

The Luke 10 Manual- Mission as Mandated and Modeled by Jesus

@ 2010 by Stephen and Marilyn Hill

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A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

For over a decade I've been chronicling the global advance of God's Kingdom . And it's true - the book of Acts is still happening today! But it's often not on shiny church platforms, well-marketed Christian conferences or touristic revival trips. The Kingdom is happening where ordinary Jesus followers pray and move out of their comfort zone, go to unlikely places (but it could be next door), serve, share Jesus with others, meet, eat, disciple and multiply. This is the dynamic we read about in Luke 10 and the book of Acts. This is how the early church started and reached the Ancient world. This is how the Kingdom is still advancing today.

Steve Hill has been a friend and companion for many years. He and Marilyn have invested themselves in 'people of peace' and simple church groups across North America, Europe and Central Asia. What he shares in this book is no theory, it's experience.

Marc van der Woude
publisher joelnews.org and teamleader simplechurch.eu

It was so refreshing to read *The Luke 10 Manual* by Steve Hill. He brings much needed correction and adjustment to many beliefs and practices that are prevalent in “charismatic/apostolic/prophetic” circles. Much of what is exported from the West via Christian television and media is distorted, unsound, unhealthy, and aberrant. The influence of Western media is vast in other parts of the world: for better, or more frequently, for worse. All things Western are not “gospel.” Some of it is poison. I so appreciate Steve’s apostolic missional mindset and his clear prophetic edge that enables him to say the necessary hard things without polemic venom. He sounds a clear call to return to a Christ-centered, New Covenant gospel message. If adhered to, the admonitions and instructions Steve provides will spare many lives from trendy, delusional, and dead-end doctrines whose end is shipwreck, human pain, and slander on the Lord’s testimony. These things must be said. I’m glad Steve is saying them.

Stephen Crosby, D. Min.
Stephanos Ministries
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Steve and Marilyn Hill's mission manual based on Luke 10 is really a manifesto calling every day Christians to be every day workers in the vineyard. It instructs, it coaches, it cajoles, it inspires, it challenges- but ultimately it is a timely word from God for this generation. Like any book, you have to chew the meat and spit out the bones. But, there is a lot of meat in this manifesto.

Brian J. Dodd

Ph D. (University of Sheffield, England, New Testament Studies)

Former Professor: Fuller Theological Seminary, Asbury Theological Seminary

Author:

Praying Jesus Way_ (Inter Varsity Press, 1996)

Where Christology Began_ (Westminster John Knox Press, 1997)

The Problem with Paul_ (Inter Varsity Press, 1998)

Paul's Paradigmatic 'I': Personal Example as Literary Strategy_ (Sheffield Academic Press JSNTSS 177, 1999)

Empowered Church Leadership: Ministry in the Spirit According to Paul_ (Inter Varsity Press, 2003)

Pastor, 25 years.

This little volume is the best I have read in presenting the Kingdom of God and the words of Jesus stripped of western culture and religious institutionalism.

“Hamid” (a follower of Jesus who has chosen to stay within his Muslim community)

DEDICATION

To our friends in Central Asia who are walking out these truths.
You are our heroes and heroines

THE LUKE 10 MANUAL
(Mission as Modeled and Mandated by Jesus)

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Preface

Testimony from Grace¹
(A Newly Active Servant)

I thank God that I can love Him, serve Him and glorify Him. I am crying full of happiness that the Lord has chosen me to share what He has done this year. Many years have passed since I gave my life to Jesus but only this year my eyes have been opened to the great truths of Jesus, that I am a beloved daughter of God and that He has service for me to do. Last year I was crying to the Lord for help since I was in great need. I had become lukewarm, my joy had disappeared and I had no spiritual support. Then I met sister Ruth whom I had known for a long time. We used to go to a congregational church together before I left to go to Kazakhstan and then Russia to work. I was water baptized in Russia and here, I continued to attend a congregational church.

When I saw Ruth I was surprised because she seemed so spiritually strong to me. I felt such warmth and love from her I asked her if she had become a pastor. She replied that she is in a movement of house churches and has already for some time been moving outside the borders of our city, is involved in multiplication across the country and even beyond. Honestly I had hesitations during a whole year. How is it possible not to gather on Sundays and not to listen to the anointed pastors? How is it possible for someone like me without spiritual education to be really capable of understanding the Bible and able to found new churches?

Then I started to visit their meetings from time to time and I saw life there. Everyone felt free to share their revelations and testimonies. There were no sermons but the testimonies showed that everyone was ministering to families, visiting people in villages, serving them and helping them in everyday concerns and cares. Everything they said was confirmed by the Word of God. Love was flowing from them.

I started to pray. Because God found me when I was perishing and gave me new life, I had always wanted to go among people and share the good news with them. This year, through the testimonies I again felt the power of the wind and heard the sound of heaven. I received freedom from offenses and was able to pray with my sister who was near death. God healed her!

My prayer was that God would let me share His light with others and He has answered my cry. At this moment I am serving many people. God has opened doors to many houses and now eight of them have started to listen. I also visit relatives and friends.

Every time we gather we thank God that He gave us revelation about houses of peace where the fire of God gets ignited. We are praying for our friends Steve and Marilyn.

1 Some names have been changed for security reasons

May God bless you in all things and always.

