protested against the Roman Catholic Church. But in a discussion concerning global world views, we must include also the world hierarchy of Catholicism under the umbrella of churchianity. I use the term Churchianity, therefore, to classify all those who in some way would recognize the Bible as a part of their religious library and Jesus as more than just a good teacher and man. But I would in no way assert that such a religion to be like true Christianity, since many who have claimed to be "Christian" have also distorted their share of the truth in order to create their beliefs after either their traditions, human generated emotional hysteria, thirst for power, or carnal desires to live according to the dictates of humanity. They are thus, churchian, not Christian after the true definition of a biblically defined Christian. Therefore, for lack of a better term, I will make my own term in order to globally classify even distant believers in Jesus and the Bible who hang on to a few relics of biblical truth in order to call themselves "Christian," but are not.

And now I must be more specific about what I call churchianity. My definition is simple. Churchianity is based on three erroneous views of Christian-

ity. First, the power structure of churches of this system of religion is focused on man. From the congregational level (local independent church), to the national level (traditional denominationalism), and to the international level (Catholicism, Anglicanism), power structures are found somewhere at the top from which control originates and church law and orders are passed down to the adherents. The more one climbs the ladder of power to the top in these religions, the more power he or she has to pass down orders and law to the adherents of the group. Though Jesus said that such structures would not exist among His disciples (Mk 10:42-45), the churchian seeks to establish either heads or bodies of authority on earth in competition with Jesus who has all authority in heaven and on earth.

Second, professionalism among the leadership of these churches upholds the power structures. Contributions of the churchian religion are not primarily for benevolence or evangelism, but to support the professionals who in some way maintain the power structures of the organized institutional church. The budgets of churchian groups clearly manifest that the greater amount of the contribution goes to the religious professionals, whereas the least of the budget goes toward benevolence and evangelism. It is the "mission" of the professionals, therefore, to promote the budget in order that their existence as the leaders of the group continue.

Third, some physical manifestation is emphasized to identify the existence or uniqueness of the churchian group.

This physical identity is usually accomplished through the construction of a facility (“plant”) that signals to the community the existence of the churchian religion. The greater and more elaborate the structure, the more the adherents feel their statement of belief and presence is made in the community. The structure thus becomes the temple of identity for the existence of the churchian disciples. Though Jesus said that His people would not be identified by worship in a specific temple or on a particular mountain (Jn 4:21), the churchian is a very zealous believer in the existence of his faith being identified by either a physical structure or prominent location on main street.

Now the rest of the world views churchianity as the religion of the West. The world has no understanding of the biblically defined church of Christ, nor a correct understanding of what a true Christian is. The world classifies all Western “Christian” religions as one religion. They do this with all the misunderstandings of true Christianity that we would expect from an uninformed world.

Even within the realm of Protestant faiths this misunderstanding prevails. For example, it is often stated that a good person in the community is a “Christian.” This biblical term is commonly used to refer to anyone who would live a good moral life in a “Christian” society. However, what people often fail to understand is that a Christian is biblically defined as one who has obeyed the gospel, and thus is in a covenant relationship with God. He is Christian in behavior because he is moved with thanksgiving for the grace

of God that was revealed through the cross.

The truth is that one is not “Christian” because he is good, or even does good works. He is a Christian because the will of the Father is done on earth through him as it is done in heaven. Directly speaking, a Christian is a disciple who has been baptized for the remission of his sins, and thus added to the universal family of God because of his obedience to the gospel through baptism.

The typical Buddhist or Muslim has no concept that there are true Christians among the many churchians in Western religion. We might complain within the churchian culture of the West that we are true Christians, and thus, do not want to be identified with the churchianity of Western culture, but as true Christians. However, our complaints fall on deaf ears to those outside our Western religious box. Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, and the host of other non-Christian religions of the world, do not separate true Christians from those who are churchian in practice. In fact, they have no understanding of what a true biblically defined Christian is. Therefore, in the confrontation between world cultures and the religions of these cultures, we must keep in mind that the religious world will always misunderstand the church, and thus never understand the nature of a true disciple of Jesus.

For the Christian, this is quite frustrating. In religious literature and public discussions in world forums, the terms “Christianity” and “Christian” are thrown around by those who have little or no

understanding of the Bible. Disciples of Jesus and the church are just thrown in the religious pot, and thus confused with the host of other faiths that in some way claim Jesus and the Bible, but have little respect for biblical authority.

If you are in the box of Western culture, you will probably not understand this point. But I assure you, as a Western inhabitant, you will always be misunderstood. I presently live on a continent and in a city where Islam is a very dominant religion. In my personal discussions with Muslims, it is very difficult for them to separate me from the churchian religion that prevails throughout my area. There is generally no problem when we confront the “denominations.” We can argue with denominational churchians about names and doctrines in the Bible in our efforts to convert one another. But when we are dealing with the clash of world religious cultures, the rest of the religious world stereotypes all “Christian” religions that have been traditionally associated with the West.

And so, churchianity is a paradox to the nonchurchian world. I have never discussed the Bible with a person who has little understanding of the Bible, who does not also misunderstand the definition of a true Christian. The great Islamic debaters classify all Protestant/Catholic denominations together, and thus, their arguments become true against a greatly divided “Christian” religion. They argue that the one true and living God would never create such religious chaos in the world. Their proof that the Christian

“god” is a false god is in the fact that the churchian believer promotes a god who has created religious chaos. The typical churchian is content with the religious confusion that prevails among those who believe in Jesus, and to some extent, the existence of the Bible as the word of God. But because of this belief that religious chaos under the disguise of “christianity” is God-ordained, I have never found a churchian debater who can adequately respond to the Muslim’s argument. If the true God of heaven is the author of such religious confusion, then certainly He is not God. He is only a god the churchian has created after his misguided beliefs, and thus, to the Muslim, the churchian is an infidel.

As long as the churchian justifies such religious confusion and division in the name of Jesus, then he cannot expect the non-Christian world to see a witness for his faith in his behavior. Every churchian debater with a Muslim always brings shame on the name of Jesus since his very practice in religious confusion denies that which he seeks to argue.

Churchianity, with its bits of Bible and Jesus, have molded the Western world view. In the promotion of institutional churchianity over Jesus, Bible moral values, nevertheless, have penetrated the culture of the West, and thus these principles have affected the thinking of the West. If the civil governments of the West have been influenced by religion in the past—and they have—then certainly no one would doubt that churchianity has been the primary religion of the West. Europe, North and South

America have to a great extent developed their cultures for centuries on the foundation of churchian faith. To ignore this fact is not to understand Western culture.

We must give credit to some of the basic principles of the Bible for the development of the West, even though the principles have been promoted by those who do not have a clear understanding of the nature of the church. Basic principles as honoring one's fellow man, freedom of choice, reverence for God to whom all must give account, humanitarianism, and a host of other principles and values have been long-held concepts of the Western world view that have guided cultural and economic development. This is not to say that the Bible is a textbook that produces democracy. It is that democracy thrives on the foundation of a world view that highly promotes the teaching of freedom, a central teaching of the New Testament.

It is this fact that the Islamic world cannot understand. The Islamist views the West as "Christian" as he views the Middle East as Muslim. There is, or should be, no difference between state and religion in the eyes of the Muslim. On the other hand, the West seeks to maintain a separation between church and state. The European seeks to eradicate religion from government, and thus maintain truly secular states. All such thinking is confusing to the fundamental Muslim. He views such efforts to be the irreligious behavior of an infidel.

This confused understanding by the Islamic world of Western churchianity is illustrated by the existence of the nation

of Israel. Suppose you are a Muslim living in Saudi Arabia or Baghdad. You pick up any "Christian" religious book of the West and read about Jesus supposedly coming to the earth again to reign on earth for one thousand years. It is taught that not only will Jesus reign for a thousand years after He has conquered all His enemies, He will reign on earth in Jerusalem. All Muslims, all Hindus, all Buddhists and all religious enemies of Jesus and governments of the world will be brought under this supposed earthly reign of Jesus from Jerusalem. During this reign, the Jews will be restored to the land of Palestine, and then there will be peace on earth for a thousand years under the totalitarian reign of Jesus.

If you were a Muslim viewing the West, now what would you think of the political motives of the West that supports a churchian faith that upholds the existence of Israel in anticipation of the coming millennial reign of Jesus? Since the eschatology of churchianity maintains this premillennial view of the coming of Jesus, then the church will always be misunderstood as it is lumped with the churchian religions of the rest of the world who believe in the one thousand year reign of Jesus.

On a global scale, therefore, there will always be a misunderstanding between the West and the East. Since religion is the driving force in any world view, the West will always be understood by the churchianity by which its citizens are identified. In the clash between governments and economies, the West will always be viewed by the Muslim to be

promoting his Western churchianity through his military ventures, since the expansionism of the Islamic world was historically through military conflict and economic takeovers.

I would like to add here that churchianity has failed both Europe and America. The first signals of this failure was seen when Cassius Clay changed his name to Mohammed Ali. Why did he become Muslim and not “Christian”? The ineptitude of the churchian religion to fulfill the needs of a great segment of the societies of America and Europe have led to many turning to Islam and other Eastern religions. We must never forget that this same scenario existed in North Africa when Christianity became churchian, and subsequently was wiped off northern Africa by Islam in one hundred years after the death of Mohammed in 622.

When a society becomes truly secular, ignoring the spiritual part of man, then every invention of religion will eventually invade that society. Today, it is not uncommon to find Buddhist temples and Moslem mosques throughout America and Europe, lands that at one time were the heartlands of Christianity, and lands from which came thousands of missionaries to evangelize the world. The existence of these temples and mosques is the prophecy of nations losing their Christian origins. Such is also the evidence that churchianity has greatly failed the West. If the churchian view of Christianity penetrates Sub-Saharan Africa and India where the church now thrives, the same will happen. If we do

not recognize this historical truth, our children and grandchildren are doomed to live in a non-Christian world that will move them off the remainder of the continent of Africa as Islam did the church in North Africa after the death of Mohammed.

## **B. Secularism:**

As we marched through the 20<sup>st</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>, Europe, and specifically France, sought to remove any outward religious expressions from government and civil life. The word “God” was deleted from the European Union’s constitution. France banned dominant religious symbols in public schools. Political parties deleted “Christian” from their letterheads. The argument for doing such was to promote and maintain a truly secular government, one that is not associated with any religion. Government was to be truly secular in that it could not promote any religious belief.

Turkey has had a difficult time finding its way into the European Union because it seeks to carry with it Islamic oriented beliefs and practices. The rest of Europe has simply said to Turkey, government must be secular and not driven by religious inclinations. No religion must use the power of the sword to promote its beliefs.

There is some truth to this move since faith must be expressed from within, not forced upon one from without. This would thus perpetually put the secular state at odds with Islamic religions, since truly behaved Islam is theocratic. Islam

is the civil government, and thus the laws of the Quran can never be implemented in a democratic system. Quran laws are asserted to be from God, and thus how can a secular democratic government ever change the law for the needs of the people. For this reason, Islam will always be contrary to the emergence of democracies throughout the world.

A secular government does not seek to banish religion from the lives of its citizens. They seek to guarantee that no one religion should dominate the citizens of the government. For this reason, civil government should be sterile of religion in the sense of not enforcing religion upon its citizens. It is simply not the duty of government, especially democratic government, to determine the faith of the citizens of a country.

It is for the above reason that Islamic nations will never truly be a part of the global community. While the West seeks to be democratic and secular, the Islamic theocratic governments of the Middle East will never view governmental decisions apart from Quranic regulation. Even in their own backyards, Islamic nations have tried to usher in secular government that is not regulated by the law of the Quran. As a result, nations as Algeria and Egypt have been plagued with internal conflict. Fundamental Islamists within such nations will never be content with secular governments.

Those governments that are Islamic will never be at home with secular governments. It is for this reason that the future will continue to be cursed with conflict between Islamic oriented nations

and those nations that are controlled by secular democratic governments. As long as secular governments represent the vast majority of nations of the world, and Islamic controlled nations are “contained,” there will be freedom of religion in the realm of democratic governments. However, if this changes in the future—which is the desire of the Islamist—there will be a global persecution against other religious faiths that the world has never known. This persecution will be targeted specifically against those nations that promote churchianity.

So herein is the clear and present danger of the disciple of Jesus. Democratic governments of the West seek to accommodate theocratic religions as Islam. It may be that the accommodation of Islam in a democratic government is politically correct in order for politicians to secure the votes of the majority in such a system. But when the majority vote of the democratic governments throughout the world becomes Islam, there will be a major change in world order. Christians will be challenged to be Christians in this new world order.

The evidence of persecution of the Christian in the future is manifested in the present intolerance of Islamic governments toward Christianity today. While Western democratic governments seek to present social freedom for the practice of different religions, Islamic governments are very intolerant toward any religion that is not Islamic. This is the hypocrisy of the Islamic governments. And this is the weakness of the democratic system that may eventually lead to

its fall through the aggressiveness of the Islamic movement throughout the world.

### C. Islam:

True Islam is locked into a time warp. It was a faith that was born out of an era of cultural and political conflict in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Christianity at that time had become a foreign religion in the land of its birth. Control, catechism and belief had been shifted to Rome. Arabs had no religious heritage or history as did the Jews. They had no identity with the "Christianity" they viewed as a foreign religion in the land of the Arabs. The time was thus right for Mohammed to give birth to a religion that outwardly appealed to the Arabic culture. From the time of Mohammed's death in 622 to the time when the Muslim armies were defeated in their invasion of Europe in 722, Islam exploded into human history, and has since grown to over 1.2 billion people throughout the world.

Where Islam is dominant, however, there seems to be a stagnation of both social and economic development. People remain in poverty. What seems to be one of the curious natures of true Islamic culture is that few great personalities are allowed to arise. Few Michelangelos, Shakespeares, Beethovens or Longfellows have arisen in middle eastern cultures where the clerics of true Islam seek to discourage development outside the control of the clerics. This is not a generic interpretation, just one that seems to manifest itself in those countries where strict adherence to

Islamic practices is enforced.

Economic development has been slow and painful in those nations wherein Quranic law has played a dominant part in molding the culture. Modernity is the problem of the Islamic nations of the world. To modernize seems contradictory to the total sacrificial life-style that is promoted by the Islamic citizen. Bin Laden found Afghanistan the best of all possible nations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the practice of true Islam. It was poor, tribal and divided. It, as Somolia, was a warlord country that was divided between different clans. Islam was the common denominator by which the Taliban thus took a nation back to the dark ages. If 9/11 had never happened, the West would have kept on ignoring the plight of this oppressed nation.

It would be untrue to state that poverty is either unique with Islamic societies, or that poverty exists only in Islamic nations. If the lack of modernity in Islamic beliefs hinders financial development in those countries that are predominately Islam, we could argue that Islam has not helped nations as Afganistan and Somolia. Rich oil reserves have injected billions of dollars of capital into sparsely populated countries as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Dubai and Yemen. But if it were not for the oil, we would wonder if these nations would have ever developed any industry to promote jobs and international cooperation with the outside world. In fact, their richness in oil may have been the only reason for these nations to reach outside themselves in order to work in partnership with the rest

of the world. If there were no oil reserves under the sands of the Arabian Desert, would the true Islamist have ever shaken hands with an infidel in an international business deal to establish a Western manufacturing business in an Islamic country? Probably not.

Poverty is a worldwide phenomenon. In 1976, I read a *Time Magazine* study concerning the existence of poverty in the world. The feature article of that issue had an impact on me at the time because I was living in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I was touched by the poor every day in Brazil as children came by our house and begged for food. Families slept on the streets and mothers routinely gathered outside restaurants to rummage through garbage cans for scraps of food to feed their children. The prediction of the *Time* research at the time was that by the year 2000, world conflict would exist around struggles between the rich and the poor. It seems that the prediction has come true.

To a great extent, this is at the heart of the Middle Eastern Islamic struggle against the West. Since the world view of the Islamist hinders him from shaking hands with the infidel in a business deal that would generate jobs and development, the Islamist seeks to bring down symbols of capitalistic development as the World Trade Center. Of course no Islamist would ever confess that is his motive. Nevertheless, his actions reveal his world view, that this is against those who lead people away from the religious fatalism of dictatorial clerics.

The Islamist, who has nothing, has nothing to lose when he blows his body

into a million pieces in the midst of a crowd of innocent victims. If a state or system of government seems to be the oppressor of the poor, then the call to rally around those who would announce jihad against the rich oppressor seems appealing. The Islamist, who presumes to represent the materially oppressed of the world, has heralded himself as the savior of the poor.

It is for this reason that there will never be peace between Palestinians and Israel. It is the poor (Palestinians) against the rich (Israel). Not all Palestinians are Islamic. However, it is the Islamic part of the Palestinians who are called to jihad against the supposedly rich land-grabbing Jews, who in reality are only one people in a series of civilizations who have lived in Palestine since the beginning of time. One culture (the Palestinians) is locked into poverty. The other (Israel) seems to survive regardless of holocaust oppressions. There is an economic and cultural jealousy here that will never be resolved simply because the two peoples are arguing from opposing world views. Unless the Islamic Palestinians give a right to another civilization to exist, there will be no peace. The conflict is not over land. It is over the right of a people to exist in this world as a nation with the right to determine their own future.