INTRODUCTION
(for Western friends)

This manual was written for our teams in Central Asia. The purpose behind this is not academic but practical. We want many more testimonies like the one above. Actually we never expected this practical manual to be published in the west. However, several friends who have read this have asked why we spend so much time dealing with the context of western institutionalism and charismatic expressions of church life if this book was written for the east. Simply because western charismatic expression is every where! It was a shock to be in Bishkek and flick through twenty Christian TV channels via free satellite link up and to find that all of them were preaching the American prosperity gospel and modeling leadership privilege and power.

You may be aware that during the decades of the nineties, each centre in the former Soviet world saw the rise of large independent charismatic churches. You may not be aware that during this last decade many of these churches have declined. Why? Most of these churches modeled a leadership style of power and privilege that was little different than that of the leaders in the worlds of politics and crime.

Recently I was in a major city in Ukraine, and then in a city of Armenia. In both cities we could see young people standing around in the night shadows by the flickering of their cell phones. The apartments are small and crowded. They have no money for clubs or cafes. They stand around in the parks and streets through the nights.

In both cities I asked the same question, "How can we hire these young adults for the Kingdom? They are standing idle in the market place." In both cities my host gave me the same answer, "It is almost impossible. Most have already been through the churches and left via the back door."

Many would say that there was a revival in Ukraine during the nineties. We began intense involvement there in 1998. There were many evangelistic meetings and many decisions. Some have told me that the number of decisions reported by all the ministries working in Ukraine added up to five times the population! Another told me that the number of decisions in Russia is equal to the total population. I cannot verify these numbers but a lot of decisions were reported. However, Jesus never commanded us to count decision cards. He commanded us to make disciples.

Yes, the young people came to the meetings but attending a meeting does not make one a disciple. These youth attended the meetings and saw how things worked. Many came to believe there is little difference between organized religion and organized crime (except that the Mafia has better restaurants!). The "gospel" of give to get wealth has worked for the leaders. They have the houses and the expensive cars. They have built impressive church buildings complete with fancy offices. But it has not worked for

the people who gave. They are still poor.

If you go to small, poor villages you are likely to find a little group being led in worship by a team with electric guitars and drums. This was my experience in a Gypsy ghetto in Bulgaria. People who are having trouble feeding themselves are putting money into sound systems and electric guitars so that twelve people can have rock style worship? I asked them, "Why are you doing this?"

They replied. "This is what we see on TV from America."

It is my conviction that much of the western charismatic expression of the Kingdom of God, which is being copied all over the world, is a mixture of leadership/personality and money cult. One purpose of the Luke 10 Manual is to strip these idols from our expression of the Kingdom of God. We need to be institution, idol and persecution proof.

We need to see our mission as mandated and modeled by Jesus. We need to see the community of disciples as Jesus mandated and modeled it. Church as we have known it² must give way to church as Jesus wants it and builds it.

If you were to seek an example of something which has become the exact opposite of its founders intention, you could not do better than the institutional church. What was intended as a band of brothers and friends has become a bureaucratic hierarchy.

² See, *Pagan Christianity: The Origins of Our Modern Church Practices*, Frank Viola (Bradon, FL: Present Testimony Ministry) for a scholarly expose of the pagan origins of church as we have known it.

INTRODUCTION (For our Eastern Friends)

It is a privilege to present this material to you . Let me begin by stating that the Bible, in its cultural assumptions, is an eastern book and that Jesus was an eastern man. The cultural background was Hebrew not Greek and the geographic back ground was the Middle East not North America. Thus, you, as easterners, are better able to understand what Jesus was teaching than I am.

However, let me use my authority as a westerner to emphasize one thing, “Do not do church as we have done it in the west for the past hundreds of years. It has not worked very well for us. Why should it work for anybody else?”

Historically we have tended to start with our traditions of how we do church (leader, congregation, building, weekly preaching services, supporting prayer and small groups) and then build our understanding of mission around our practice of church. That practice of special place and special time where special things are done by a special person which you do not do for yourself and which you pay the special person to do for you, is the mark of all religions around the world. Thus we start with religious tradition.

When we start with how we do church, our understanding of mission becomes trying to get people to come to the meetings and support the program of the church by attendance, volunteer labour and finance. That can hardly be called mission.

At its worst, this is marketing aimed at already Christians to get them to come to you rather than the church down the road.

At its best, this is sincere and dedicated people doing all they know how to do in order to serve their communities in the way that they have always done it.

However, in this context, discipleship becomes an indoctrination into the dogmatic distinctions and authority structures of that particular denominational movement. This is a very thorough indoctrination into all that makes that movement different and better than all the others. After all, these things are believed and practiced because they are right and everybody else is, if not wrong, at least not as right as we are. Hardly helpful in seeing Jesus and His followers as one Body or in seeing Jesus and His Kingdom.

To put this in big words, we start with our ecclesiology (how we do church) and let that form our missiology (how we do mission) and trust that somehow through all of this folks get to know something of Jesus (Christology). This means that church and

mission look pretty much the same in every culture except for the denominational differences which, unfortunately, tend to be even more entrenched in the second and third worlds than in the first.

Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result." Another saying I use is, "If we always do what we have always done, we will always get what we have always got." We have insanely done what we have always done while praying for a different result.