What is interesting in this conflict, however, is that no Palestinian Christian has answered the call to be a suicide bomber. The fact that they have not manifests the difference between the world views of Christianity and Islam. Christianity is proved to be of divine origin

because it seeks peaceful negotiation. Islam is proved to be man-originated and maintained because of its mandate to die for the possession of land. Any religion that promotes material reward in the afterlife in order to accomplish material goals in the present life cannot be from God who is spirit.

In our efforts as Christians to evangelize the world, there is a significant difference between the system of evangelism of the Christian than the system that is used by the Muslim. Christians evangelize in reference to changing the beliefs of the people to whom they go. Muslims, on the other hand, evangelize in reference to economic opportunities. While we seek to convince people that Jesus is the Son of God, and thus urge obedience to the gospel, the Muslim is in town buying up businesses and shops in order to corner the job market.

In the 80s and early 90s, I did campaign work in Thohoyandou in the Venda region of South Africa. There were few Muslims in the city of Thohoyandou at that time. However, by the year 2000, the majority of the businesses had been bought out by Muslims. If one wanted a job, he or she had to work for a Muslim. After a friend of mine was on the job for a Muslim for about two months, he was asked to become a Muslim. This is subtle economic evangelism. Islam uses the capitalistic system of a free market nation in order to evangelize the nation. In this way, the Muslim who has learned to modernize his beliefs is able to exploit the capitalistic system of a nation in order to propagate his religion. What else

would explain the rise to over six million Muslims in the capitalistic free market economy of America? One day, America will be as Thohoyandou. The former South African ambassador to Pakistan once visited Thohoyandou a few years ago and asked the Venda people, "Don't you see what they [the Muslims] are doing?" That's a good question for America.

#### **D. Hinduism:**

India is seeking to be a world economic power. Though strapped with a population that is mired down with poverty, there is an economic elite in India that is driving the nation forward. If history is a textbook for the future, strong economic countries have strong cultural influence on the world. And herein India will preach its religious faith to the world.

India has been the geographical bastion of Hinduism. The government of India is linked to Hindu faith, and thus cannot be viewed as a truly secular government. This has historically placed India in conflict with Pakistan and other Islamic countries. In fact, within India itself there is a growing tension between the emerging Islamic faith and the dominant Hindu government. Though I believe Hinduism will always remain the dominant religious world view of the country, Hinduism, because of its pacifist nature, will always be threatened by more radical religions.

Not only is Islam growing in India, but also the Christian faith. It is for this reason that the government has made

some restrictions on the foreign influence of religious workers. But it is too late for such legal maneuvers since the seeds of other faiths have already been firmly planted in Indian culture. The church and churchianity have firmly been planted in the hearts of millions among the one billion plus population. Christians will continue to expand in this nation simply because the typical Indian seeks to better himself in a free-market world. The typical Indian has viewed the West to be economically strong because of its roots in biblical principles. They have reasoned that if these principles can make a nation economically strong as America, then they are willing to incorporate these principles into their faith, or even convert entirely to Jesus.

Hinduism has been known for being tolerant of other faiths. But for its survival, this may change. Whenever a faith feels threatened it will often seek state and government to come to its rescue, especially when a faith is tied closely to state and government. Hinduism, however, is a faith that seems to always be looking for another god. It is for this reason that many Hindus have simply grafted Jesus into their beliefs, and thus developed a "Christianized Hinduism."

Regardless of the futile efforts to hinder outside influence from the Christian community, the church will continue to permeate this culture in which it is believed the apostle Thomas spent his last years. India and Africa are and will continue to be the geographical center of the church. India will have the most disciples as a nation simply because of its population. Africa will have the most disciples

as a continent simply because of its size.

Pakistan exists today because of an inability of the world views of Islam and Hinduism to bring a society together into peaceful coexistence. Since both faiths seek to be linked to state, it was inevitable that two states would eventually form after Indian independence in 1947. As long as these religions use the power of government to maintain their dominance, there will never be peaceful coexistence between either state. Since secular states do not pose a problem, or become competitive in reference to religion, India will have harmony with the West, but will always be suspicious of Islamic states. It is for this reason that the West should always shake hands with India in the global economic world. The Christian, however, must make every effort to manifest a spirit of love to all men, regardless of their religious beliefs.

## **E. Buddhism:**

Buddhism represents over one billion people of the world. As with churchianity, Islam and Hinduism, Buddhism will continue to be a major player in the forming of future cultures. As China continues to emerge and become a strong financial participant in the global economy, Buddhist China indirectly will influence secular societies that have largely given up Christianity and become very secular. This is manifested in the New Age Movement as it continues to grow in the West. The New Age Movement is Buddhist religion, though called after a different name.

As the West craves cheap goods from the cheap labor of China, a monetary transfer will bring China into being the top global economy in the near future. As America bought Japanese products for fifty years after World War II, and subsequently made Japan a world economic force, so it will happen with China. The only difference is that China has a population that is measured in a billion plus, not in millions as Japan.

China, as it is under a communist regime, will become increasingly secular. After years of atheistic communistic teaching, it has become a nation of people who have no religion. As far as economics is concerned, a class of the rich has already developed. Porsches and Mercedes are already being driven down streets in Beijing, passing donkey-pulled carts of a lower economic class who can never seem to get a piece of the pie.

It will be the emerging rich of China who will challenge the secular West in the future. As China contents itself with a tremendous gap between the rich and poor, the rich of China will have an economic source that gives it an economic advantage over the West. This advantage will be built on the backs of the cheap labor force of the masses of the unskilled. The West will not be able to compete with this economic strategy. As long as there is a driving class of the privileged in China who ride on the backs of the poor, and because of the materialistic thirst of the West to obtain cheap China goods, capital flow from the West to China will build an economic giant in the Far East with which the West will

eventually have to compete.

I believe one thing is certain. China, with its passive religion of Buddhism, and atheistic moral culture, will become a strong world power. It will become such simply because of its massive labor force that is willing to work for meager salaries in comparison to anyone else in the world. This force that is used by an intelligentsia which feels comfortable with the exploitation of the poor, will drive China to the forefront of world economic influence. Its Far East economics and culture is ready to eclipse the economic giants of the world.

The problem with the emergence of China is that there are no trade unions to rally the poor to a better life. While the West must deal with trade unions that take care of labor, a laborer in China is simply set aside for twenty or thirty other laborers who want the same job. However, there is grumbling in China, especially among the rural poor. But it will take another generation or more for an economically strong class of workers to change the government. When only a few people enjoy the blessings of economic growth, human rights for the masses can be easily ignored. The economic elite in China know this. They also know that the masses can arise to change government. In preparation for any such repetition in history as the cultural revolution that was initiated in 1948, China has built a million-man army in order to keep its own population in check.

The ruling elite of China will never forget what was expressed at Tienamen Square. A suppressed class of young

people sought to give birth to greater freedoms. Unfortunately, the government at that time harshly squashed the efforts of this group, but the day will come when those who marched in Tienamen Square will be ruling the country. We must pray that they will not forget that for which many of their friends died.

Regardless of all the blessings and cursings of China's economic situation, Jesus is being preached among the masses of China. I once picked up a *Time Magazine* and read a two-page article that reported on the destruction of an almost completed church building in China. The government bulldozers moved in and completely destroyed the structure, while police beat some of the members. The article concluded that the China government is not concerned about "Christianity" that meets in homes in a seemingly disorganized manner. However, when churches get organized and gather great crowds of people into one place, then they are troubled.

When the early church began in the first century under the oppression of the Jews, and then the Roman State, the same persecution was launched against Christians. As a result, the church grew rapidly across the Roman Empire. So are we to be thankful to the China government for implementing the very thing that will cause the growth of the church in China? We will remain in small groups and seemingly "disorganized," for our Head is in heaven. We need no organized body on earth to take the place of our Head. In this manner China will continue to be evangelized.

In the year 2000, several house church leaders in China had a secret meeting. They estimated at that time that there were at least fifty million members of house churches throughout China. Are we to thank the oppression of the China government for this? It is ironic that those who promote churchianity in the West are the first to judge the actions of the China government against religion. But the church is not what the churchian would teach. It is not what the China government perceives it to be. True Christians are those who simply seek to live a better life to the glory of God, not build monuments to make a public statement, nor be represented by a professional clergy who would voice members' rights, while siphoning off the money of the poor in order to maintain their power structures.

I think one thing is true. If the Chinese government truly understood the biblical world view and behavior of a true Christian, it would be totally tolerant with true Christians. But as long as it perceives the churchian religion of the Western as a religious power base with professionals who maintain a Catholic role of control in world politics, Christians will be lumped in with the masses of churchianists in the minds of the China government. They will continue to oppress organized religion. But ironically, I see the government becoming more tolerant of those who want to be simply Christians and good citizens.

So is the Western disciple able to live and work in China, having been so influenced by the churchianity that is main-

tained in the West? When the Western church places so much emphasis on bands and buildings, how can disciples be trained to work with a meek and quiet spirit, in an environment where love, not physical structures or performances, is the means by which the heart of God is proclaimed to the masses?

A good friend of mine and his wife, with their young daughter, have been working in China for several years. They support themselves by teaching English. They quietly do the work as disciples of Jesus, teaching and gathering into their home a small group of Christians. It is a

hard and often discouraging work. However, there are others throughout China doing the same and with great success.

I have often wondered why others are not called to do the same as my friend. Is China too far away? Does it speak a language that is too difficult to learn? Are the living conditions bad? Is it that no glowing reports can ever be made of one's work? Or, is the religious culture of the Western churchian so radically different from simple Christianity that Western disciples feel no "call" to go to where it is difficult? This is at least a question that must be seriously considered.

### Chapter 3

## Anticipating The Future

*Those who are able to change,  
are those who are able to capture  
opportunities that are offered by the future.*

The winds of change always blow. For those who find it difficult to change, these winds always seem to be chilly winds that bring discomfort. John the apostle used the term "sea" in Revelation as a metaphor for the populations of the world. What better metaphor could be used to illustrate the constant change that besets civilizations throughout history? Nothing of this world ever stays the same. We are always held in anticipation for the next chapter of human history.

Because Africa was first tribal, it fought social change for centuries. But most Africans have relented, and thus are pushing forward to the next urban Africa

culture, since over half of Africa now lives in urban centers. As nations seek to become part of the global community in order to have their piece of the economic pie, they must source information. They must go online, download the latest work manuals, business information, stock prices, and thus learn to keep up with the latest leading economic cultures of the world. This access to a wealth of information in order to generate wealth is the engine that is moving Africa and the world into the future.

Since information is the force that changes culture, change is inevitable in those nations that want to advance from

Third to First World economics. Old ways will have to give way to new adventures as governments seek to bring their nations out of the doldrums of Third World despair. Development means change, and thus any country that would develop must teach its population to transition with the information that is necessary to build nations.

Sub-Saharan Africa illustrates the future of the struggling Third World that seeks to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economic family. It has been a continent with a cuffed hand that sought any means by which to pull itself out of centuries of underdevelopment or exploitation. With the Western demand for democracy, African countries are trying their best to emerge out of the “dark continent” syndrome in order to become a part of this democracy that seems to encourage self-initiative to better one’s self in a competitive world.

For many years, however, Africa will remain economically cursed as it limps forward. The continent will remain cursed with regimes of government who are composed of corrupt, self-seeking politicians who feign a concern for the people, especially the poor, but inwardly are using their positions for possessions. On the bright side, however, this is a passing generation of “politicians” who have at least ushered in democracy in many African countries.

Before we become critical or cynical of African countries as they seek to bring themselves into the global community, we must not become hypocritical in our judgments. We must remember that

America was only about one hundred years old when she elapsed into civil war. Most African countries are less than fifty years old. They are struggling democracies that are interpreting democracy according to African culture and history. Therefore, we must save our judgments of these nations for another fifty years if we would make any comparisons between them and the United States. I personally think they are a long way ahead of the time frame for political and economic development than America was at the same time in its historical development. I see great things coming out of Africa in the future.

But African’s Achilles heel is the cuffed hand. She is a continent of nations that seems to thrive on foreign aid and foreign investment. What made America a strong economy that is based on a dynamic and very patriotic culture is that there were no sources for foreign aid investment in her early years of development to become an economic giant. Since it is a truism that economic development hinges on culture, then it was culture that drove America to where she is today. And since the principles of Christianity played the major role in determining the culture of early America, it is true that Christian principles as a way of life set the norms for Western development. This is opposed to those nations that succumbed to an Islamic world view in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Could this be why the Islamic world is so jealous of American financial strength? Could this be the reason for the perpetual tension between the West and Middle East?

Jesus said that He came in order that we may have life, and subsequently have it more abundantly (Jn 10:10). I am sure that more was included in this promise than the mere fact that Jesus' principles would make us more holy. His "abundant life" certainly included enjoyment of this life in a way that would bring one out of the despair of a satanic controlled world that keeps the masses in the grip of poverty.

This is not to say that Christianity is a means to wealth. It simply means that the moral life Jesus brought into the world was the best there was and is. The respect of the individual, the worth of life, the principles for good neighborhood, and the foundation of love are the best principles upon which world views are developed.

Christianity offers principles by which freedom and human dignity can develop and thrive. By living according to Bible principles the individual can develop for himself the best possible life. There is great power in the principle, "Love your neighbor as yourself." To a great extent, the God-fearing culture of America did just this in developing the humanitarian culture.

But for centuries Africa kept itself out of the current of human development by its beliefs in spooks and spirits. If any individual of the tribe economically excelled above the whole, he was conveniently cursed by the witch doctor, and subsequently brought into economic conformity with the rest of the tribe. It was the same hideous world mess that was produced by atheistic communism. The

communist used a gun to maintain commonality. The African used fear of spooks and spirits. The result was the same. The masses were kept in abject poverty for the benefit of the privileged few. Until Africa frees herself from such superstitions, she will not emerge. But there is hope. The information highway is bringing to the continent a way out of ignorance. Biblical principles have been proclaimed on the continent for over two centuries. There is indeed a renaissance happening. No longer is a great part of the continent under the control of the witch doctor and ignorance that is fed by superstition. No longer is communism a major threat. There are grounds for great hope.

The United Bible Societies of Africa have played a major role in bringing Africa out of superstitious darkness. Bible printing by the Bible Society in Cape Town produces over one million Bibles annually. The Gideons produce hundreds of thousands every year. This tremendous amount of Bibles goes into the continent of Africa every year to bring the light of truth to a people who are seeking God. Through the distribution of the *Study New Testament* of the church, with the enclosed "teacher" of the *Encyclopedic Study Guide*, this "little missionary" is being sent to nations throughout the continent. These are efforts to bring light to a dark continent. I would say, therefore, that the single most important source of information that is bringing Africa into development is Bible information. The Bible has changed sub-Saharan African culture. It will continue

to change the culture of Africa in the years to come if we continue to put the Bible into the hands of a people who are hungering and thirsting after the word of God.

We are now in an era of world history wherein it seems that those who have the greatest ability to change will be those who will economically develop the most. Accepting new ideas and strategies in a changing world gives one the edge over those who are steeped in unproductive systems that have locked them into the past, if not doomed them to underdevelopment and poverty. As the new economic world eclipses those economies and cultures that refuse to accept new means and measures for development, a tension will continue to develop between the haves and have nots. And herein is the curse of the Islamist who cannot modernize with the new world order.

If the Taliban's seizure of Afghanistan twenty years ago proves anything, it proves that an archaic world view can cripple an entire nation. It can take a nation backward a century and hold it in the grips of poverty and backwardness. The inability of fundamental Islam to cope with the developing world will for many years to come generate tension between the haves and the have nots. And since the Christian world view allows the liberated to develop economically, the Islamist will always view Christianity as the religion of the infidel. We can almost with certainty say that there will never be any armistice between fundamental Islam and Christianity since the fundamentalist of Islam would stymie

economic development for the sake of a religious communism that makes all citizens poor and backward under the control of dictatorial clerics.

I would add another dimension to this sociological equation. Most people in America do not understand the widening rift that is developing between the United States and Europe. The American is certainly perceptive that there is a rift, especially since the events of the Iraq war. But I am wondering if the typical American understands the reason for this.

The European was a colonial. However, the American never formerly engaged in such with Middle Eastern countries and Africa. But it seems that the colonial past of European countries may now come back to haunt them. When the colonial countries were eventually given their independence from the mother countries of Europe, dual passports, and sometimes citizenship, were established between the colonized country and the European mother country. In the decades since independence of the now free colonized countries, a constant flow of immigrants have come out of the old colonial possessions. This human flow of population has poured into Europe. And you guessed it. The colonialized countries of Europe were countries in North Africa, India, and the Middle East, countries that were to a great extent Islamic. And now, there is a vast **voting** population of Muslims in Europe who will determine the future of Europe. There is some irony in this. The colonials will eventually be overcome by those they colonized. Freedom in a democratic

society will allow this to happen.

The West must keep in mind that fundamental Islam is not as Buddhism and Hinduism. There is a theology of tolerance and liberty in Buddhism and Hinduism that allows religion and economy to exist. The adherents to both can co-exist with the Christian without either seeking to blow up the Christian. However, the Islamist maintains a different view. Since Christianity is the religion of the infidel, he thus concludes that Christianity is a false religion that has launched centuries of attack against Islam and Islamic countries.

From an evangelical point of view, the Islamist is right. Christians have sought to vigorously convert the Muslim. Unfortunately, during the era of the Crusades, a counterfeit Christianity—churchianity—sought to use government military power to accomplish the goal of eradicating Islamic control of the Bible lands. In order to counter this threat, Islamists now seek to capture governments in order to make their stand against any invading “crusaders.” To the fundamental Islamist, therefore, the Western invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq were crusades. Though the objective of the West was to free a people instead of some supposed holy shrines and holy city, the Islamist believed that the era of the Crusades was resurrected. His cry for jihad, therefore, is a cry to stop foreign influence in his holy lands. As long as the infidel occupies his “Quran lands,” the Islamist will always feel that the “Christian” West is an occupying force that must be eradicated from his holy lands.

What extremists as Bin Laden have done is ignite the tension between the Christian and Islamic world views. The irrational terrorist has forced the hand of the West to avenge 9/11 with a holy war of justice called “war on terrorism.” The Islamists, however, have certainly revealed their contradictions by accusing the West with invasion into their own lands when they rejoiced over an invasion into the land of the infidel with jets flying into skyscrapers. The Islamists want the infidel out of holy lands such as Saudi Arabia, and now Iraq. But they have enraged the infidel by attacking his “holy land.” In doing so, a tit-for-tat retaliation exists to snuff out those states who might be responsible for terrorist activity or harboring terrorists within their borders. The Islamic terrorist has never considered the fact that if he would have stayed out of America, America would have stayed out of the Middle East. But again, a terrorist is never a rational thinker. He or she is simply driven by obsessions and delusions of a religion that accommodates passions against the West.

In these winds of global change, the Christian is both hindered and helped. He is hindered in the fact that conflict between world governments and religions do not make it easy to move among the nations. Paul asked Timothy that prayers be made for kings in order that we live a quiet and peaceful life. It is in peaceful environments that evangelism is easier and the church grows. On the other hand, in times of conflict it is difficult for Christians to go into all nations, especially

when nations shut their doors to the missionary.

Global conflict has helped the Christian cause in the sense that Christians have had to rethink their faith. They have been driven to recognize the differences between Christianity and religious faiths that are founded more on obsession than fact. If the rise of the war on terrorism has accomplished anything, it has awakened a Christian faith that was at a critical point of becoming stagnant and dead. Conflict has awakened the Christian to the fact that if his faith subsides, there is another faith that will gladly take over his land.

From the mid 1960s to the turn of the last century, Islam grew in America from an unknown religion to over six million. How could this have happened in a supposedly "Christian" nation? Did the Christian become so introverted that he lost sight of his mission?

I believe one of the primary causes for this growth of Islam in America was that the American became so enthralled in economic development and secular living that he forgot his faith. Those who were left behind in the development of America remained poor. A spiritual vacuum was formed among the poor in America. And this poor person was usually African-American. When Cassius Clay became Mohammed Ali, something changed. A new threat entered America with a new faith.

Has the war on terrorism stopped the conversion of America to Islam? We will not know for another decade or so. However, its growth from obscurity to six

million should alert the West that pure secularism in a materialistic society does not work. We are religious creatures. If society seeks to suppress religion with things, fun and games, we will pay the price.

I believe the global conflict between the world views of Islam and Christianity have awakened the fundamentals in both faiths. Where we go from here will be determined by the dedication of both the Christian and the Muslim. Since the dedicated Christian is driven to be more evangelistic with his faith, the dedicated Muslim will always be threatened with Christian zeal. The Islamist will continue to be defensive. And in being defensive, he will seek measures, any measures, by which to stem the evangelistic tide of the Christian. And since fundamental Islam is a theocratic system, the fundamental Islamist will always view Western governments as the vehicle that seeks to spread Christianity into all the world. It is for this reason that the war on terrorism will never have an end. There will never be an armistice signed by an Islamic terrorist who believes that his faith is under attack by a Western government.

We must keep in mind, therefore, that Christianity and true Islam can never have peaceful coexistence. One or the other must be modified in order to live together in the same society. This means that one must be false, and the other true. Only the one that is false can be modified. The world views of each are inherently opposed to one another. When the Muslim is in the minority in a democratic government, things are relatively under

control. However, when the Muslim becomes the major voting citizen, things change. Europe and America will never again have the relationship they had in the past. World War II brought the American and European together, but it will be the power of the Muslim vote in Europe that will move them apart. It will move them apart because there will always be those Muslims who will not modernize.

They will not modify their faith in order to coexist with other faiths. Islam is a theocracy, and as a theocracy all other faiths must be moved out of the way in order for true Islam to be practiced in any given society. Do those of the West understand this? I believe their indifference to religion will lead to their conversion to Islam.

## Chapter 4

### Transitions In Church History

*A clear definition of fundamental truth  
will guard the disciples of Jesus  
from a wayward path for the future.*

In a changing world, there will be changes in the behavioral traditions of the church. Leaders must understand that though truth does not change, our response to the truth may, depending on how godly disciples culturally respond to the will of God. As the church moves from one generation to another, there will always be changes in how the church carries out the commands of God. And in these changes there will be times of struggle, if not chaos. It is incumbent upon church leaders, therefore, to take the church through these times with a merciful and patient spirit.

Regardless of the challenges that any environment of the world presents, the church is under a mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Challenges do not negate this mandate. We can never use difficulties and

persecution as valid objections to accomplish our divine mission. Difficulties can be overcome. Persecution can be endured. After all, any cause that is not worth dying for can never be a cause worth living for. Since this world is not our home, then we must continually press on, knowing that we can either be sent home by our persecutors or called home by our Lord. In either case, we go to our eternal home.

In our work as His disciples, we seek to populate heaven through the proclamation of the gospel, knowing that no man has a right to hear the gospel twice when there is another who has not yet heard it once. We are driven with a mission to find others for Jesus because He found us.

We must be extremely dedicated to this mission. When we are, God will

bring forth fruit from our labors. Now as disciples who are to be wise as serpents, we must evaluate our work in order to determine if it is a work of either wood, hay, stubble, or a work of gold, silver and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:9-15). I have been involved in both types of work in my global adventures. However, I can say this by looking back at past failures and victories. We can make a determination of failures and victories only by planning for the future with information we have learned from the past.

I have traveled to more countries than I can remember and lived on three continents. Since I launched into global living and became a global citizen in 1974, I have experienced a number of movements within the socio-religious structures of various cultures. I have experienced the church at several different stages of growth in countries throughout the world. I thought that it would be good to share at least one scenario of the growth and decline that seems to be common in many places where the church has been planted. This particular scenario that is not uncommon is one that often produces churches of wood, hay, stubble. We must thus look back at these cases in order to prevent ourselves from repeating history. In looking back at past failures, we must learn the skill of planting churches that are gold, silver and precious stones.

I would thus like to point out some of the typical stages of development that some churches go through in the process

of history as they grow from early establishment to second, third and fourth generation leadership. These same stages can be seen in the movement of the church in many situations throughout the world. As leaders, it is imperative that we recognize which state of development the church is in for the purpose of making adjustments for the future.

The time span of the following general case history is usually from twenty to forty years in any given culture. The history usually begins with evangelists who are sent in to initially establish the church. Throughout the history of growth, the newly established churches usually go through a series of transitions that take the church from birth to death, depending on the principles that were established in the initial year or two of church planting. The manifestation of church growth principles of the established churches usually begin to manifest themselves when the movement is between twenty to thirty years old. After twenty to thirty years of growth to stagnation, the first generation leaders, the pioneers of the movement, are usually in their fifties or sixties. These churches are usually functioning upon the foundation of the initial works of the early evangelists. However, it is during these times that some negative transitions begin to take place in the movement. It is at this time that the principles or methodologies that were embedded in the church in the early years of establishment begin to produce their fruit.

## **A. Stage 1: Transition to a new leadership:**

When the typical church is twenty to thirty years old, a second generation of leadership has now moved into the leadership of the church. These preachers and leaders are in their twenties, or early thirties. They have not fought the battles of the first generation leaders, and therefore, have a different view of the nature of their work. Because they “grew up in the church,” their perception of “church” is different than their pioneering fathers. They have been the product of the first generation leadership, and thus, some of the principles and methodologies of their fathers lingers in their beliefs and behavior. However, they begin to learn new things, and thus view the church from a different perspective.

The first generation leaders fought battles for survival. They fought the denominations. They fought half-converted brethren who in the early years of the establishment of the church brought into the church a host of churchian thinking and doctrine. These early leaders fought for the faith and defended the truth. They usually built the church on the strictness of a “proof text” concept of understanding the Scriptures, since their battles centered around first principles with those who denied such.

As a result of their intense debates with false teachings, their approach to understanding the Bible is legalistically oriented. In the struggles of the early

years, doctrine was the primary motivation for learning the Bible rather than discovering and applying principles of holiness and focusing the minds of people on Jesus. Doctrine, not behavioral Christianity, became the emphasis of the movement. Church, not Jesus, became that which had to be defended. Obsession with the body over the head, not only turned the thinking of the members upside down, it embedded within the membership an introverted mentality that focused first on man, not Jesus. In those years of debate, a legal oriented view of church was developed. The seeds for future discord were thus planted that would eventually lead to squabbles in the body over an assortment of issues.

In their defense against the forces of denominational error in order to establish the “true church,” the early pioneers often developed a reactionary theology that was very legalistic. This legalistic approach to Bible teaching molded the attitude of the early pioners into developing a legalistic catechism of beliefs that were constructed in reaction to churchian doctrines. When the denominationalists said “faith only,” a reactionary theology was developed that said “works only.” When the churchianists promoted “grace only,” those in the heart of the first battles unconsciously developed theologies of “legal obedience.” When churchianists emphasized the work of the Spirit, we developed a deistic concept of God who is somewhere off in the universe. As a result of this reactionary foundation upon which our teaching was based, we too

developed our own churchianity, a focus that is primarily focused on preserving the church rather than exalting the glory of Jesus as the head of the church and savior of the world.

The extent of this reversal of the body over the head could be illustrated by an experience I had in a class on the scheme of redemption in the latter 60s. The instructor of the class was teaching the “plan of salvation.” He wrote on the blackboard, “hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized.” He looked at what he had written, and said, “Brethren this is the plan of salvation, but somehow we need to put more Jesus into our presentation of the plan.” At the time he knew there was something wrong with “our plan.” But neither he nor the rest of us could at the time figure out what was wrong. Now we have. The plan is Jesus. It is His death for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. This was the gospel of God’s scheme of redemption. “Hear-believe-repent-confess-baptism” was only the recorded response of people to the preaching of the gospel. What we were doing back in those days was emphasizing the response instead of the gospel, which was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We thus converted people to a legal code of obedience for which we had several passages of scripture. All of us have since repented of this, but the legacy that was left is a generation of people who were legally baptized, but were not added to the church by focusing first on Jesus and His cross and resurrection. The cross was presented to them only after we had

preached “hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized.”

Because of confrontational beginnings, legalism often became the the first generation leaders’ approach to biblical teaching. Their hermeneutics became legalistic because of their struggle for existence among a host of religious errors that were promoted by churchianists. A balance was lost and a tendency to stand to the far right was developed. In a churchian environment of legalism, members were regimented to conform to those traditional shibboleths and interpretations that were constructed throughout the years of conflict. This was the “Christianity” that was handed to the children.

What happened in this first stage of church establishment was that the seeds of discord were planted for the destruction of the church in the generations to come. Whenever a legalistic approach to church is development, all is well as long as everyone agrees on both doctrine, opinions and traditions. When everyone is cloned after the same system of opinions and behavior, then there is peace and harmony. However, a new generation begins to think, “Is this what the Bible actually teaches?” Questioning matters of opinion or methodologies often brings discomfort and discord among those whose focus first on perserving a system of church (churchianity), rather than Jesus.

If legalistic thinking is embedded in a church in the first decade of its establishment, the seeds are planted for

division in the decades to come. When legalistic Jews came into the initial establishment of the early church, it took two inspired letters from the Holy Spirit (Romans and Galatians) to solve the problem. It would be wise, therefore, to thoroughly engraft the principles of Romans and Galatians into the thinking of newly established churches in order to guard against division in the future.

In order not to implant negative seeds that will eventually grow into discord among the brethren, evangelists should initially preach Jesus and the cross. If we preach church instead of Jesus, a churchian religion will develop. Legal church doctrines will be embedded in the thinking of the early disciples that will not bring forth fruit until someone questions one of the “doctrines” that has no biblical foundation, but was actually the expressed opinion of one of the early pioneers of the church. When a new generation starts focusing on Jesus, churchians will say, “But doctrine is also important.” It is. But the point is that Jesus has all authority. He is head of the church, King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is our high priest at the right hand of God, and the one into whom we must be immersed for remission of sins. This is the doctrine. If we try to go legally through the New Testament to first seek doctrine, then we will never find Jesus, for in focusing on doctrine, we fail to fully see Jesus, because in our minds we keep ourselves away from Jesus. But if we first seek Jesus and the grace He brought through the cross, then our appreciation of what God has done for

us through grace will bring freedom and an appreciation for our salvation.

## **B. Stage 2: Transition to different opinions:**

In the initial establishment of the church in any area, some of the first generation leaders often develop a guardian attitude toward the movement they have begun. They are/were the pioneers, and thus, there is a self-appointment of themselves to make sure that the movement stays on their concept of a course of “sound doctrine.” There is often an unconscious stealing of the church from Jesus and His word in order that their own opinions and dictates be observed.

A psychological mold for the history of the church is thus established. Around this mold emerging leadership has a very difficult time to think and act freely for itself without the intimidation of the older leadership. Self initiative in Bible study is stymied. Interpretations must be based on the Bible **and** in conformity with the opinions of those who have become standards of biblical interpretation. Basing one’s study solely on the Scriptures becomes difficult because of the intimidation of unwritten interpretive opinions that hold the new generation of Bible students in check. And since the thinking of the first generation of leaders was based on a legalistic view of Scripture, the second generation of leadership that grew up “in the church” must conform to opinions in interpretation and church behavior of the

older generation. Because the first generation of leaders have a difficult time determining the difference between Bible and opinions, any change in opinion is viewed as a change in Bible teaching. The foundation is thus set for division.

In this environment, the second generation leadership struggles. These leaders too often over react to the intimidation of their fathers. The younger generation did not fight the early battles of the movement. They have been the product of the foundation of the early struggles in the movement. As a result, their perspective of the church is different. They are of a different nature. They see things differently because they are not the products of a reactionary theology. They often see some things from a different perspective because they approach Bible study not in an effort to answer denominational error or brotherhood apostasy. They want to enhance holiness rather than promote a confrontational argument with some denominationalist. They search the Scriptures, not to win battles, but to develop the spiritual growth of the now twenty to thirty year old churches that were built on the foundation of the early pioneers. Problems arise because they do not understand the nature of the pioneers of the movement and the pioneer leaders do not understand them. There is a generation gap.

Because of this lack of understanding on both sides, the church enters into an era of confrontation. Because of the often implanted legalistic thinking of the fathers in the development of their

reactionary theology, the new leaders on the scene see that many sacredly held church practices are not Bible, but simply the behavior of an earlier generation of leaders who fought the initial battles that established the church. The new generation that “grew up in the church” did not fight these battles. They did not develop a reactionary theology. And thus, their objectivity is not clouded by the smoke of a heated battle with some religious error.

It is at this time in the history of a church that both the pioneer leaders and younger generation leaders must be cautious. The pioneers must not seek to steal the sheep of God. One steals sheep by becoming a lord over the flock. Peter saw this happening among some churches of the first century (1 Pt 5:1-6). It happens today when leaders seek to bind on the church their opinions, methodologies or ceremonies. Older leaders must be very cautious about binding those things that are only traditional, and thus not mentioned in the Scriptures.

Younger generation leaders must respect their elders. They must not become arrogant when they discover a point in belief or behavior that is not in the Scriptures. They too must guard themselves from reacting against the leadership of the church that was handed to them. They must remember the early struggles of their fathers who stood valiant against the wiles of the devil in all sorts of biblical ignorance in the churchian world. Younger leaders must always remember that in all discussions

about belief, the Bible alone must be our final authority. Just because something is not in the Bible does not mean that it should be changed. It should only be recognized as a tradition, a tradition that is up for discussion between the older and younger generation leaders.

### **C. Stage 3: Transition into group tension:**

Something almost tragic happens in some churches when they are twenty to thirty years old. Two generations of church leaders often come into conflict with one another. A contrast of opposites is set up in which Satan often does some of his best work in church division.

The second generation leaders seek change. This change is often a change from legalism to a more grace oriented faith. They also often seek a change in methods, not the message. However, the legalistic nature of the older first generation leaders reacts against the supposedly “liberal” nature of the second generation leaders. They react to change, assuming that any change is liberalism and an apostasy from the “truth.” They confuse method and message, assuming that any change in method is a change in message. Any change usually threatens the icons of the older generation, and thus a sense of insecurity is developed in the minds of the older generation. Therefore, they assume that change must be liberal because that to which change is made is not how it has always been done or believed in the past.

The new generation of leaders wants

to do things in different ways. However, the established way of doing things in the local church is now about twenty years old. Any change in the established behavioral manner of doing something obviously brings tension because the first generation leaders have by this time confused method and message. They have allowed the traditional way of doing something to be the only way it can be done, and thus a tradition has become a doctrine.