What happens if we start with Jesus? What happens if we let Jesus direct our mission and then let Jesus build His church? What if the order is Christology, Missiology and then Ecclesiology?³ What if Jesus directs mission differently in every culture and the church He builds looks different in every culture?

Exploring that through the words of Jesus in Luke 10 is the purpose of this book. When we look at the words of Jesus through the lens of hundreds of years of building centric, hierarchical expressions of the church, we fit His words into that structure. We use His words to support our traditions and what we are already doing. This is to be trapped in church as we have always known it.

What would the church that Jesus wants look like? What happens if we try to see church through the words and example of Jesus?

Maybe if we would do what He commanded and make disciples (train the nations to do all that Jesus commanded us to do), He could do what He promised and build (personally direct the members of His body and be the real Head rather than the figure Head of His body) His church?

What if we started with mission as Jesus did and commanded it? We invite you to walk with us through the commandments and implications of the words of Jesus in Luke 10.

3 Steve Chaulk, "Intelligent Church", page 29, ISBN-13:978-0-310-24884-2

Chapter One THE PROBLEM OF THE LABORERS

Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few:" Luke 10:2

A/ THE HEART PROBLEM

When Jesus contrasts the greatness of the harvest with the scarcity of the laborers, He does not tell us why the laborers are few. However, experience shows that the majority of Christian workers are concentrated in the most evangelized parts of the world while those parts with the fewest believers have the fewest workers.

That may have to do with our desire for security, position, salary, comfort and safety since unbelievers are not very good at providing any of these things! Harvesting is often difficult, dangerous work conducted at your own expense!

That could point to a problem with the heart of the laborer. I sometimes feel that we only go so far in our pursuit of God. We go far enough to feel His love, to know His forgiveness, to experience healing, in short, to feel better, but not far enough to be consumed by His heart for the nations and for the least. God is love but He is not nice. His love is wild, dangerous, boundless and fearless. Harvesting is mostly hard work but it can also be dirty and dangerous. Our hearts must be bigger than all of that and they only get that way by being one with His heart.

We also need to be aware of new age spirituality and its desire for spiritual experiences as an end in themselves, as consumer items. When this mind set is prevalent, spirituality is divorced from responsibility to others and from obedience to the One experienced. In the New Testament these are never separated. The experience of the Holy Spirit is the motivation for a life laid down unto Jesus through radical obedience.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses (martyrs) to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

The New Testament is full of dramatic spiritual encounters but these did not take place because the early saints sought them in and of themselves. There is no New Testament record of the apostles teaching the saints how to go into the third heaven, how to experience angels nor even how to know the voice of God. There are many ministries in the west based upon the leader claiming to be able to teach others how to experience these things. They talk about going into the third heaven as casually as going to a restaurant and thus show that they have never gone any further than their

own imaginations. This is extra biblical teaching.

Do people experience something in these meetings? Yes, many do but what are they experiencing? Crowd dynamics, psychological suggestion and emotional hype can produce intense feelings and delusions of legitimate spiritual experiences. Just because individuals in the New Testament had supernatural experiences does not mean that we are to seek them in and of themselves. So much of charismatic conference ministry and TV ministry is extra biblical. Bible verses are used in ways that they were not used in the New Testament. This is the error which the early church fought when some began to claim special experiences and knowledge and teach these as necessary to salvation. These teachers were called the "Gnostics". They elevated their "spiritual" experiences above the simple teachings of scripture.

John had the gnostics, with their new revelations in mind, when he wrote I John 1:1- 4, *That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life- the life was manifested and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*

Things from the beginning, things experienced by all, bring true fellowship and true joy. This relationship with God will work itself out in real relationships with others. John is clear about the practical outworking of a relationship with God being to love and serve one another.

In the New Testament experiences of God were not sought separately from obedience to God. They experienced the supernatural encounters and the miraculous interventions of God as they proceeded through hardship and sufferings to obey the Master. For example, I would agree with many who think that Paul's third heaven experience took place when he had been stoned and left for dead outside Lystra (Acts 14:19). The primary thing was to be laborers together with God! We are not to be seekers of spiritual experiences in and of themselves. We are to be those that know we have died to sin and selfishness in Christ and are thus free to present our new selves as a living sacrifice to Him. We live to follow the Master to the next home, the next village or the next country. We walk with Him.

B/ THE TRAINING PROBLEM

Traditional training can also be a problem. It has become a truism that the more years of theological education someone has, the less likely they are to ever lead another to Jesus. In reality, traditional Bible schools and seminaries do not train laborers. They train professionals in the art of maintaining and growing an institution. Those so trained, who later prove successful in seeing many become followers of Jesus, often testify that they had to unlearn all they learned in seminary in order to be a successful follower of Jesus and a mentor of men.

Another truism is that the more distance you take someone from their environment for training, the less likely they are of ever returning to that environment to serve. This does not mean much within western culture but it means a great deal if you take someone from a third world and train them in a western context, or if you take someone from a rural third world culture and train them in the city. Again, such training tends to produce professionals who then want a professional standard of living. It does not train laborers willing to engage in the hard work of the harvest and the life style of the harvest fields. Laborers are trained in the field!

Jesus trained His laborers in the field. We do not have a better way! Jesus trained fishermen and farmers in the field to be fishers of men. He was not interested in training religious professionals. He rebuked, and cursed the religious professionals of His day (Matthew 23 is rough reading!) and He would do the same today.

Jesus talked about practical training in John 7:17, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority." We know through doing! The discipline, faith and struggle to work in His will produces dependence upon Him and profound humility. Merely mastering information, detail and knowledge about doctrine, Bible truth and theology can produce the most profound arrogance as evidenced by the Pharisees in their statement in John 7:49 "But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed".

Jesus also spoke of "in the field training" in Matthew 28:19- 20 with the commandment to disciple the nations by "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you". The worst of institutional discipleship is into the doctrinal differences and authority structures of that denomination. This builds separation from the rest of the body of Christ and a sense of superiority since you obviously believe that your stuff is the best!

In contrast, the commandments of Jesus involve relational wholeness through forgiveness and restitution and then serving others with relational integrity. The focus is

healed hearts and relationships not doctrinal correctness. Unfortunately it is often the brightest and most gifted who are the poorest at relationships. Intellectual arrogance is not a good foundation for loving relationships! Paul, one of the most educated men of his day, observes in I Corinthians 8:1 that “knowledge puffs up but love edifies.

”Which would you rather be- someone who talks about miracles or someone who works miracles? Someone who speaks of the love of God or someone who can embrace another and minister the love of God? In the Kingdom of Jesus we are known by our fruit, not by how much information we have mastered.

There are no diplomas on the walls of the Kingdom of God. Jesus entrusted His kingdom to “uneducated and untrained men”. Why do we think we have a better way?

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled and realized that they had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13

Another manifestation of the off site training error is the successful charismatic leader that opens a ministry training school. The focus is on training the students to do what the leader is doing in practical ministry, for example, healing. This sounds good. Students begin to flock to this school from all the places that this leader or his associates have ministered. Often the hungriest and the best sacrifice to attend these ministry schools. The atmosphere in the school and central church can be very exciting, challenging and life changing. What is the problem?

This is not what Jesus did nor is it what He asked us to do; so there will be problems! The best come to be trained. The ministry school grows and its own needs begin to emerge- needs for administrators, teachers, counsellors and personal assistants. Many of those sent to be trained begin to stay at the school. This ministry centre does not bless the local communities which sent their sons and daughters to be trained by sending them back to the local harvest fields but instead begins to keep the best for themselves. The local harvest fields have not more but less laborers because of the ministry school.

This ministry centre has conferences so pastors, leaders and anybody who can fly, drive or walk comes to them. If you want to become somebody in the movement you have to be there! The preaching and praying is about revival and harvest. Wonderful! Wonderful? The leaders will spend thousands per year on conferences and invest little or nothing in their inner cities.

What if the time and money invested in the conferences was invested in the homeless, the poor, the prisons, the inner cities and the refugees? What if? The harvest they are preaching and praying about might actually be happening.

In Central Asia we have been surprised to find individuals who have completed as many as eight courses of Bible training from various mission organizations. Why would some want to be forever students listening to the same teaching over and over again? Why would they seek education further and further afield? Sometimes the training comes complete with room and board and that is a powerful draw in a culture of poverty. Sometimes the training experience brings a connection with a mission organization that results in a paid position- another powerful draw!

You can be sure that the various missions do not tell their supporters that the majority of the students in the Bible school have already completed several other courses of study in competing denominational schools. I am sure that they only report the numbers they are training to be "the future leaders of the nation".

Why would they do this? They themselves were trained in a Bible school. Running a Bible school is all they know how to do. They know how to train professionals for a position in an institutional setting. They do not know how to train laborers for the harvest fields. Their success lies in how many students go through the program. They count certificates handed out. They can not count disciples made.

Fortunately some students get tired of this merry go round and simply decide to follow Jesus and get on with the job. However, even some traditional programs are changing. I have heard of several schools that would not graduate a student until they had gone out, baptized twelve individuals and formed them into a community of Jesus followers.

The simple truth is that any institution or authority structure which rises up extraneous to the local church ultimately becomes an enemy of the local church.

These institutions absorb resources of finance and personnel and become the head of the local church rather than Jesus. It is these centers of supposed education and training for future church leaders which become the sources of heresy. This is an expression of the anti Christ reality, that is, any institution, structure or persons who diminish or deny the place of Jesus as the functional head of His church and the One indwelling and directing His people.

Antichrist is not a single person to come but a spirit already working in the church, says John in I John 2:18- 23. These manifestations of antichrist are identified as having come out of the church and their principle lie is to deny that Jesus is the Christ. However, I do not believe that John is pointing to a verbal denial that Jesus is the Christ but rather a practical denial of His Lordship over His church. We confess His Lordship with our mouths but make all the decisions ourselves thus reducing Him to a figure head rather than the real Head of His church.

However, over the past twenty years, major church planting movements across the world have risen up that are dedicated to training laborers for the harvest in the harvest fields. That is what Jesus did. David Garrison documents this in “Church Planting Movements” (www.churchplantingmovements.com). Movements of disciple making are exploding in previously unreached people groups and in areas that have been labeled as “hard ground” and one reason for this is on the job training of laborers.

Disciples are made by disciples. Programs and events do not produce disciples. They produce people who know how to run programs and how to put on events. Jesus sent away the crowds and invested His life in the twelve.