The first generation leadership has often led themselves to believe that they had a hedge on understanding the Bible because they won so many battles with the denominations. The truth they proclaimed was right and victorious. However, a subtle attitude of arrogance crept in where they convinced themselves that there was nothing else to learn. When the second generation leadership entered the scholars’ lounge, these leaders were often challenged for their new approach or emphasis. Because of their emphasis on other areas of biblical truth, and because they often expressed old truths in a different way, they are often accused of being “liberal.” This is the beginning of an era of confrontation that often divides brethren because no forum was ever developed for open discussion. When lords rule, there are no round table discussions.

In an over reaction to the legal atmosphere of the first generation leadership, some second generation leaders fly right through Jerusalem. They go from one extreme to another. These leaders go “grace only” in reaction to

legalistic works only. They lose their biblical center of reference. In reaction to hardline legalism and hierarchal control of some first generation leaders of the church, they lose their biblical perspective of the unique nature of the church. They often consign the church to being just another denomination. In fact, they sometimes join what they would consider to be just “another denomination” when some dispute arises in the church. They become truly “liberal” in theology, giving up the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament for the sake of peace. Because the initial establishment of the church was not built on love of the brethren, they are unable to agree to disagree for the sake of fellowship.

This is a time in the history of any church that the instructions of Titus 3:9-11 must be obeyed in every detail. Paul wrote that some want to generate “controversies, contentions and strivings.” But he reminded Titus that such disagreements “are unprofitable and worthless.” Those who would persist in contentions over insignificant matters are factious, and thus must be rejected. They must be rejected because contentious people are perverted, and thus sin. They are self-condemned because of their desire to argue over matters of opinion or things that are not significant in reference to one’s salvational relationship with God. It is imperative, therefore, that leaders “*not strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the believers*” (2 Tm 2:14). Once a leader perceives that a debate is about to insue over “words to

no profit,” he should “*avoid profane and empty babblings*” (2 Tm 2:16). This is a time not to show up at the meeting of one who is seeking to be contentious and controversial.

#### **D. Stage 4: Transition into reactionism:**

At about this time in the historical transition of the church, some of the first generation leaders also make a fatal mistake. Because they do not understand their own legal approach to Christianity they do not understand why some of these second generation leaders are reacting to some of their beliefs and behavior. They do not understand why some are leaving the church. In their failure to see their own legalism, they label as “liberal” everything and everyone who does not conform to their “position” on the issues. More tragically, they intensify the situation by establishing a “watchdog” mentality. Some make themselves the saviors of the church, often marching from this city to that church, from lectureship to gospel meeting in an effort to stamp out the rise of liberalism in the church. The emphasis of their preaching gradually turns from saving the lost to saving the saved. The nature of their spirit gradually turns to bitterness and mistrust in the younger generation of church leaders. They wake up one day and find themselves alone in a theological circle they have drawn so small that they alone are in it.

But there are those second generation leaders who have not gone off to the

denominations as some of those who have lost their center of reference concerning the true nature of the church. This second generation of leaders also see the apostasy of those who have fallen away to religions that have been created after the traditions of men. However, they see the cause of this apostasy from a different perspective. They see the legalism of some of the first generation leaders who have pronounced themselves as guardians of the church. Christianity is viewed by this generation of leaders more from a Christ-gospel perspective rather than a “doctrine-argument” perspective. Because they do not close ranks with the first generation leaders who are in a legalistic manner reacting to an apostasy, they are considered with suspicion in the eyes of the first generation leaders.

The older, first generation leaders again react. They react with a religious nature of legalistic argumentation against those in the church who do not conform to their opinions. The brandishing about of terms as “liberal” or “doctrinally loose” is too often heard. Such slanderous labelling and name calling only intensifies the conflict and causes all involved to lose contact with the real issues. The issues are not over fundamental doctrine. They are over attitudes, opinions and methods. In the conflicts that ensue, there is a real loss of the fundamental doctrine of unity of the church and salvation of souls. Men too often violate the fundamental doctrine of church unity for the sake of propagating their own opinions. The

weightier doctrine of unity is sacrificed for the traditions of men.

The second generation leaders too often carelessly throw about terms as “conservative” or “hard core” or “legalistic” because they do not understand the nature of the older first generation leaders. The conflict between these two generations of church leaders is most unfortunate and too often severe. Fellowship among preachers is often lost. Fellowship among churches is lost. Good men’s reputations are slandered by the slinging of labels and gossip. Men lose their direction by turning from evangelism to church politics. The inevitable result is the loss of souls, both in the church and outside the church, for evangelism ceases. Struggling Christians become disillusioned with the conflict of senseless battles which should never have been fought. The movement is now in a stage of self-destruction. It turns on itself.

Are there those among us who can find and maintain balance in times of conflict? Church unity is a fundamental doctrine. Would we violate a fundamental doctrine over squabbles in differences of opinion? Would we turn from evangelism of the lost by turning on ourselves?

I write these words because of a biblical teaching which is too often neglected in our preaching and teaching. It is the doctrine of the unity of the body. All Christians hold different opinions and interpretations. However, we must maintain unity that is based on fundamental doctrines. One evangelist

in South Africa once said, “We are divided over opinions, but there is absolutely no difference of understanding over fundamental doctrines.” Our problem is trying to move our opinions into the realm of fundamental doctrine. And in doing such we divide brethren. Do we know the Bible well enough to know what is not there? Do we have the same fear about binding where God has not bound as we do about loosing where God has not loosed?

### **E. Stage 5: Transition to a renewal for unity:**

I was once in the country of Liberia immediately after the end of thirteen years of civil war. As I moved through the city of Monrovia, the capital, I observed the numerous bullet holes in houses and poles and every standing structure. The heat of the battles of the war were intense. A quarter of a million people died and a country was economically destroyed. Nothing was gained by power-hungry warlords who sought to control the minds of men with the support of diamonds. But one good thing came from the years of war. The people were totally disgusted with war. They could see what it had done to their country. Leaders were driven to the negotiating table in order to have peace instead of war. Countries that want true peace must come to this conclusion. Churches that want peace must also practice peace.

After civil war in the church in any area there is a refreshing breeze for unity

and peace among those who are disgusted with the era of conflict that was perpetuated by those who sought to maintain either power, positions or purse. After years of conflict there rises within the new leadership a recognition of the foolish strifes of the past, and thus a yearning to be brethren in a church that is more interested in saving a lost world than slandering a good brother. This leadership looks forward to a time when members of the church are known for their love of one another and not for being baptized in vinegar in order to wage argument. In this stage of development, the church lives on, never wanting to go back to the days of slash and burn.

It is a normal sociological phenomenon. All societies go through times of social chaos. The chaos is generated because there are changes being made in beliefs and behavior of the people of the society. What is actually happening is that the society is struggling to give birth to a new generation. It is not enjoyable to go through these times of chaos. Old beliefs are being challenged. Old behavior is being changed. The older generation will always conclude that things are coming to ruin. In a way, an older generation is being lost in order to give way to a new. The generation gap surfaces with every generation, because in the chaos of change, the new generation is seeking to establish itself with beliefs and behavior that they have determined.

Throughout the years of social chaos, everyone must keep in mind that this is a time of change, a change to a new

generation. In applying this principle to the disciples of Jesus, it is a time to restudy the Bible in order to reaffirm that we stand on the Scriptures and not on the traditions of the fathers. If the traditions of the fathers are allowed to carry the same weight as the Scriptures, then we are in trouble. Out of the chaos will come a new denomination, a new churchian movement that will lead itself further from God, and thus create a religion after the traditions of the fathers. However, if the new generation focuses on Jesus and His word, then the chaos will produce a

new and exciting generation of disciples who know how to relate the gospel to their contemporaries. If they do not focus on the word of God, they are gone. The point is that a Christ-centered life is a word focused life. One cannot lead himself to believe that he is Christ-centered in his life if he is not into the word of Christ. One of Satan's greatest deceptions in these times is to lead people to believe that they are Christ-centered, and the same time be ignorant of the word of God.

## Chapter 5

# Rediscovering Our First Love

*Visionary leadership will plan for the future  
by determining what to do in the present  
with their knowledge of the past.*

This is not the most encouraging chapter of our life in leadership training. In fact, it could be quite depressing if we looked at it from a human viewpoint. The subject that follows is a burden upon the heart of all evangelists who are concerned about the spiritual strength of the church in any part of the world.

Those of us who work among many church groups must constantly prepare lessons and materials in order to challenge stagnate churches. God wants growth because He wants that which causes growth, the salvation of lost souls. When churches lose their mission, souls are not being saved. Churches

subsequently cease to grow. Therefore, bear with me as I take you through this chapter. World evangelists deal with this situation every week because they seek to stir up love and good works among the disciples of Jesus.

When one is involved in conducting workshops, lectureships and seminars that are directed toward the edification of the church, there is a common purpose and challenge that must determine the nature of what is presented. Those who teach, must work as Paul said, "*for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*" (Ep 4:12). As evangelists, our

work is to edify the church in order to cause growth in Christ (Ep 4:16). In order to promote this growth, we must first understand what causes stagnation or the death of churches.

When I approach an assembly of disciples for a seminar, there is a common problem that often plagues churches that are fifteen to twenty years old. This is the problem of non-growth. Because of non-growth, leaders and churches become discouraged. As discussed in the previous chapter, sometimes the leaders are the problem for the stagnation of a church. If they are, then it is time for repentance. And actually, whenever a church is stagnant, it is a problem with leadership.

The thoughts of this chapter are a scenario of “church growth” that seems to be common among many churches. It is a cycle of growth that leads to the destruction of hundreds of churches throughout the world, and thus it is imperative that church leaders understand this cycle of history through which many churches go in order that they not allow a church to go into stagnation.

In the 90s in south Africa, many of the churches in the country were already in their third decade of existence. Many of these churches had been started by missionaries from America. However, the missionaries had long since left. The older members still remembered the enthusiasm of the early beginnings of the church. But during the 90s they knew that they were “on the plateau” of the church growth cycle, that is, they were in a state of non-growth because of a lack

of conversions.

There are no specific dates on the time line of this cycle. The problem is not the time but the fact that a church reaches a stage at which it does not grow, and subsequently moves into a stage of decline. How to get out of the slump is the challenge. However, reaching this plateau of non-growth usually starts when a particular church is forty to fifty years old. I call this “**Table Mountain Church Growth**” after the shape of Table Mountain in Cape Town.

### A. The cycle of stagnation:

The following are general trends that are often evidenced in the life of a group of disciples that is destined for stagnation and death. If our group is in a state of stagnation, we would do well to recognize where we are in this cycle in order to make some changes in our lives. Stagnation could be the result of our construction of a god after our own image and a religion after our desires. This god and religion may be taking our group of disciples on an unfortunate trip to death.

#### 1. Stage 1: *Climbing the mountain:*

The Plateau church begins with a rapid church growth in the first five to ten years of its existence. Enthusiasm is high. Many are being added to the Lord. Members are out every evening beating the doors of the unsaved and the evangelist is leading the way. The attendance rises dramatically because all have the spirit of reaching the lost in order to build the church. This typical church is

on the upward slop of the mountain.

Keep in mind that the history of any group of disciples is usually embedded in the first generation of converts. What the fathers learn, they pass on to their children and the next generation of converts. It is imperative, therefore, that positive growth principles be taught and practiced during the early beginnings of a particular church.

### **2. Stage 2: *Reaching the plateau:***

At this stage something goes wrong. After initial growth, members of the Plateau church start settling into themselves. They lose their “first love” since they feel they have accomplished their goal of establishing a church. The sense of accomplishment is often enforced by the construction of a building that is thought to be an evangelistic outreach for the church. There is thus the feeling that the local disciples have arrived at their goal of accomplishing their mission. They thus nestle themselves into the “temple” they have constructed for themselves, thinking that the building will do the evangelism for them because it is now the advertisement for the church and the “method” of evangelism.

The evangelist of the group around whom the work has now centered itself, finds himself fighting the devil more in members than in the lost. If the group’s growth is the result of a single evangelist, he finds himself dealing with a host of problems in the new converts. Since they need spiritual maintenance, he must give a great deal of his time to their care. His evangelistic outreach thus deteriorates

and his example of non-evangelism begins to have its impact on those who follow him. Therefore, after about seven to fifteen years, the growth of the Plateau church begins to decline as the attendance reaches its plateau of about 75 to 125. There is some concern about the non-growth, though there is no repentance to change the now established pattern of stagnation.

### **3. Stage 3: *Walking on the plateau:***

The Plateau church is now into a period in which it has constructed a religion after its own desires. Few people are now being added to the body because no one is out evangelizing the lost. Thus, no new energy is being brought into the group through conversions. Those who do come in are “cooled” after a few months and intimidated to sit on the pews as the rest of the church that has become evangelistically indifferent. Complacency sets in. The church group begins to accept its non-growth syndrome in which it is now being encased. Members start believing that they are in an “unreceptive area,” and thus fatalistically sit back and ride out the end result of the plateau.

The Plateau church then takes on the nature of a social religious club and members show up for assemblies in order to keep their membership current. Evangelism passes out of the scene except for a handful of members who still hang on to the spirit of teaching the lost. The church group now unknowingly constructs a behavioral pattern that will keep its growth on the plateau for the next decade or two.

The following are some of those philosophies that lead churches to stagnation on the plateau, and keep them there until the decline begins. The members of the Plateau church have now adopted these beliefs in their construction of a religion that pleases the members' lifestyle.

**a. *Social-club churchianity:***

The Plateau church is into the middle of its second decade of existence. It huddles around itself in order to keep that for which much struggle was made in its first decade of growth. When growth ceases, the members seek to keep what they have. Christian fellowship digresses to church membership. The members of the Plateau church begin to view themselves as simply "members of the church" rather than in fellowship with one another because of a covenant relationship with God who brought them into membership with the universal body of Christ. Attendance and contribution become check blocks on a legal checklist that has now been constructed, and by which they judge themselves "faithful" after having checked off all "acts of worship" and requirements of the club.

There are few good works in this group. If the Plateau church exists in an economically strong environment, contribution checks take the place of personal involvement. Supported professionals become the medium through which work is accomplished.

Holiness becomes a secondary struggle because members find contentment in a fully completed

checklist of outward legal club requirements. Church members become introverted with one another to the point of inadvertently making it difficult for outsiders to come into the group. Members die feeding off themselves. They become "spiritual" cannibals ineffectively listening week after week to preaching and teaching that does not get beyond the walls of the "sanctuary." They become as the Hebrew writer stated, "dull of hearing" (Hb 5:11). They have ears, but cannot hear. Their ears only itch for preaching that makes them feel comfortable in their indifference.

**b. *Introverted churchianity:***

The Plateau church is on the plateau and is now self-centered. Instead of seeking to grow in holiness inwardly by reaching outwardly, it changes to developing ministries that reach inwardly but can be checked off outwardly. They "test those who claim to be apostles, but are not" as a legal requirement (See Rv 2:2). The Plateau church begins to believe that it must first take care of its own needs before it can reach out to others. Books, sermons and classes on **self-help**, **self-esteem**, **self-evaluation**, **self-control**, etc. become the common read among those who know something is wrong, but cannot discover why they are on the plateau.

Because the Plateau church members have no self esteem, they feel bad about themselves because they know what they should be doing. "Feel good" books in such churches become common bestsellers because members are seeking soothing for the lack of self esteem that

has been brought on by their isolation from one another and the needs of humanity.

The Plateau church has constructed a churchianity that sees itself as an end within itself. The primary work of the Plateau church is now to instigate programs for the survival of the church. The term “ministries” becomes fashionable. Programs are constructed to generate activity. However, the definition changes from a biblical concept of serving the life-produced misfortunes of this world to entertainment of the body life. The Plateau church becomes secular. The teenage group is entertained. The concept of fellowship digresses to simply meaning food, drink and parties. A true churchian existence has now been established.

Plateau churches can often be identified by their assemblies. Because these churches have become introverted, the focus of their assemblies changes. Instead of coming together to stir up love and good works toward others, members come to assemblies in order to see what they can get. Instead of bringing worshipful spirits together to pour out worship to God, they seek to be entertained. Assemblies thus take on the behavior of a music concert in order to draw those who seek a “worship experience.” Adherents go to the assemblies, therefore, for themselves, not for what they can give to others (love and good works) and God (worship).

**c. *Good works without eternity in mind:*** The Plateau church has now

convinced itself that its purpose is to preserve itself. And in doing such, the church turns on itself with petty squabbles and senseless disputes about “genealogies” and other brotherhood issues the members feel might endanger the norm behavior and theology. Business meetings are consumed with talk about buildings and grounds, “fellowship meals,” and who has not showed up lately in order to keep up their “membership” at the social club. Squabbles develop over the presentation of ceremonies during the assemblies. Dress codes and structures and ceremonies are fine tuned for appearance.

Shepherds who once smelled like sheep now start smelling like brick and mortar. Business meeting records which once recorded discussions about evangelistic efforts now contain scribbled notes on problems, projects and parties within the local club. Elders digress to being board members dictating assignments to a corporate church that has been organized into introverted committees and programs to take care of every need of a membership that has lost their direction toward the saving of the lost.

The good intentions of the Plateau brethren have changed in focus. Satan consumes the energy of the church to do good into doing those works that have no eternity in mind. The emphasis or goal of the works of the church are changed only a little in order to keep people working, but their minds off saving the lost. Members start seeing their purpose as saving the saved instead of saving the

lost. Leaders see themselves as working among the flock instead of eyeballing sinners. The preacher becomes a clergyman who marries and buries members. The local function of the Plateau church changes to sustain the plateau instead of training evangelists, teachers, preachers and elders for world evangelism. This is churchianity in full bloom.

**d. *The loss of growth-oriented vision:*** The Plateau church begins hiring staff who are job-oriented. The church seeks a preacher to minister to its own needs instead of hiring someone to do the work of an evangelist, since at this stage the Plateau church has long lost its understanding of the work of an evangelist and the purpose of the church. The “evangelist” of the Plateau church sees himself in a job-oriented work instead of being a God-called man to do the work of an evangelist. It is usually at this time that the local religious group (the former Plateau church) has changed its understanding of the work of an evangelist and nature of the true church. The members want a “pastor” or “clergyman” to function among the members in holding hands and wiping the running noses of forty and fifty year old babies who should have by now learned commitment to Christ. The mission of this religion has changed from “go into all the world” to “come visit me.” The lammstand has now been removed.

**Stage 4: *The backside of the mountain:*** The end of the Plateau church is inevitable. Those early members have

now grown older or passed on. They have lost most of their children to the world because the parents lost their example by losing their first love. As the church group majority reaches their fifties and sixties, they start wondering why they have not grown for twenty years. They are still 75 to 125 after all these years and no growth is in sight.

As the churchian group nears the backside of the mountain they can look back and see that their attendance was greater in the past than at the present. Unfortunately, it is usually by this time that they have already constructed a religion after their own desires and it is too late to turn from the back side of the mountain. Negative growth now sets in as members start dying off and a plummet to the bottom is certain.

While on the plateau a few were baptized to fill in the gaps. Some moved away. Some fell away. Some died away. However, after thirty or forty years of existence, even the gaps are not filled and the Plateau church is down in attendance and on its way out. The ship is now dead in the water and the current is taking it toward the rocks of destruction.

The problem is intensified by the fact that the churchian disciples do not think there is a problem. After thirty to forty years of existence, no one is alive who remembers the glory days when members were evangelistically reaching their neighbors.

Unreceptivity is not so much the result of changes in the community, but in the nature of the churchian development of the disciples. The

churchian member excuses himself or herself from evangelistic outreach by describing his or her neighbors as unreceptive. The problem is not in unreceptive neighbors, but in churchians who seek to be accepted in their communities, and thus are afraid of causing any disturbance by “preaching their religion” to their neighbors. Everyone in the community is thus “Christian,” and will somehow make it to heaven on their good works. Churchian speech can always be identified by those who say of those who have not obeyed the gospel, “He’s a good Christian.”

Now add to the preceding scenario the ownership of a church building by a dying membership. The original group was excited about their own church building after they had grown to the point of affording payments. They sat in a new building they thought would bring growth, but after a few years of nongrowth in the building, they discovered a startling fact. Their attendance on Sunday morning was diminishing as children grew up and moved away. The urban district in which the building was built started to change. It was no longer the district where most of the members were living. In some cases, it became the inner city, while most of the members moved to the suburbs. Most of the members simply migrated away from the building. The unfortunate thing about urban church buildings is that members often move away from the building, and it is left standing with only a few to maintain the building itself.

Because there is such an emotional attachment to the building, the last remaining “charter members” hang on to either building payments or utilities in order to maintain the shrine. What sometimes happens is that a merger takes place with another church group that is also in a similar situation. A merger is thus accomplished, one building is sold and another is saved, and the new group is reaffirmed again for another thirty years until the same story starts to repeat itself. No one confesses up that a spirit of evangelism has been lost. There is no desire to repent and do the first works.

## **B. The Ephesian syndrome:**

The preceding common history of the rise and decline of a local church should startle repentance into the hearts of church leaders. This cycle of church growth is happening to many churches throughout the world. If churches fail to see this historical pattern, they are doomed to live it. It is a common cycle of church history that naturally happens if disciples develop a churchian definition of Christianity.

The reality of this cycle is manifested in the life history of the Ephesus church. I call this the Ephesian Syndrome. It is a history of the rise and decline of a church, to the point that the lampstand was ready to be removed as they existed on the backside of the plateau.

In Acts 18 and 19 the Ephesian church was established with vibrant commitment and growth as people dramatically turned from mystic religions

to the one true God. The date of this dynamic beginning was probably around A.D. 52 or 53.

After the initial explosion of growth, Paul revisited the leaders of the church a few years later. He warned them in Acts 20 about a “departure from the faith.” He saw the departure coming, and thus warned them that it was in their future.

In A.D. 61 or 62, Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesian church, addressing their apparent misunderstandings concerning Christ and the nature of the true church. Their decline had already started because churchian theology was changing the way members thought about the church. It started with a misunderstanding of the nature of the church, which misunderstanding led them to distort true Christianity into something that was foreign to Scripture. Christianity was being transformed into churchianity.

By the time John wrote the book of Revelation, Jesus pronounced judgment on the Ephesian church in Revelation 2 by stating that they had become a legal oriented church that had lost its first love. The warning was that if they did not repent, their lampstand was going to be removed.

From the time of the events of Acts 18 and 19 to the pronouncements of Revelation 2 was about thirty-five to forty or fifty years, depending on when you think the book of Revelation was written. Is there a pattern of growth, stagnation and death here about which we need to be cautioned? Is there a danger that should be recognized by the leaders of churches today? I firmly believe that the

Holy Spirit used the history of the church in Ephesus as an example to caution us about a cycle of growth, decline and death that we should recognize. One thing is very clear from this case history. Even the presence of a Christ-sent apostle in the early beginnings of the Ephesian church was not a guarantee that the church would not move into an era of decline and death. If this was true of the Ephesian church, then certainly church leaders must be alert to the fact that such can happen today in a church.

It is important to remember that the seeds that are planted in the first year of the establishment of a church will affect that church for the next fifty years. If evangelists plant seeds that lead to stagnation, those seeds will eventually lead to the stagnation and death of a church. It is critically important, therefore, that evangelists know what they are doing. We must seek to plant churches that are based on solid growth principles. We must build churches on the foundation of Christ, constructed with spirits of gold, silver and precious stones that will endure the test of time.

However, being built on a solid foundation of biblical principles is no guarantee that a church will survive the onslaught of the religious culture in which it exists. The Ephesian church is a good example. What better foundation could a church have than being established by great people as Aquila, Priscilla and the apostle Paul. Add to this the fact that the Holy Spirit sent the inspired letter of Ephesians directly to the church. Though the Ephesian church had

all the advantages, including an exciting beginning, all such advantages was no guarantee that its lampstand would not be removed. If this does not alert us to the fact that even great churches will suffer decline and death, then we are not good leaders of the flock of God. We must remember, if it happened to the church in Ephesus—and it did—then it can happen to us.

I have received numerous calls from church leaders who are tired of their existence on the plateau. They knew they are dead, but they want to change. They want to grow again. However, they often do not understand how they got to where they are, nor how to get growing again. But at least they have come to realize that they must start growing again. Unless a church takes ownership of its death, it will never start growing again.

Herein is the challenge of evangelists who work among the churches. There is a definite need for evangelists not only to be trained in the skills of establishing new churches, but also in the skills of resurrecting stagnate churches. It is my opinion that the latter is more difficult than the former. It is more difficult simply because a pattern of non-growth has been established in the minds of the disciples that will be difficult to change. Once churchianity has been established as the norm, it is almost impossible for churchians to start growing again by evangelistically reaching out to their communities. They are churchian simply because they think they are right. Nevertheless, there are a lot of churches out there who need the patient help of

evangelists who can help them start growing again. Because Jesus called on the Ephesian church to repent and rediscover their first love assumes that He knew they could repent. There is always the possibility for repentance in the lives of those who have grown cold. We must never underestimate the power of Jesus in the lives of those who seek to repent.

So did the Ephesian church repent and restore the first works? Unfortunately, Revelation was the last inspired New Testament book that was written. We do have secular church history that records the continuation of the Ephesian church. However, second century records of the church paint a different picture of the Ephesian church than the picture of the church that is described in the New Testament. The point is, members keep on meeting as a “church” though the lampstand for representing Jesus in the community has already been removed. The world is full of such churchian denominations that have long lost their representation of God on earth. In this type of religious environment it is our challenge to search the Scriptures in order to discover how God would have us be as His flock. It is not our goal to clone an existing churchian institutional religious group. It is our goal to use God’s directions in order to be as He would have us as His children.

If there is no desire to be obsessed with the word of God in directing our paths, then there is no hope of restoring the church as God would have it. This is

the ever present danger of traditions. They make us feel comfortable in our religious institutionalism. And when we feel religiously comfortable, there is no desire to check the Scriptures just to make sure we are who we claim to be. There can be no restoration unless there is a revival in Bible study. We live in an era

where there are many religious people who seek to fall under the umbrella of Christendom, but at the same time have created a “Christianity” after their own desires. We must remember that all Christians are religious, but not all religious people are Christians, even though they claim to be.

## Chapter 6

### Vision For The Future

*Leadership that is futuristic in thinking  
will always keep themselves alert  
for evangelistic opportunities  
that are produced by change.*

One peaceful night I sat alone by the restless waves of the beaches of the country of Gabon in the armpit of Africa. Waves are the same everywhere. They remind one of the constant changing influences that torment the beaches of societies. Change is a way of nature and life. Those who would not adapt or rise to the occasion and take advantage of the opportunities that are produced by change will break with the traditional molds of yesteryear. Or they will miss the golden opportunities that are presented by change for the future. We are reminded of Paul’s advice. “*See then that you walk carefully, not as fools but as wise, making the most of the time because the days are evil*” (Ep 5:15,16). No better advice could be given to Christians, especially the Christian leader.

We live in societies in the world that are going through the metamorphosis of

cultural and political change. As the typical world citizen seeks to set himself free from past dictators and Marxists regimes that bankrupted his economy and robbed him of hope, he has proven to himself and others his resilience to survive in a harsh world. A peace accord is signed here, a past suppressive government is voted out there, a new civil war begins and concludes. There are those usual agonies that arise from power struggles and transfers, from the unleashing of past resentments and sociological baggage. However, if one can see past the nonsense of politics and palaces, he can prepare himself to recognize opportunities for evangelism. In this sociological emergence through change, God is working wondrously to open doors. Therefore, as leaders of the church, we would be wise in seizing the opportunities of the times.

A common slogan in Africa is TIA. It means “This Is Africa,” a place of many social contradictions, chaos and injustices. It is generally a pessimistic statement because Africa is a place of struggle as a way of life. However, TIA is emerging into TIH, “There Is Hope.” The emerging leadership generation in Africa is educated, and thus, it is a generation that wants to join the technological world in forming a new Africa. There is an emerging leadership in the world that is optimistic. It is a generation of young leaders who have a vision for the future. They want to give themselves birth out of the old confinements of the past in order to take advantage of new things in the future. These are truly exciting times for this new leadership.

From a spiritual perspective, there are some clear and present opportunities in this emerging world. As in many places of the world., the typical African is traditionally religious. There has never been and never will be in Africa a passing receptivity caused by the fall of a Berlin wall or the change of a political philosophy. The African has always been religious! He has kept himself isolated from the turmoils of what goes on in the oval offices of world palaces. Many in the world, and especially in Africa, are economically challenged. Many are often uneducated in what the affluent urban societies call “education.” But the typical rural population of the world is deeply religious, though this religious nature is fulfilled with a host of distorted world views and false religions.

In the past one hundred years several countries of the world have survived beneath the flow of political changes from Animistic tribalism, to colonialism, to dictatorial communism, and then to dictatorial capitalism. However, those changes that have occurred in the palaces seem to have little affect on the world views of rural people. Changes in high places often bring freedoms that produce opportunities for evangelism. The changes have brought freedoms that have opened doors.

Political changes change society. This is especially true in urban areas. What happens with the death of oppressive governments and dictatorial leaders is that freedom is awoken which trickles down and permeates society. This new democratic freedom gives people a new sense of hope. Times are changing for the better as oppressive leaders of past generations are being set aside or just laid to rest. There are only a few dictators left and they are very old and unwanted. The new world order is not an order that will include the reigning dictator. As church leaders we must be wise in seeing opportunities as the winds of change sweep across the world.

In the 1990s, South Africa went through tremendous waves of change. In the times of chaos, anxiety gripped the souls of the advantaged. They were afraid, not so much of the change—they knew it had to come—but of losing what they had. But such is the normal mentality of the rich and famous. It is this way everywhere in the world when men’s possessions are threatened. Those on top

always slap away and are afraid of the hands reaching up from the pits of poverty during times of change.

Every culture has its affluent societies and every person of every society wants more. Nevertheless, the materialism of the affluent separates them from the norm of society. In this “segregated” materialism, the affluent have convinced themselves that they have a right to the wealth of the society. What happens among the affluent is that everyone at the financial top develops a certain pride, a definite arrogance about what they have and who they are. Those on top develop an insular world with all its legal and political fences and safeguards. The arrogance of the affluent leads them to believe that no one else should tell them how to run their country and life. Their pride makes them think that they could go it alone without the rest of the world. This is only a delusion. So we are not so obsessed with the rich, that we forget the poor. James, Peter and John desired that Paul, in his mission to the world, remember the poor. *“They only desired that we remember the poor, which thing indeed I was eager to do”* (Gl 2:10).

In 1994—the year of the first free election in South Africa—the affluent South African was at first afraid of the New South Africa that would unfold in generations to come. Many were very apprehensive about the future. They knew that there must be change, but they were only willing for change to come in order to keep the stock market up and the foreign investment coming. Their

willingness to change was not primarily for the benefit of the poor and oppressed.

Since 1994 South Africa has transitioned through great sociological and economic change. The change has been good, though it has taken two decades to mature. The younger generation of leadership has been molded by times of hope, and not by the struggles of the underprivileged or by the arrogance of the privileged. This new generation is representative of the New South Africa and the new African who wants to continue to change for the better. Such is typical of many nations of the world whose younger leadership seeks to lead their people to greater opportunities.

We were once in Zimbabwe in the latter 90’s preaching and teaching. We met a twenty-year old South African youth there who had come up to Zimbabwe in order to live and learn from the Zimbabweans. He went to a rural village in order to live and eat with a rural Zimbabwean brother and sister. He said he wanted to be an evangelist, and thus, he wanted to better understand those of a rural culture. To the best of his ability, he wanted to experience the world of those who had few things, but possessed great faith. He wanted to come out of his separation from the urban materialistic culture in order to experience the realities of life in rural living. He was typical of many of the new South African young people who wanted to communicate and be with those from whom his forefathers had separated themselves through urban living. His example would suggest that urban church

leaders would do well to come into contact again with rural opportunities. We have found that when people migrate to the cities, after two generations in the cities, they lose contact with their rural roots. They thus see evangelism only of the cities, and not in the receptivity of the rural culture from which they came.

The Arab Spring is not just for the Arab countries. Social media is changing the world. We are moving into a world paradigm shift that is making the world smaller. And with a smaller world comes many great opportunities to reach the lost. It is a truly wise leadership who takes advantage of social change. Instead of working against change, the wise leader will adapt, and see in the change opportunities to populate heaven. The wise leader will understand that social chaos in society is society looking for a new order. And when there is social chaos, the wise church leader will make Jesus the object of the new order for which many in a changing society may be looking.

### **A. Opportunities for evangelism:**

So what should we as the church do in a changing world? First, we must adapt our thinking and methods of work and outreach to changing social environments. Old mission methods of years past will not work in a new urban world that has more self-esteem and confidence. Research mission books of past works in urban cultures are out of date for the evangelist to the changed society. For example, the old mission of

houses and church buildings within a compound is no longer appropriate for most world evangelism. Also, the churchianity that is so prevalent in the Western religious culture is deficient in the urban setting of metropolitan cities throughout the world. The old system of “colonial” mission control must be reexamined as those of the social-media world seek to write their own mission textbooks. Evangelism by remote control never really working in the past, and certainly, in a confident world of the educated future, it will never work among those who seek to determine their own future.

Secondly, the mission church should rise to the occasion. We must never forget that the basic nature of millions throughout the world is religious. We would urge the mission church not to ignore what is happening throughout the world. The supporting church has always been too fickle when it comes to supporting mission works. What makes headlines is too often what gets the mission emphasis. The church in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is now larger than in any other place of the world. There are more Christians in Africa because the receptivity of the continent continues to grow, especially in rural settings. Though sub-Saharan Africa produces few headlines, there is great receptivity among the rural people. This is also true of India. The church is growing in the rural areas far more than the urban centers.

Thirdly, with the fall of old governments and the emergence of new

open doors, there are countless areas where evangelists must be going. Many world churches are now realizing that evangelism is not an American problem. However, the world church does want and need foreign church partnership. We must remember that the typical rural church is still economically challenged, and it often takes money to print Bibles and send evangelists into new regions. In establishing strong partnerships with rural churches who can do the work, the mission church would do well to encourage evangelism by partnering with local world churches.

However, we suggest the preceding with some caution. The Western church is greatly entrenched with the philosophy that he who pays the bills pulls the strings. This philosophy may work in the business world, but when it comes to brethren doing the work of the Lord in world evangelism, there are many complications. The worthy African or Indian evangelist needs to be educated to effectively do the work of the Lord, but he does not need to be some supporter's puppet. We have found that the more strings that are attached to the support of a qualified evangelist, the less effective the evangelist is in accomplishing his mission. After all, how can someone thousands of miles away correctly determine what must be done locally and in a different cultural setting? The world evangelist would thus call on the supporters to be very cautious and wise with the use of funds, but also be cautious about controlling the work of an evangelist who knows what he is doing.