The infrastructure of the Kingdom of God is relationships.

C/ THE VISION PROBLEM OR BLAMING THE HARVEST

In John's Gospel Chapter four we have the story of the woman at the well. Normally Jews despised Samaritans as mixed race apostates and would walk around Samaria rather than cross through it but John notes in verse four that Jesus "needed to go through Samaria". That resulted in the meeting at the well and the salvation of the woman and brought Jesus to the point of speaking about fields that are "white unto harvest".

*"Do you not say, There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest."
John 4:35*

The disciples and Jesus were looking at the same field, Samaria. The disciples saw empty ground still four months from harvest. They did not want to be in Samaria and they had no faith for anything good to happen there! Jesus was eating the will of His father and saw white fields ready for harvest and, acting on that faith through gifts of the Holy Spirit, reaped a harvest. They both looked at the same field but they "saw" according to their hearts.

To describe a field as "hard ground" is a self fulfilling prophecy. It also blames the harvest for not being harvested. Or worse yet, blames God- "God is not moving here as He is in other nations". Problems with vision are heart problems that need to be corrected by a baptism into the heart of the Master.

For years a ministry broadcast into a closed Muslim nation the message "Come to Jesus, then find a good church to be baptized and discipled". A problematic message in that there are no churches meeting in buildings in that nation for its citizens. A change of methodology was implemented. They began to broadcast simple house church gatherings complete with participatory Bible studies, baptisms and prayer for the sick. The message became, "Come to Jesus and start a community of disciples in your home." Such communities are now multiplying in that culture and the report is that, as a percentage of population, there are more baptized believers there than in Belgium or Japan.

This same methodology of simple church on DVD and on the internet is helping to release house church after house church in Iran (www.222ministries.com).

FAQ

1/ It seems somewhat harsh to blame either the heart, vision or methodology of the laborers for a lack of harvest in a given culture. Is it not true that some cultures are more open and receptive to Jesus? Are there not seasons of sowing and reaping?

Yes, there are seasons of sowing and reaping but they seem to follow pretty close together as Paul lays it out in II Corinthians 3. It also seems that in every culture there are pockets of harvest where someone has ignored the “hard ground” perception and simply obeyed Jesus. Most of these moves of God have begun among the poor, the broken and the disenfranchised.

2/ Is it not true that what works in one culture will not work in another?

When we share these principles in the West some say that will work in the East but not here. When we share in the East some say that will work in the West but not here. We all love to make excuses! However, we are dealing with the commandments of Jesus. He is the greatest leader and the wisest man ever. If His words are bound to one culture we are all in big trouble. His words transcend culture and are the key to unlocking all closed doors so that His Kingdom culture can fill hearts, families, cities and nations.

3/ Is this not just another methodology? Are we again just copying something that works somewhere else and hoping it will work here?

We are to be followers of Jesus. His command was for us to train others to obey all the things that He taught. We are not followers of any man, even the most successful. Yes, we are indebted to countless individuals who have dared to obey the words of Jesus in Luke 10 and who are seeing the fruit of that obedience in cultures that have historically been the “hard ground” cultures. This is not just another method. This is simply what Jesus commanded.

So much church growth strategy is based upon business and marketing models. So many leadership conferences are based upon the latest corporate wisdom. The New Testament is used to “proof text” what is being presented but the basis is often the latest fad in business. These fads come and go but all truth is in Jesus and we seek those truths that are in Jesus.

This is not just another methodology. This is His methodology! However, it is

interesting to know that some business trainers are adopting much of the strategy of relational integrity and intense mentoring that Jesus modeled.

4/ Why do we build institutions for training and teaching?

Why do we not do what Jesus modeled and train in the field? Maybe it has to do with issues of feeling powerful, in control, successful and visible? Maybe it has to do with copying the way the world does things? Maybe it has to do with tradition? Maybe it has to do with basic insecurity and lack of faith that the scriptures and the Holy Spirit are enough? Maybe it has to do with a lack of faith in the words of Jesus that the basic condition for being a witness unto Him and His Kingdom is the filling and leading of the Holy Spirit? Maybe it has to do with the fact that few elders in the faith will actually walk with the younger ones like Jesus did with His disciples? Maybe because there is no relational discipleship and life transformation through walking with people the way Jesus did? Programs, information transfers and certificates are simply no substitute for relationships.

5/ Are you saying that everyone who starts some kind of ministry training centre or bible school has wrong motivations?

No, I am not. We all begin these projects with good motivations and the best of intentions. We have our own story of starting and stopping a training centre! The problem is that when we do not follow the words and example of Jesus, we always end up in a very wrong place. The problems with centralized training are clear and well documented. It may begin with proper motives but once an institution is up and running it acquires a life of its own and the motivation of those in charge can radically different than the founder's intention. The founder may have had a clear focus on laborers but those who come after begin to focus on maintaining and growing the institution, growing their salaries and growing their positions.

Do some good things happen? Of course, but ultimately all institutions become enemies of the harvest. They consume resources of finances and people that Jesus would send into the harvest.

What began as a short term ministry training can become a three year Bible school and what began as a Bible school can become a four year seminary and what began as a seminary can become a university. The founder's original intention is lost and institutional momentum takes over.