Fourthly, we would suggest a major paradigm shift for urban evangelism. The majority of the membership of the church in developing world urban centers is financially challenged. At the same time, the real estate in the same centers is priced according to or above First World costs. Does this mean that the world urban church is doomed with the Western churchianity that is identified by the presence of some physical structure on the main streets of Nairobi or Accra? And in order to get to that structure to do the supposed performances of an imported religion the typical world father and husband must fork out a good amount of his weekly salary to buses and taxis just to get his family of six or eight to the place of meeting? If this is the scenario we have imposed on the urban world church, then the urban disciple in the developing world is doomed to sit continually with his cuffed hand out toward the First World in order to build a "plant" for worship and buy buses to get there.

We would suggest that the urban disciple in the developing urban city must be directed toward the first century and the houses in which the early Christians met. For the first three hundred years of the existence of the church, there were no purpose-built church houses as designated places of worship. Only when Caesar Constantine hijacked Christianity and planted the first seeds of churchianity, were church buildings erected in the Roman Empire with a professional clergy that was on state support.

If we can survive the intimidation of our religious communities that we must make a statement of our faith with a church building, then we will be able to realize greater growth in the urban settings of the developing world. We are not optimistic about this suggestion for two reasons. First, the churchianity that has been imported into the world religious scene from Europe and America for the past five hundred years has had its effect. Second, the effect of church-house oriented religion is strong in the religious world of Christendom. As the religions around us take pride in their cathedrals, local disciples are intimidated to build their own. They are thus humbled by meeting in houses, schools and under trees. In order to keep up with the nations around them, they are compelled to build. If they cannot build, they suffer with a low self esteem because they can never be as the religious nations around them. This should not be so.

If you cannot come up with two million dollars each to build hundreds of church buildings in urban centers in the developing world, then we should change our emphasis from a building-oriented religion to a living-room faith. We must remember that Christianity has always been a relational experience across a dinner table, and not in the eloquent performances of a high church assembly on Sunday morning.

## **B. The work of God:**

These are exciting and challenging times for world evangelism. So many

doors are opened that it befuddles our minds as to which one must be entered. However, we do not frustrate ourselves by trying to determine which door we must personally enter. When we work as the apostles, great things can happen. When we allow God to use us in every way, He opens the doors. "Come over to Macedonia and help us" is a call that has reached the ears of many evangelists who have determined to give themselves to God (See At 16:6-10).

The apostles stayed in Jerusalem for at least fifteen years after the initial establishment of the church in A.D. 30. The reason was that every year there was the Jewish Passover/Pentecost feast to which Jews came from throughout the world. It was during the Passover/Pentecost feast of A.D. 30 when the Spirit was initially poured out on the apostles in Acts 2. This was a unique event. On the A.D. 30 Passover/Pentecost feast the church was launched into existence with the baptism of about 3,000 on the first day. Many of these went back to their homes in order to urge those of the synagogues of their homelands to go to Jerusalem the next year (See Is 2:1-4). They did, and you know who was waiting in Jerusalem upon their arrival? The apostles thus evangelized the world by proxy. They evangelized the world through those who were converted in Jerusalem during the Passover/Pentecost feasts that occurred every year after the A.D. 30 event. By A.D. 61/62, just over thirty years after the establishment of the church, Paul could write that the gospel had gone into all the world (Cl 1:23).

God has made it possible to reach any and all open doors throughout the world through the distance training of local church leaders and evangelists. The apostles did not have a worldwide postal system, but we do. This is the main reason why we have been so convinced throughout the years that distance training schools by use of the post office are necessary in world leadership training in order to reach the masses of the world. From the statement of Acts 2:42, we would add the fact of Short Term Schools. Those who came to Jerusalem on the Passover/Pentecost feast “continued in the apostles’ teaching.” They stayed long enough in Jerusalem to be instructed in the truth before they returned home to evangelize their local synagogues.

The reason for this is simple. We cannot simply concentrate on bringing evangelists together into classrooms for long periods of time in order to equip them for the task that is to be accomplished. God has given us a pen, press, stamps, envelopes and a postal service in order to take the “classroom” into all the world. He has given us the hospitality of Christian homes in order to receive and instruct those who travel from afar. Not only is this system cheaper than long-term resident schools, it allows the church the opportunity to reach to distant lands with teaching for faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

In Ephesians 4:11, God set different ministries of leadership in the church. The primary purpose for these ministries was “*for the equipping of the saints for*

*the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ep 4:12). Through distance training and Short Term Schools, we are able to equip the church for the work of ministry in distant lands.

Now try to visualize what is happening with the distance training schools. They are reaching out to thousands of church leaders who would never be able to attend a long-term resident training school. Through distant training courses and seminars that are conducted, mature leadership can touch the lives of thousands who must be equipped for world evangelism. There are prospective evangelists and church leaders scattered in countries throughout the world. So how can the church train its leaders in distant regions? The answer is in sending the teachers (the courses) to the students instead of trying to bring the students to the teachers. The “teachers” can be sent either by posting course materials, or in personally sending the teachers to teach in Short Term Schools. Either way, the training of faithful men in their environment is financially feasible to the church everywhere throughout the world. By working this way in leadership training, we can reach a tremendous number of people. God has opened a door of fantastic proportions through such efforts. Thousands are being equipped as God works exceedingly abundantly above all we can imagine.

The question with distance training is that we can never know exactly how many people are being equipped by mailing courses throughout the world.

Courses of distance training schools are being used by thousands of preachers and teachers to teach classes and preach sermons to thousands of people. Students of these systems of training are using their courses for their own seminars and lectures in Short Term Schools. The impact of leadership training by distant training courses and Short Term Schools is the way of the future. This is especially true as the world goes online with the Internet and the use of computers. When we consider the vast population of the world, and the number of evangelists that are needed to get the job done, then our primary emphasis in leadership training must be on distance training courses or Short Term Schools. Only in this way can we train the mass number of evangelists who will be able to go into all the seven billion people of the world.

We must use every means available to accomplish the task of training leaders for world evangelism. The production of literature for distance training and Short Term Schools is crucial. Books for leaders is the power of leadership training. God used Philip to help sort out the confusion that was facing the eunuch (At 16:26-40). Once the word was clearly explained to the confused eunuch, the preacher was caught away, and the eunuch went on his way to Ethiopia. The advantage of good books is that the eunuchs we cross in passing can be sent on their way with a "teacher." We do not know how long Philip stayed with the eunuch before the eunuch came to the conclusion that he had to obey the gospel. This may have been a "short"

Short Term School. What is important to remember is that the eunuch accepted the teaching of the teacher, and then went forth. He did not stay around for two to three years of indoctrination. He was taught the basics, and then went on his way rejoicing.

In the context of training leaders in the word of God, we must add some thoughts which we must always keep in mind. Never in the early church was there emphasis placed on "graduating" from a Bible school. This is an invention of modern academics. It is an invention that often produces a professional leader who distances himself from the people. It is a practice that often produces arrogance on the part of the trained, and thus, they sometimes set themselves as official interpreters of the word of God. We should make every effort to refrain from such behavior. There are no qualifications for preaching the gospel. In the New Testament the only qualification we can find is that one should know and obey the gospel. There was no special clergy of "trained men" who preached the gospel to the world or taught the church. The early teachers received their knowledge of the word by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Since we have copies of the Bible in our hands, we need no miraculous impartation of the word of God. We can read and study the Bible every day. We are far more blessed with the complete written word of God than the early Christians were with the gift of knowledge (1 Co 13:8-10). All the knowledge that the Holy Spirit would

impart is written for our learning (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). We have access to it in our homes and wherever we can carry a copy of the Scriptures. The traveling evangelist, therefore, goes forth with a copy of the Scriptures to validate his mission. No diploma from a school validates his mission. Every person who has a zeal to study is validated to preach the word of God.

The growth of the church will always exceed our opportunity to train leaders in a classroom setting. In fact, if we are confined in our thinking to the classroom training of leaders, we will bottle-neck the growth of the church. We will never be able to have enough classrooms to train the amount of leaders that must be trained to keep up with the growth of the church. For this reason, we must change our thinking when it comes to training those who will teach others. The local church has the responsibility to train its own leaders. If we can partner with churches who are seeking to do this, then great things will come. When the local

church assumes her responsibility to train in the Bible those they would send forth into all the world, then we will have restored the work and vision of the early church (At 13:1-3). The point is that the local church of disciples must be so Bible oriented and focused that naturally out of their midst will come forth those who are so full of the word of God that they must go forth to tell others. Mission churches are always defined by the Bible-filled evangelists that go forth from their midst. Every assembly of local disciples, therefore, must be so Bible focused in study that they naturally give birth to those who go forth. Living churches, therefore, are not those who have exciting assemblies or warm fellowships. They are those churches that fill the members with so much Bible that they naturally give birth to evangelists who go forth into all the world. So when a church is not giving birth to world evangelists, then we could assume that it is dead. It has lost its first love. It is for this reason, that we must awaken the church with the word.

## Chapter 7

### A Home For The Refugee

*Every Christian is a spiritual refugee,  
with citizenship in heaven,  
while living on earth.*

Living in Latin America, the West Indies and Africa for over four decades has changed my thinking and my culture. I would no longer consider myself an American since I left the American

culture in 1974 in order to sign up for world citizenship. This does not say that I have forsaken all cultural links to America. I have some American baggage. It means, however, that both

myself and America have since changed so much that I feel like a foreigner when I travel to America. One can never go home after being away from home for so long.

When I first left America for the rest of the world there were some things that were initially quite challenging to my American culture. One of those things was dealing with world poverty. The other was dealing with the refugee, a human phenomenon that was entirely foreign to my American culture. I have since come to better understand both, though I must confess that there is no fix to either situation.

So you can understand why I once sat stunned in Malawi, listening to my brother, my fellow Rwandan evangelist who had two weeks before fled in fear with his wife and three children from Kigali, Rwanda. Soldiers were walking down streets telling jokes while whacking the heads off everyone they could find. The beheadings turned into a relentless slaughter of men, women and children. The hundreds of dead in a few days turned into thousands. The thousands turned into tens of thousands, and then, hundreds of thousands. In less than two months over half a million people were butchered in a killing frenzy that had never happened before in modern times. Some have even estimated that almost one million died by the end of the slaughter.

Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans ran for their lives. Many fled to the Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, or any place where they could feel some safety. One teenage boy

walked all the way to South Africa, over 1,500 miles to the south of Rwanda. These thousands joined the millions who were already refugees in Africa, people who for fear of death fled for life.

But then there were the refugees who fled because they did not want to take up arms to kill their fellow brothers. During the Congo wars, many young Congolese showed up in Cape Town. These were young men who had fled the war because they did not want to be forced into the conflict of the war. Most of these were religious people who, upon their arrival, started various churches throughout the city of Cape Town and other cities of South Africa. But they came into an environment of struggle. These, as all refugees, fled for survival.

For the refugee home often becomes a tree, a tent, or a simple gathering of tree limbs that have been shuffled together in a makeshift manner to block either searing heat or relentless rain from a baby's head. A mother shudders in the coolness of an African night, cuddling a small child who shivers uncontrollably. Words of comfort seem to bring little relief to those who have fled from their homes and for their lives into an unknown country that is not their home. These are refugees. They are the misery of situations beyond their control, and too often, beyond their understanding.

Africa is a continent of forced homelessness. It has been a continent of political struggle that is no different from Bosnia or Afghanistan or Cambodia. The refugee still suffers the same. Families are torn apart. Fathers killed. Mothers

raped. Children left orphans. Scraps of families show up across some border in a waste land that is unprepared for their arrival, and often resents their presence. Food is scarce. Hunger is a relentless pain that reminds one that fate has dealt a terrible blow to the human spirit.

Warlords and power hungry rulers consider the refugee the price to pay in order to sit somewhere in a palace. The refugee is too often the result of the greedy who are struggling to control gold and diamond mines and oil fields. The unmerciful pompous princes involved in power struggles of this present time will most certainly eternally pay for the homelessness of millions of souls they have brought on humanity.

A refugee is who he is, not because he did something wrong, but because he is in a situation that has gone terribly wrong. He or she usually does not understand the endless chess games of the political world or the thirst for power of greedy warlords. A father or mother has simply heard shots and bombs in a distance, grabbed what could be carried on the backs of every family member, and fled. They are unwillingly homeless. Refugees have been forgotten by those who would rule over them.

A movie was once produced entitled *Blood Diamond*. It was a true representation of the problem with the riches of diamonds in some African countries. Another movie about African civil war was also produced that was entitled, *Lord of War*. It was also an accurate depiction of the diamond/civil war curse of Africa. Both movies had

their setting in the the Liberian/Sierre Leone conflicts of the 90s. Diamonds became the monetary units that supported the warlords. Forced laborers mined the diamonds, and the diamonds bought the guns that killed hundreds of thousand of people. Little did a young bride-to-be in America or Europe know that when her finger was fitted with a beautiful diamond in order to build a family with a proposing husband that she with the purchase of that diamond may have destroyed a family in some world she did not know existed. So many “conflict diamonds” were sold throughout the world in 90s that no one really knows how many refugees were made by the black market selling of diamonds to buy guns.

Wars produce wearied refugee souls who flock together in camps that are infested with disease and dysentery. Host countries often struggle to find locations in their own crowded lands for these often unwanted guests. Scorned by the locals, the refugee has a meager existence of living on token rations from foreign governments. Praise God for humanitarian governments who spill over their surpluses for these who have not willingly chosen this lot in life. Thank God for churches whose hearts bleed for those who are naked, and hungry, and destitute. Possibly, the refugee exists in order for God to test our Christianity. God bless America for her humanitarian nature and care for the world. If a nation could be saved for her works, surely America is at the top of the list.

A Christian friend ignorantly, but sincerely, questioned, “Why don’t they

get jobs.” There are no classified ads circulated in refugee camps. There is nothing to do. No fields to tend. No cattle to feed. Nothing. Refugees arrive disillusioned, starved and destitute. Their arrival at camps is usually a last chance at life. If no food can be found, then that chance is lost. One simply lies down and dies.

While the haves heap food upon themselves in an environment of tremendous prosperity, would to God that they remembered the refugee. We often telecommunicatively witness the plight of the refugee via CNN or BBC. However, it is hard to feel the suffering of humanity through a television screen or radio speaker. While sumptuously eating dinner, we sit and watch the misery of others. While watching the starving we say, “Pass the potatoes.” We moan a word or two of disgust, and then pass on to the next news event. All the while on the other end of the camera a mother, or a father, or a helpless child dies before the end of the evening news. Recent figures manifest that 75,000 people die each day because of malnutrition causes. During the Rwanda crisis, one thousand died each day in the Goma refugee camp alone.

People die *en masse* in famine areas throughout the world. Agony thrives in the bodies of those who unfortunately live in famine stricken refugee camps. It is a wretched death. Your muscles wither away because there is no more fat off which your body can feed. Flies relentlessly torment your mouth and eyes. You become so weak that walking becomes impossible. You simply stare

into oblivion and waste away. Your stomach aches. Your flesh becomes as leather. Your eyes become sunken and glassy. You then die.

Famine is a merciless attack against the human being. Drought inflicts endless misery. Place the refugee in a famine situation and we have the most deplorable situation that life can deal to the human being. What is even more cruel about this is the fact that there is more than enough food in the world to prevent this. Our challenge is to first sensitize the haves to the tremendous need for food throughout the world. Secondly, we face the problem of getting the surplus of the haves to the hungry mouths of the have nots. This can be done. There are great and noble efforts and people out there who are doing something. We must fully support their efforts. We must not become dull of hearing their pleas for our help.

When one lives in the middle of Africa it is difficult to communicate needs to the rest of the world. But keep in mind that twice as many people died from starvation and civil war in Angola in the six months previous to April 1993 than in the war of Bosnia. But Bosnia was on TV news every day. People cried out. Governments were forced to do something. But no one was listening to the struggles of Angola. Is this racism in the press? As long as it happens in Africa I suppose it is no real problem. Nobody seems to know or care. TIA.

When refugees started coming over the border into Namibia from the Angolan war, I said to Martha that we

must do something. The next day we received a fax that a church in Columbia, South Carolina had committed \$1,000 to famine relief. God answers prayers. People do care. We simply need to be challenged to do something.

Adrian Blow, Kurt Platt from Swaziland, and I once made a 4,500 mile round trip up to the Namibia/Angola border to work with refugees out of Angola. During this trip I was touched by the reality of struggle and the plight of the refugee. Refugees had fled into Namibia to escape the harassment of soldiers who sought to raid and rape. We prayed for peace in Angola. If peace did not come, then tragedy would intensify. Peace has since come.

Over one million Mozambique refugees lingered in Malawi in makeshift huts during that twenty-year civil war. A quarter of a million Mozambique refugees were in South Africa. Thousands were in refugee camps from Somalia and other nations. In every camp and in every situation, the refugee camp is the same. Flies, dysentery, coughing children, malaria and a host of other human sufferings are common experiences of existence. Sickness and death are daily rituals to which inhabitants become desensitized because of their commonality.

We blame not God for allowing such human suffering to come upon humanity. We look to ourselves. Our thirst for power, our selfishness, our indifference and political games have caused us to lose contact with humanity. Yes, and even our desire for that diamond. The individual

is lost in a global arena where national boundaries were drawn from commandos' quarters. The plight of the poor is of no concern to those who lavish themselves with wine in diplomatic conclaves that are thousands of miles from the suffering of a refugee child who is about to breathe his last breath.

“God, please have mercy on us because of our lack of sensitivity to the plight of the refugee. Forgive us for our greed which often causes war to protect our ‘interest’ in some far off Third World country whose name we cannot recall.”

We live in a crazy world. It is a mixed up world of rich and poor, power and poverty. For example, during the years of the Angolan civil war, both sides were indirectly supported by what the rest of the world consumed. The government maintained the rich oil fields, from which they sold oil to the rest of the world in order to buy their guns. UNITA, the opposition force, gained control of the diamond mines. They sold diamonds to the rest of the world in order to buy their guns. This is a wretched scenario, isn't it? We consume the goods that supports some senseless war.

In the struggle between forces, the refugee is born. The refugee camp is built. The refugee mother sits idly on a rock under the few limbs or boards she has thrown together for her children, wondering what it is all about. She knows nothing of the use of uranium. She wears no diamonds on her finger. She can never use copper or platinum. She

has never heard of titanium. Many are as the Malawian preacher who asked me a question during a seminar session, "Brother Dickson, What is gold?" This innocent African resident, as others, often pays the great price for all these most precious things over which the industrial world goes to war.

The refugee is the result of sin at work in the world. Satan does his best work in governments that cause misery. Political treaties bring temporary peace. But the gospel is the only hope for a world that has gone astray with the direction of Satan. The gospel must go into all the world, not only to save man from eternal destruction, but also to save him from himself. The Christian is truly the salt of the earth; he is the only hope for a world going wrong with sin.

We would remember the words of Jesus.

*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and*

*say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."*

So what is the opportunity of the refugee for world evangelism? We must always keep in mind that God always turns Satan against himself. When Satan causes social chaos, God goes to work. It is an axiomatic truth of the spiritual warfare between good and evil that started with the beginning of time.

I have already mentioned how the Congolese refugees have blessed South Africa. These were those young men who did not want to take up a gun and kill their fellow Congolese. When they fled to South Africa they started churches throughout the country.

When a civil war is over, refugees must return to their country of origin. They lose their UN refugee status, and thus must return home. This reverse migration presents a great opportunity for evangelism. I was once in Addis Abba, Ethiopia where Behailu Abebe, an Ethiopian preacher, was working with Sudanese refugees. At the time we knew of no churches in Sudan. After baptizing several of these refugees, we concluded that the church was established in Sudan though the baptisms took place in Ethiopia. I am sure this is what took place in Jerusalem in Acts 2 after many of the 3,000, who were baptized on the day of Pentecost and the following weeks, returned to their homes of origin. Refugee camps are places to evangelize in hope of civil wars that will eventually come to an end.

Northern Mozambique was evangelized during the civil war there when over two million Mozambiqueans who were living in southern Malawi were evangelized by the Malawian church. The Malawian church preached the gospel among the refugees, and when the

refugees returned home, they established the church in northern Mozambique. God uses the work of Satan to accomplish His mission to populate heaven. The plight of the refugee can thus be turned into a plan to evangelize a nation.

## Chapter 8

### Riches For The Poor

*The richest person in the world  
is the one who has total peace with God  
while possessing nothing of this world.*

Since the majority of the world lives in an economic environment that is radically different than that of those who send forth evangelists, it is imperative that sending brethren seek in some way to understand the environment of the poor. It is important to understand the plight of the poor in order to better communicate the gospel across cultures to those who have little economic hope. There is a tremendous receptivity among lower income people simply because their attention is not in bondage to that which wealth can buy. For this reason, therefore, a concerted effort must be made to preach the gospel of hope to those who are trapped in economically adverse conditions. Therefore, allow me in an inadequate literary manner, unfold to you the real poverty of this world. "Poverty is the open-mouth, relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society." So said Henry George in *Progress and Poverty*. And so it is true today in much of the Third World.

The word "plight" according to Webster, is "a condition, state of affairs, or situation; especially now, a **dangerous or awkward** situation." And that's exactly the situation of the poverty stricken environment of many of our Third World brethren. Poverty is the plight of the poor. Milton expressed the predicament, "This miserable loathsome plight." Just ask anyone of those millions who scrounge each day for another morsel of food. That person will thoroughly agree that his plight is miserable and loathsome and awkward and dangerous.

Jesus did remind us that the poor are always with us. And how right He was. The poor, the materially destitute, have always been and always will be. I guess that's just life. And life can be so cruel.

But most of you who are reading this book will not be able to identify with what I am saying. And I can write about it but never really understand the plight myself. Poverty, real poverty, is only something

materially wealthy people read about. And admittedly, it is difficult to even write about, even though one has seen and lived with the worst of poverty the world has to offer. And I have, both in Brazil and in the West Indies. But none of us have ever lived like the poverty stricken of the world today.

Not everyone who lives in a Third World country is poor. Let me explain. We must define what is biblically defined as poor. Paul said that as long as he had food and clothing, he was content (1 Tm 6:8). I would assume, therefore, that not having food and clothing is poverty. Not having a radio, television, vehicle or new pair of shoes is not in the biblical definition of poverty. Living in a grass hut is not poverty. Walking to school for ten kilometers is not poverty. Poverty is having no food to eat and no clothes to wear. Being in such a condition would possibly be the result of having no land to farm or no job by which to earn a salary. But having no land or job is not defined in the Bible as being poor. When one is without food and clothing, he or she is living in a relentless struggle for survival. This is poverty.

Breecher said, "Poverty is very good in poems but very bad in the house; very good in maxims and sermons but very hard in practical life." Yes, to some it may be easy to write and talk about. But poverty is still that "relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society." In *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton reminded us, "It is easy enough to tell the poor to accept their poverty as God's will when you yourself have warm clothes and plenty of food and medical care and a roof

over your head and no worry about the rent. But if you want them to believe you, try to share some of their poverty, and see if you can accept it as God's will yourself!" I must agree that it is easy to write and preach about poverty, but perilous to practice it.

We all have our stories about how rough we had it in the "good ole days" when we were growing up. It seems that poverty is a condition you try to hide while you experience it, but brag about after you have experienced it. Someone once said, "I was once so poor I used to buy a pint of milk for breakfast and a loaf of bread for dinner, and eat them both for supper!" And then there was the good man who bragged, "I wasn't born in a log cabin, but my family moved into one as soon as they could afford it."

I guess there were some advantages to those days, those days when poverty was an allergy that made us unusually sensitive to paper money. It was an economic condition that kept us from going anywhere but in debt. After all, back then your income tax was so small you never had to borrow to pay it. And your car keys were never in your other pair of pants.

Why is it that we never recognize those blessings of poverty until after we have experienced the poverty? And why is it that most people do not realize the deplorable situation of the poor of the world? Why is it that we have erected a barrier between ourselves and the reality of the poor of the world? Why is it that we feel threatened by the "have not" countries who supposedly are trying to "get our money"?

I spent four years living in Brazil where poverty was real and next door. I have vis-

ited other countries where it is even worse. The annual income per person in Brazil back in 1975 was \$1,140. However, over thirty million in that country lived at the same time on an average income of \$77.00 per year. Those two figures should give you some indication of the tremendous separation between the rich and the poor in Brazil. Ten percent of the people owned and controlled ninety percent of the wealth.

The world's produce, I am told, can support only twenty-five percent of the world's population on the standard of living as that enjoyed by the average American. And Americans are in that lucky twenty-five percent and enjoying all that which they feel is their right to have. But the have nots want a piece of the pie. They want to lift their badly fed bodies out of the pits of agonizing hunger. And who can blame them. If you had four or five hungry children at home, what would you want? What would you believe? What would you do? Desperation often moves fathers and mothers to do things they would not normally do.

Have you ever had the wretched experience of having a mother or father dig through your garbage can in order to find some potato peels to feed their children. I have ... several times. You just want to cry. Most of the time in the developed countries it is a dog or cat that upsets and digs through the garbage cans. In the conditions of many Third World countries, it's people, people with starved bodies. That was the poverty we experienced in Brazil.

In Brazil they were called *molecos*. These were those three to ten year old children who roamed the streets begging for

food, many times having no home to which to return at night. Over 600,000 poverty-stricken people were living in houses of scraps of cardboard and tin when we were in Brazil. The rich shipped expensive things around in packing crates to put in their houses. The poor used the crates **for** their houses.

Most of us who lived in the "carpet world" want the poor to stay out there. We cry, "Don't bring us any more boat people." "Keep the wetbacks out." "They'll take our jobs." In South Africa it is erroneously called xenophobia, the fear of another race. The jobless South Africans have not been favorable to refugees from the north. However, it is not actually xenophobia. It is the fear of refugees taking jobs away from the jobless South Africans. It is a conflict of the poor against the poor.

I think some of us could care less about such situations because we understand less the plight of the poor. But "out there" is the real world. This is **our** real world, a world of relentless poverty. John Worrall, a newsman in Africa, wrote back to his newspaper, "Millions sit idly outside mud huts, crushed by crop failures due to drought or floods, wondering when they can eat again." The next time we grumble about the high cost of food at the food store, let us thank God that we have a food store to grumble about. We must understand the ever present danger of subsistence farming during drought. When it does not rain, one cannot go to a food store to buy food. You have no money. When drought occurs, people simply starve. People fall victim to their environment.

I do not have any answers for the poor

of the world. There will always be those who close themselves in the security of their homes with filled refrigerators in order to isolate the pleas of the desperate. On the other hand, there will always be those with tender hearts who will feel for the millions who live in malnutrition. May our concern move us to tears, to thanksgiving, to sharing and caring. I would urge the West to continually watch the weather, the world weather. When there is a drought there is a real need as poverty strikes subsistence farmers. There are no other jobs for fathers to feed their families. The World Food Program is a great work of the West. The humanitarian nature of the American culture has led the Americans to do wonders in coming to the needs of the poor. I have always thought it curious that America has been known for dishing out billions of dollars in food aid throughout the years, but oil rich Islamic nations are not known for such. Could this be the nature of the Christian-principled culture of the West as opposed to the Quranic-principled culture of Islamic countries. I do know that when nations are in trouble, they go first to those of whom they are often so critical, the West.

If we have food and clothing, I sincerely feel that we need to be constantly reminded that God has truly blessed us. We need to thank Him that we happened to be living in a blessed spot at this particular time in history. After all, I could have been born into the midst of a drought stricken area of the world, or in the slums of Calcutta, India. Seventy-five thousand people die each day because of either mal-

nutrition, or malnutrition related causes. The same number died yesterday. Those of their friends and family will battle to find that next piece of bread, that next apple core or potato peeling that will allow their starved and swollen bodies to continue until tomorrow. Their whole purpose of life has dwindled to find that morsel of food that will get them through another day. And after today, maybe another.

In Africa, there is a drought going on somewhere at all times. Or, there is a political conflict with refugees scattering here and there. These situations must be in our prayers. For example, the tragedy of Darfur, Sudan was caused by senseless men in Khartoum, the capital, who did not care for those who were of a different religious faith in the south of the country. The tragedy of Darfur was inevitable. A country with an Islamic government in the north boycotted a Christian based culture in the south. The country should have done what former South African foreign minister Botha advised, "Just divide the country."

In order to understand the world we seek to evangelize, we must seek to understand the disadvantaged and the poor. There is great receptivity among the poor. The advantaged thus have a responsibility to share. The Christian leaders in Jerusalem encouraged Paul in his travels to always remember the poor. He told them that he was very eager to do such (Gl 2:10). In our world evangelism, therefore, we would do right to follow Paul's example, and thus be eager to remember the poor (See At 20:35).

## Chapter 9

# High Demands Of Faith

*Faith is an inner character  
that must be developed  
for the purpose of eternal dwelling.*

The opportunities for evangelism in the world today are so great that we must have laborers of great faith to seek the challenge of world evangelism. We must call on those who through faith are willing to leave fathers and mothers, houses and lands for the salvation of the lost of the world. We need those with mountain-moving faith to uproot and reach out to a world that is hungering for truth.

Evangelists with roots in the West, and residents of the cocooned culture and affluent society, often glance into the face of faith and shudder because of their own self-sufficiency. The challenge we see in the world of have-nots always taxes our dependence on that which is possessed. When we contemplate faith's demand we struggle to sacrifice that which is always first to go when faith comes calling—the security of a world that demands little faith. The empirical walk we so often trust agonizes down the hall of faith.

There is always something unnerving about faith's call. It is a call to us in our secure culture to venture out into the unknown. This is not thinking outside the box. It is a call to live outside the cocoon of the material security we have

created for ourselves. It is a challenging call only because our nerves and emotional constitution have been trained to walk on the crutches of the seen and known.

Nevertheless, we fight to allow ourselves the test of trusting the Almighty Unseen in the altogether unknown. I often wonder that if faith was a fortune at the end of a rainbow of supporting evidence, I might be the poorest of them all.

Any Western evangelist who manages to escape the isolated cocoon of Western materialism usually crashes with his cultural baggage on his voyage into the Third World. If he or she does not sense in this new and common world the absence of the affluency of his homeland, then the elevator has not yet reached the top floor. This is the real world, the world that exists everywhere and on every continent. It usually cannot be seen by the rich for the rich never look down, while the poor are always looking up. The poor see everyone at the top. But because the rich do not want to be reminded of them, they more often refuse to look down to the bottom.

Before one can accomplish acculturation, he or she must discover

self. One is only truly aware of his surroundings when he is aware of himself. I have always wondered at the lack of self-awareness of those who live in the affluent societies of the world. They who are of that exclusive world class find it difficult to condescend to men of lower estate. They simply do not understand the poor, their plight and their problems. Third World thinking is such an elusive concept to those of the First World.

Our self-realization of who we are and where we are from, however, often leads to frustration. Being one of the haves often separates us so far from the have-nots that we lose contact with this Third World mentality that we never had in the first place. We thus accuse the Third World resident for having no initiative or being lazy, backward, indifferent, etc. Our frustration is not knowing what to do with ourselves in the midst of those who have so little, or those we presume are desperate because they possess so little.

You say Jesus dealt with it by saying that the poor are always with us. He was not giving us an excuse. Neither was He excusing Himself. He was so often abased during His ministry, though He had food and clothing. The comparison of my sacrifices with His sacrifice of leaving heaven for earth, however, is no real comparison. His was extreme. Mine is too often only external. Remember, most of us presently have more now than Jesus owned in His entire lifetime.

So we compare. Was Jesus poor in relation to ourselves? Yea, verily. Thus

comes a possible shocking reality we are usually not willing to live. Must we be as Him in order to understand and be able to say what He said about the poor without such a statement being either an excuse or justification for our own materialism? As a culturally born and reared materialist, we shudder at our conclusions to these dreadful postulations. If we are right, then we are wrong.

The face of faith is still there. It glows more now in these days and beckons more fervently than when I first met the poor. But you are afraid that I take you down this road of thought. You may be afraid to face faith. I am apprehensive about taking you there, for I know you will not understand, and if you do, we will turn around in the middle of the road. Nevertheless, we will venture on. There are too many souls to be saved to turn around in the road.

Would we be as Jesus in order to be able to say and do as Jesus? Must we become all things to all people in order to cross the cultural bridge of communication? And in order to communicate, must we be abased in order to abound in our cultural relationship with the lost? Our conclusion to these postulations wearies our souls and frightens our affluent cultural roots.

We must ask ourselves, Would we be as Jesus in order to be able to say and do as Jesus? Is the price tag too high for us to condescend to those of lower estate? How can we identify with the poor to whom Jesus went if we cannot identify with the poor to whom Jesus sends us?

We might be irritated at such questions. They make us think. They make us look into our own cultural mirror, and when we look, we might see a man standing there we do not want to see.

So we rationalize. It's not wrong to be rich. Then we read, "They sold their possessions and goods." But we appreciate our multitude of clothes. Then we read, "I was naked and you did not clothe me." But we can be rich and spiritual. Then we read, "Few that are in high places are called" and "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." But we say we have a right to our material way of life. Then we read, "He emptied Himself and was made as a man." So this struggle of cultures continues within us. "I discipline my body," wrote Paul, "and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

Then we contemplate our fellow affluent cultural victims. Has our frustration level with our brethren become a measuring rule of their unrealized materialism? We would not so judge lest we fall into the sin of arrogant snobbery. Nevertheless, that frustration is there when we experience those of "home" who quibble over the color of cars and the fashion of the latest outrageously priced tennis shoes. We suppose that our experience outside that cultural "cell" has awakened our awareness of who we really were, and to some extent, still are. When one works

in the "careless" societies of the affluent world, and at the same time among the barefoot poverty-stricken prisoners of the Third World, it is hard to feel sorry for someone with a full refrigerator. When we return to the world of games and things, it is hard to identify again with a world from which we came and a culture that lingers in our own being.

The problem with too much money is that one starts inventing how to keep the cash flow going through his hands in order to maintain a materialistic lifestyle. That cash flow, mind you, is through my hands and unto my desires. So I take up a sport and discover some new land to which I must travel. I buy another bicycle or car. Another pair of shoes won't hurt. I stop in at the shopping mall for a tube of toothpaste and end up at the counter with a full shopping cart of incidentals to stuff away in some cabinet at home. When I have purchased beyond my needs I discover flea-markets. I then buy trinkets to continue this self-centeredness, this cycle of money-out-things-in lifestyle. There's always enough money in hand to let it flow. However, I am unaware of a new psychology that is setting in.