We are to be followers of Jesus. He trained on the go, in the field. Where disciple making church planting movements are multiplying rapidly in a culture, one of the common characteristics is on the job training. This is supplemented by multiple, short

term training and rest periods where the disciples have opportunity to receive wisdom and feedback from elders in the faith.

Chapter 2 WASTED PRAYERS AND THE GEOGRAPHY PROBLEM

*“Therefore pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest”
Luke 10:2(B)*

A/ WASTED PRAYERS

It may be controversial to note that Jesus did not command us to pray for the lost but that is the truth. He did not ask us to pray for the harvest. The cries of the lonely, the abused, the tortured, the fearful, the sick, the addicted, the raped, the starving, the oppressed and the afflicted are continuously touching the Father’s heart. The cries of the lost are effective, powerful and never ending prayers.

Jesus saw the fields as spiritually white and more than ready. They need no more spiritual preparation. We need to hear their prayers! They do not need our prayers. They need our obedience.

It may also be controversial to note that Jesus did not command us to bind any spiritual powers controlling the lost or cast down any spiritual powers exercising authority over them. That is not where He saw the hindrance to harvest. Besides, He knew He was going to deal with all the powers of darkness through His death and resurrection.

Meditation on Ephesians 1:15- 23, Colossians 2:14- 15 and Hebrews 2:14- 15 may be in order here. The spiritual powers holding the nations in bondage were dealt with through the death and resurrection of Jesus. For us to pray as if we were doing this job is simply to act in unbelief towards what Jesus has already accomplished. We cannot do through “spiritual” technology what has already been accomplished on the cross.

That is why we preach Christ and Christ crucified! Paul does not pray against the powers of darkness but that the church would have revelation of the victory of the glorious Christ over the darkness.

Jesus did declare to the returning disciples (Luke 10:18) that He had seen “Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” But that was accomplished as they obeyed Jesus in ministering the Kingdom where ever they went. That was the result of their obedience on the ground. He declared that they had authority over “serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy” and as they exercised that authority in healing and

deliverance, Jesus saw Satan fall.

In many charismatic circles it seems you can have a “ministry” so long as you create another reason for folks to do “spiritual” stuff that does not actually involve serving people. They will sing for hours, do “spiritual” warfare, make declarations, prayer walk, take prayer journeys (“spiritual” tourism?), prophesy the harvest to come, pray for the harvest to come, declare the harvest to come but they will not take their resources of time and relationships to simply obey the commandments of Jesus in Luke 10 and do the harvest work now.

So long as you are praying, prophesying, preparing and declaring you are safe. There is no risk of failure. There is no fruit to judge. You can only judge the atmosphere, the “anointing”, the feeling of the meeting. You can talk about “spiritual breakthroughs” (where in the New Testament is there any talk of spiritual breakthroughs?) but you have to be “spiritual” to sense them! You are judging performance art. There is no accountability to real life. You have ignored the command and accountability to make disciples and are living in a world of false spirituality, of never ending meetings.

Why do we pray as if we must convince, cajole and otherwise twist God's arm to move in the nations? Do we not believe that He loves people and actively wills their best? Much prayer exists because we have never encountered the nature of the heart of God. Yes, pray for the nations until you have God's heart to go.

Why do we pray as if the more often or the louder we say something, the more likely God will hear and respond? Jesus asked us not to do this since it is the heathen who think they will be heard for their many words (Matthew 6:7). God hears our hearts.

Why do we try to gather as many as possible for massive prayer rallies? Do we really think that the more people praying, the more God will do in response? Can we power trip God with numbers? James tells us that the prayer of a single righteous man does a lot and then gives the example of Elijah (James 5:16- 17). God honors faith and righteousness not numbers.

Why do we think massive public prayer is effective? It can make superstars out of “prayer leaders” but Jesus condemned the religious crowd of His day for their public prayers and said that when we pray in secret, God will reward us openly (Matt. 6:5- 6).

The religious spirit will celebrate what God has done in the past and cheer the Messiah to come in the future but seek to kill the One who says, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21- 30). What God has done in the past brings us comfort and what God will do in the future brings a sense of excitement but the command of the Master demands faith, obedience and sacrifice now.

The truth is that Jesus commanded us to pray for laborers. The harvest is ready, over ready! It is spiritually ready. He has made all the preparations necessary. He accomplished the great intercession. We are to reap the fruit of His intercession. We are to pray for laborers.

The danger of praying for laborers is exactly what happened to the disciples. They were immediately sent as the answer to their own prayers! When we humble ourselves to obey, we find ourselves flowing in His purposes.

We are not the directors, the professionals, the researchers or the kings. There is no New Testament ministry or gift called "prophetic intercessor". There are no "generals of intercession". We are all priests and we all pray because that is part of our job. We are the laborers.

We are to pray for those who will be humble and who will do the labour intensive, dirty and sometimes, dangerous work of harvest. God only has one method and that is to send His Word in flesh to live among people so that they can see the glory of God full of grace and truth. John 1:14 is His plan "A". He has no plan "B".

We cannot pray for laborers without going ourselves.

Pray for laborers!