The problem with materialism is that it reveals a low self esteem. The materialist shouts, "Look at who I am because of what I have." The poor humbly say, "What you see in me is what you get. Nothing more."

The cash flow through the materialist's hands changes him into a new and different person. As the money goes out, things and activities come in.

They all come his way. He has now set up an inward selfishness that makes him an extremely self-centered person. The more money he has the more things and activities that come his way. His psychology changes. He wants to maintain this selfish cycle. He fights to keep it happening because it has become his culture. Those in his world have all adopted the same lifestyle. He excludes those who threaten his culture and becomes agitated with anything or anyone who would disrupt this selfish cycle. Presidents are cursed for recession and missionaries are shunned because they keep disrupting his cycle of self by asking for his money. They keep reminding him of who he is and what he must give in order to accomplish the mission of his Christian profession. Whether or not he realizes it – usually he does not – he has now become a part of that way of life which dictionaries refer to as materialism.

But we must not be mistaken in our definitions. My Third World brethren define materialism in a much different way. The affluent society glances over the word. Those who are victims of a cultural deformity too often become oblivious to the handicap. But by Third World comparison, lives exist in an environment that is on the other side of the continuum. To the poor man, materialism is living or being any place than where there is continual sickness, poverty, death, starvation and war. In his environment he has never set up the psychology of selfishness, for he has never had the opportunity to buy toys and

activities to enjoy. Giving to others does not threaten him, for his hostile environment has continually extracted from him since the day of his birth.

I have always wondered why it was easier for the widow to give her mites than the rich man to give his surplus thousands. The poor have never had enough money to start this vicious cycle of materialism. People always want more. I would say that in a sense all people have greed, both rich and poor. However, the poor have never had enough to allow their wants to digress to a psychology of materialism.

One advantage the less financially advantaged have is that they do not give out of their surplus. In other words, sacrificial giving brings joy because one has given that which he could have used to better his own life. If one gives only of his surplus, his life does not change when he gives. He can maintain his lifestyle regardless of his contribution. On the other hand, the one who gives that which could have been used to improve one's life, is blessed with joy for he has given sacrificially. He has sacrificed a better life for the sake of giving to another.

It is always easier for the poor man to share what he has than for the rich man to do the same. Requests for help do not disrupt any selfish cycle of materialism in the society of the poor. You can be assured that the rich man will give. But you can also be assured that he will not so give as to disrupt his cycle of materialism. He will continue to play his games and buy his things. What he gives

will often simply be the surplus of what he does not need to maintain his lifestyle. You see, giving to the point of sacrifice is a personal infringement upon his psychology; it is against his materialistic culture. The poor are usually never offended when they are asked to give. That is one reason why there is such great receptivity for the gospel message among the poor. The nature of the Christian life fits the nature of the financially disadvantaged. Jesus said, "Freely receive, freely give." Because they have not been fashioned according to the nature of materialism, it is easy for those who are not materialistic to freely give. That is why the Philippians, who were in deep poverty, begged Paul to take their contribution for the famine victims in Judea (2 Co 8:1-4).

Are you angry with me because I point these things out in our lives? There are so many poor in the world. They are so receptive to the gospel. Citizens of the West live in the top two percent of the wealth of the world. How can those of this materialistic cocoon come out of this top two percent and identify with the other ninety-eight percent in order to preach the gospel to the poor? This is certainly the challenge for the Western missionary. But while considering this challenge, remember that when John sent messengers to Jesus to question if He was the Messiah, Jesus responded that the gospel was being preached to the poor (Mt 11:5). If preaching the gospel to the poor was one of the evidences that Jesus was the Messiah, then it must be the same evidence of true Christianity today. If

we do not preach the gospel to the poor, then we have developed another form of churchianity after our own materialistic isolationism.

We must keep in mind that there is a "bright" side to poverty. It does produce receptivity. Africa is thus a place of great receptivity. It is so because it is a place of poverty.

Africa and India will be receptive for many decades to come. Why? They will be receptive simply because they will be economically challenged for a long time to come. It is ironic. The center of Christianity has moved to the poorest nations of the world. Jesus was right. Few who are in high places will hear. His message to comfort John in prison was that the poor had the gospel preached to them. That focus in evangelism still brings comfort. The poor have the gospel preached to them because they are the ones who receive it the most. Must we not go to those who are the most receptive?

Now how do we accomplish our divine mandate in a world that is so complex and changing? Understanding the world in which we live will always be a challenge. The world is as John's sea that ever changes and places challenges before the world evangelist. But this is not the greatest task we face. The greatest task is ourselves. We have in many cases digressed into a churchianity that is ineffective. We must therefore repent and restore the first works. We must remember who we are as the children of God, and then get on

with the task that Jesus set before us.

There are no magic formulas for repentance and restoration in this matter. I have no sociological or psychological paradigm to which we must turn and implement in our lives. We have only the Bible. There is no magic methodology that will programme our lives into an effective ministry to the lost. But we do have the Bible. And I might add that it takes no Bible scholar to reach into the Scriptures and discover what must be done. The Holy Spirit offers a New Testament textbook of what to do, as well has several case histories of how common people successfully followed the textbook, and subsequently turned the world upside down in the first century. Therefore, in your personal studies of the textbook, see if the following concepts were implemented in the lives of the early disciples in order to take the gospel to the world:

#### **A. Restore our ministry of prayer and fasting.**

In the initial years of the existence of the Antioch church in Acts 13, the prophets and teachers continually ministered and fasted (At 13:1). It was not that the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas, and then they fasted. The text reads that as disciples they ministered and fasted as a behavior of life in their work of preaching and teaching. When leadership restores ministry and fasting, then God knows the qualified men He can call into a greater world ministry.

After the leaders qualified

themselves through ministry and fasting, it was then the Holy Spirit who asked that Paul and Barnabas be separated unto a greater ministry. And you know the rest of this story.

If we are to get into the world as Jesus would have us, then we must qualify ourselves through ministry and fasting. I have found that there is not so much a problem with the ministry, but with the regular fasting. In discussing this matter with church leaders I have had some leaders even argue that fasting is not a command, and thus for them it cannot be a part of their Christian life. And herein is the problem. The truth is that fasting is not a command. However, Jesus said that in His kingdom His disciples would fast (Mt 9:14,15). It is not that there must be a command for fasting. It is as the prophets and teachers in Antioch. When sincere and passionate men are serious about the commission to take the gospel to the world, fasting and prayer is a way of life.

When leaders start fasting about the work, things start happening. What we often try to do is get by with a cheap prayer. But sometimes words of prayer are just that, just words. But when the action of fasting is linked with prayer, then God knows that we are serious. And it takes serious people to be called by the Holy Spirit to move on to a greater ministry. Therefore, unless our prayers are linked with fasting, the Spirit cannot find passionate leaders to get the job done. I believe that the lack of fasting in churches will continue to greatly hinder the potential of what can be done by any

particular church. On the other hand, if a church starts fasting, look out. The Spirit will start working abundantly above all that we can imagine.

## **B. Restore our search of the word of God.**

The correct translation of 2 Timothy 2:15 is, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Diligent preachers and teachers will be diligently into the word of God. The problem with the religious culture of the churchian world is that adherents give a religious performance for God that is directed by professional clergymen, but the adherents do not know the Bible. Churchians are often so busy in their secular life that they have no time for serious Bible study.

If we do not believe that people will be saved by their good works, then we will have no desire for evangelistic outreach to these “good people.” And thus, we have no passion for the word. We now live in an extremely biblically ignorant churchian world. Because of this ignorance of the word of God, the foundation is laid for the development of numerous religious movements that direct the minds of men away from God. What is more scary is that many churches assume that the preacher is the one who is to be the authority in the word, and thus they have given themselves over to what little knowledge he has of the word. This behavior sets the foundation upon which preachers can lead religious

groups wherever their desires so choose.

Any disciple who seeks to do what God wants him to do will seek to let God continually communicate to him through the written word. In prayer we talk to God. But God cannot do something with a child who will not listen to Him. Because of laziness in Bible study, what people have done in order to find a message from God is to place great emphasis on dreams or experiences. I often hear the statement, “God spoke to me.” In all these humanistic adventures, people are trying to get a cheap message from God. But what God has instructed is that diligent disciples diligently get into the word of God. There is no easy way to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Through long hours of study we will know the will of God. With a knowledge of the word of God we will guard ourselves from being led astray by the theologies of men, and more importantly, by our own misguided behavior. When Christians are truly into the word of God, they are diligently into all the world because they want to teach others what God has taught them through His word. For this reason, therefore, we must repent and restore diligent Bible study in the family of God.

## **C. Restore personal relationships with one another.**

The New Testament is saturated with passages that encourage relationships. These are called “one another” passages. There are simply hundreds of such passages that teach Christians to pray for

one another, sing to one another, give to one another, consider one another, encourage one another, watch out for one another, bear one another's burdens, etc. Christianity is relationships, and if one would seek to spiritually grow, he or she must establish a close relationship with fellow disciples.

Relationships prepare us for heaven. Relationships prepare our characters for eternal dwelling because our close contact with other people helps us to fine tune our own personalities. We learn to dwell with others, and thus we discover different qualities in our own personality that may need more attention in order to cohabit with others. The better our relationship is with others, the better we understand ourselves.

Churches that seek to establish close relationships between Christians are usually those churches that are seeking to serve the needs of others. They are churches that have members who know how to work together in accomplishing ministries that touch the lives of other people.

We live in a world with religions that are sustained by traditional ceremonies that identify their existence among other man-made religions. These groups are often cold and very impersonal. They are built around the function of a pastor or clergy that is viewed as the sustainer of the group or organization of churches. But people want more than attendance at a religious ceremony. They want people. If the church is what it should be, there will be a natural appeal to the hearts of others who are seeking friends. They will

thus be drawn by our love of one another, not by our doctrinal correctness, nor by our ceremonies.

And this is exactly what Jesus said would be the signal of our identity. We should be known by our love (relationships). Churches that would be successful in world evangelism, therefore, are churches that are built on loving relationships that draw people to them. This brings us to the true identity of the church.

#### **D. Restore our love experience.**

Everyone knows Jesus' mandate that we be identified by our love of one another (Jn 13:34,35). It is this love that moves us to do what Paul said in Philippians 2:4. *"Let each one not look out merely for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."* When a group of Christians start doing this, then their love is manifested toward others. Slaves seek others to serve. But when a church becomes introverted, they are not seeking to serve, but to be served.

When love is truly practiced by disciples, they gather together in order to find someone unto whom they can express their love. The serendipity of the gathering of those who seek to serve, therefore, is that one is exhorted by being served. We do not come together in order to see what we can get out of our assemblies. We come together to find someone to love. By this we are identified as true disciples of Jesus.

In order to do this, look at the preceding verse to Philippians 2:4. Paul

wrote, “*Let nothing be done through rivalry or empty conceit, but in humility of mind let each esteem others better than themselves*” (Ph 2:3). In order to develop a group that is loving in relationships, each member of that group must learn how to “esteem others” better than himself. Those who do this will continually seek to serve others. And this is the magic of evangelism. People usually first come to Jesus because of our love of one another. Once drawn, then they are taught the truth in order that they obey the gospel.

Now consider this. Do you think others will be drawn to loving groups of disciples? Will others who are wounded and hurting come for rescue where there is a family of disciples who are seeking to care for them? This is church. It is a relational environment that draws those who seek help and friendships. Unless churches restore this type of environment among the members, they have no appeal to those who need help.

The primary reason why people are drawn to the church is not because it has the right doctrine. They come for loving friendships. If churches can restore such among the members, then the church will grow numerically because those who come will grow to know Jesus through the behavior of the members. This was what Jesus wanted the fallen Ephesian church to do. If they would restore their first love, then others would be drawn to Jesus. But if there is no love, then the lampstand of light has gone out.

## **E. Restore good works:**

Paul exhorted Titus to remind the brethren to “*be careful to maintain good works*” (Ti 3:8). Because of the warning, we must assume that there is always the possibility of apostasy away from maintaining good works in our lives as disciples of Jesus. The reason for this is that we often take for granted the fact that we were bought with the price of Jesus’ sacrificial offering on the cross. We thus forget to be thankful with a response of good works (See 2 Cor 4:15).

When the church in any area moves into the generation of disciples who have grown up in the church, there is a tendency for members to take for granted who they are and what they have. As stated in previous chapters, when the church moves into the second and third generation, they often become unevangelistic because they exist on the evangelistic work of their forefathers. They become unevangelistic because the church is composed of those who have grown up in the church, and thus they have forgotten the chaotic religious confusion out of which their fathers were converted. Good works cease because there is not appreciation for the freedom that was gained in Christ through obedience to the gospel.

This is one of the reasons why the Hebrew writer exhorted the older disciples to whom he was writing to not forsake the assembling of Christians together in order to stir up love and good works (Hb 10:24,25). Those who are not careful to maintain good works will not show up at assemblies that promote love

and works. This is usually what happens to churches in their second and third generation of existence.

In order to get growing again, it is absolutely imperative that stagnant churches repent and restore their first works. There is no alternative to this. Members may be willing to do good works when the works present themselves to be done. But this is not the problem. If there is no initiative to go to work by implementing plans to accomplish work goals, a church is dead. If there is a supposed faith that is not expressed by work, the church is dead. When members stop coming to assemblies wherein good works are identified, the church is dead. Repentance that is manifested by fruit is the only escape from this death. As Jesus exhorted the Ephesian church, we must remember from where we have fallen and repent in order to restore the first works (Rv 2:5).

## **F. Restore an evangelistic outreach.**

*“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men ...”* (2 Cor 5:11). In order to restore our desire to persuade men through the preaching of the gospel, there must be a restoration in our lives of the fear of God, not only for what God will do to those who do not obey the gospel, but also to us for not preaching the gospel.

**Every Christian must be evangelistic.** If one would disagree with this statement, then the spiritual death of that person is identified. If we bring

together an entire group of disciples who agree with the one who disagrees with the statement, we have the answer to why churches stagnate and die out of existence. Unevangelistic churches have created a religion after their own desires, and thus the entire group of members who are part of that church ushers themselves together into death.

If churches believe that they can start growing again without the entire body of members becoming evangelistic, then they have deceived themselves into believing that an unevangelistic disciple is acceptable to God. Every member must be evangelistic. No one can sit idly by and allow others to do all the work. If those who idly sit by become the majority of the group, then death has set in.

The curse of fulltime preachers who stay with a specific church is that the church who pays their salary often hands over to them their evangelistic responsibility. This is not something that I am teaching of my own opinion. This is an axiomatic truth, that is, a truth that is self-evident. When churches become financially rich, they seek to hire their work to be done for them. Members then sit idly by when the fulltime evangelist does the work. You know this is true.

It is difficult to convince one who is obsessed with a successful secular job that he cannot buy his way out of personal involvement with a paycheck to a fulltime preacher. The problem is not in the preacher, but in the one who thinks he can be obsessed with his work in worldly things while someone else assumes his responsibility in being personally

involved in good works and evangelistic outreach.

Though it is almost impossible to restore rich churches who have hired a staff to do their “spiritual business,” there is always hope. But the hope lies only in the repentance of those who have chosen to sit on a bench during the “hour of worship” while someone else becomes personally involved. Only repentance will salvage a church house full of such people. By repentance I mean that every member must make a commitment to become personally involved in what Jesus would have every disciple do. This was what Paul exhorted Timothy to tell the rich. *“Command those who are rich ... that they be rich in good works.”* (1 Tm 6:17,19).

### **G. Restore daily discipleship.**

We have created a religion that naturally dies once it has reached the end of its life. Now think about this. We have now the “hour of worship.” This is not a New Testament concept. It is the result of an industrial/business culture that seeks to departmentalize every aspect of the life of a disciple. We reason that since work is departmentalized between 8:00<sup>AM</sup> and 5:00<sup>PM</sup>, then certainly “religious time” can also be departmentalized. In order to enforce this concept, the departmentalized “hour of worship” is boxed in between an “opening prayer” and “closing prayer.” Fulfilling one’s personal duties as a Christian is thus confined to an assembled “hour of worship,” outside which, one is on his own time and free

from any responsibilities to fulfill one’s service to God. This is the belief and behavior of the dead church. It is true churchian doctrine at its best.

Acts 5:42 is a record of the behavior of the early church. *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”* There was a daily obedience in the lives of the early disciples because they realized the urgency of their calling. As priests of God who never ceased doing the responsibilities of priesthood, they were daily into the work of God to preach the gospel to the lost and teach the disciples. There is no such thing in the New Testament as an “hour of worship.” There were no opening or closing prayers. Discipleship was a lifetime, all-the-time commitment to serve. Anything different in belief is an apostasy from the truth. Anything different in behavior is an apostasy to a religion that we have created after our own desire to shirk our duties and separate ourselves from personal involvement in the lives of others.

In order to start growing again, we must restore in our lives daily discipleship. We must be daily priests of God who minister the word of God to the world. When we once again become excited about sowing the seed of the kingdom because we are excited about the need of preaching the gospel to the world, we will start growing. We will have more conversions only when we grow in the conviction that every disciple must become involved daily in preaching the gospel to the world. Nothing else will keep the church growing into all the world.