B/ THE LORD OF THE HARVEST

In this Luke passage, Jesus gave Himself the identity of “The Lord of the Harvest”. He has done all that is necessary to identify Himself as such. Some folks believe that the church will decrease until Jesus comes to rescue us from demonic night. They seem to actually believe in an increasing evil taking over the world rather than an increasing Kingdom filling the earth as seen by Daniel in Daniel 2 and declared by Jesus in Matthew 13. They believe that Jesus will return to do by violent force what He has failed to do by sacrificial love. They believe that it really was not finished on the cross and that His sacrifice was not enough to redeem the lost creation. They seem to believe that Jesus should have called Himself “Lord of the Decrease”.

Jesus triumphed over evil on His cross. Love indeed, never fails! The numbers tell the story that the Kingdom of God is an increasing Kingdom. “By AD 40 the movement Jesus founded had about 10,000 followers. By 300 AD the number had grown to around six million people or ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire.”⁴ That dynamic growth stopped after the third century and the church became institutionalized but growth began again with the first missionary movement of St. Patrick and then after another period of decline, growth began again with Martin Luther and the beginning of the reformations, restorations and missionary movements of the last 500 years.

For the first three centuries the church was a movement of simple gatherings primarily meeting in homes around a meal. These organic gatherings never really disappeared but for centuries the traditional church violently persecuted and executed any who would read the Bible in their homes or pray with their own children. What was sporadic and hidden really exploded in the twentieth century as house churches appeared on the scene again, particularly in China.

“In the early years of persecution, many Chinese believers gave up their faith.... Some historians say as many as 70% of the 750,000 church members at that time denounced the Lord. As China slammed its doors shut, the rest of the world was sure there would be no Christians left at all.... In the late 1970s the doors to China began to open.... and now most researchers agree there are around 100 million Christians in China today.”⁵

Taking a look at Africa... “In 1900, Africa had a population of 108 million people of which 8.7 million, or 9 percent were Christian. The majority of those Christians were Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox. They were outnumbered by 34.5 million Muslims, a ratio of four

4 Steve Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, Missional Press, 2009, page 73

5 *Asia Harvest Magazine*, December 2009, Newsletter #102, www.asiaharvest.org

to one. By 1962.... there were about 145 million Muslims and 60 million Christians- a ratio of about five to two.... By 2000 there were 360 million Christians in Africa... 40.6% of Africans were Muslim and 45% were Christian. From 1900 to 2000 the ratio of Muslims to Christians shifted from four to one to less than one to one.”⁶

From India... “The Starfish Alliance, a collaboration of house church networks in India, reports that on the day of Pentecost in 2009 they baptized 300,000 people. On the same day in 2010 the baptized one million. Leaders Victor and Bindhu Choudhrie say that significant inroads have been made into the Muslim and Brahmin communities.”⁷ And Starfish Alliance is only one of many such rapidly multiplying networks in India.

James Rutz believes “The growing core of Christianity crosses theological lines and includes 707 million born-again people who are increasing by 8% a year. These 'core apostolics' are a powerful mix of Charismatics, Pentecostals, and Evangelicals whose main distinction is that they are in expanding, connected and easily countable networks.”⁸

Jesus is the Lord of the Harvest. That is one of His titles. That is an expression of His Nature. We are a part of His increasing Kingdom!

6 Steve Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, Missional Press, 2009, Page 50- 51

7 Marc Van der Woude, *Joel News International* #708, November 17, 2009

8 Jim Rutz, *Mega Shift*, Colorado Springs, CO, 2005, page 15.

C/ A VERY SPECIFIC PRAYER AND A GEOGRAPHY PROBLEM

The request “to send out laborers into His Harvest” has a passive sound (at least in English). We send letters, we send out e-mails, we send our congratulations or condolences. However, in Luke 10, this verb should paint a picture of a farmer throwing seed onto his land from his hand. Is Jesus Lord of our lives such that He can take us in His hands, out of our world of comfort, familiarity and security and throw us into His harvest fields? Are we willing to fall into the ground and become invisible and die in order that we may bear much fruit? What is our motivation? Do we want to use God for what we can get from Him or do we truly desire His glory?

Meditate on John 12:23- 26! If we serve and follow Jesus, we will be with Him where He is and be honored by the Father. Where was Jesus at that time? He was not speaking of a place in space or time but where He was relationally and that relational place was in the heart of His Father. We can only express the heart of the Father if we are living in His heart. That is where Jesus lived and that is where He wants us to live.

Very few moves of God have come from the respectable, comfortable centre of society. Most have begun on the fringes among the poor, the desperate and the broken. And very few moves of God have begun by inviting people to come to our meetings from those fringes of society. We are to go to the edges.

Someone has said that the church has a geography problem. Jesus commanded us to go and we keep asking the world to come to us. Why do we do that? If some one comes into my space, they come to where I am in control, where I know the unwritten rules and where I am comfortable. The more people who come into my space, the more resources I control and the more powerful I become. The more people who come into my space, the more successful I appear to be. Gathering crowds has made many leaders into kings, complete with kingly lifestyles.

This has been called the “attraction model”⁹ of church growth. The problem is that most of those attracted are already believers but believers who are looking for a better deal. Is our task as believers to find a community that meets our needs as we perceive them to be or is it our task to create community for those who do not have it? It should be clear that we are not to be shoppers for or consumers of spiritual experiences. We are to be laborers in the harvest fields.

9 Michael Frost & Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Hendrickson Publishers, 2006, page 225.

The truth is very simple. The not yet followers of Jesus do not generally come to our meetings, no matter how anointed. That is like a farmer standing in the door of his barn and calling out to the harvest, "Come in harvest! We have a very nice barn with all the facilities for your comfort and convenience. Our worship is exciting. Our preaching is anointed. Our child care is number one."

You would say such a farmer had lost his mind. If his harvest is to come in, he must go, get it and bring it in. That is the kind of laborers we are to pray for. That is what the Lord of the Harvest commands us to do.

FAQ

1/ So you do not believe in what some call "strategic level spiritual warfare"? You do not believe in binding the spiritual forces that hold nations in bondage as a preparation for evangelism?

No, I do not. Jesus did not make that a precondition for going, so why should we? Actually, in the middle of Luke chapter 10 we have Jesus saying "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." From the context we can only conclude that this was the result of the works of the Kingdom completed on the ground by the disciples in the verses preceding.

For a complete discussion of this issue we invite you to study "Ultimate Spiritual Warfare- The Revelation of the Glory of Jesus" on our web-site, www.harvest-now.org.

The commandment is to pray for laborers and to go. Would the Master send us if the preparatory work was not completed?

Some of those who began this teaching on discerning principalities and powers and then casting them down are former Satanists who claim "insider" knowledge of the kingdom of darkness. Why would we take their testimony over the clear teaching of scripture?

It has become part and parcel of many "prophetic intercessory" (a completely non-biblical term) ministries to claim to be able to discern the evil rulers over nations and then to be able to bind them and cast them down. If this is so important why is it not taught by Jesus or Paul? Why is there no record of this taking place prior to Paul going into a new area?

This may make good theatre on a conference stage but it is not New Testament Christianity and has no place in our practice. We are to heal the sick and cast demons out of people. Let us do the works of Jesus and not follow the delusions of those who are focused on demons in the sky.

2/ What about prayer walking prior to seeking houses of peace in a particular area or village?

Yes, prayer which seeks to bless a village or area, which seeks guidance to the persons of peace, and which is linked with specific action, obedience and service. Where this goes wrong is when there is a disconnect between prayer and obedience or when “spiritual” activity becomes a substitute for loving serving of people. The point is that we are all intercessors by virtue of being royal priests and we are all to be laborers. As the Nike ad says, “Just do it!”

3/ Is everyone to go? Are we all to be evangelists and church planters? Jesus was speaking to the apostles was He not?

Yes, Jesus was speaking to the apostles and clearly, not all of us have extra local responsibilities. However, whether it is across the ocean, across the valley or across the street, each one of us has the privilege and responsibility to serve the world around us and specific responsibility to family and friends.

Just as it is normal in family life for every couple to desire children, so it is normal in our relationship with God the Father to share His heart for sons and daughters, to share His heart for a big, beautiful bride for His Son and to share His heart for a great big creative, living temple for the Holy Spirit to enjoy.

Chapter 3 THE DANGER AHEAD

“Go your way, behold I send you out as lambs among wolves.” Luke 10:3

A/ HARVESTING IS SUPPOSED TO BE DANGEROUS WORK!

When we went to Central Asia, I asked how the gospel first came to the region. The reply was that the first missionaries came courtesy of “Apostle Stalin”. I had heard Stalin called many things but never “apostle” so, of course, I asked what was meant by that statement.

The story is that Stalin, in his hatred of all things Godly, had arrested the believers around Moscow and sent them in cattle cars by train to Kyrgyzstan. Today that is a three day and night journey and they left in that time with only what they could carry and with no provision for food or water along the way. One third died during the journey and one third died upon arrival, since there was no provision for them once they arrived. The third who survived were the first witnesses for Jesus in the region¹⁰.

Mao Tse Tung is also called an “apostle” by some the body of Christ in China. Again, you may ask why? When Mao came to power the church in China was concentrated in the south east of the country, dependent upon western finances, subservient to western leadership and weak. Mao deported the foreigners, destroyed the Christian schools, seminaries, church buildings and began to arrest the believers and send them all over the country as slave labour in factories, mines and farms. They gave of their bread and blankets to the sick and dying. They took the worst jobs like cleaning the toilets to be able to go from cell to cell and bring comfort. The testimony of the believers as they lived, served, suffered and died began to bring multitudes to Jesus. The testimony of Jesus which had been isolated in an alien culture and confined to one part of the country was planted across the nation at the expense of the communist Chinese state. The Word became flesh and dwelt among them!¹¹

Did these believers suffer? Yes, and many died. Did Stalin or Mao have the last word?

¹⁰ From conversations with friends in Central Asia.

¹¹ For a first hand account see *The Heavenly Man*, Paul Hathaway, Monarch Books, Mill Hill, London, 2003.

No. In trying to stamp out the church they only planted it more deeply in the soil of their nations.

B/ IT IS IN SUFFERING THAT THE NATURE OF JESUS IS MANIFESTED

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:11- 12

The commandments of Jesus delivered in the Sermon on the Mount confront the realities of persecution and suffering. The command to love our enemies, bless those who curse us and do good to those who abuse us comes in Matthew 5:44. It was the fulfillment of these commandments that turned so many hearts to Jesus in the Chinese prison and forced labour systems.

These commands confront our desire for ease, peace and prosperity. We even have whole sections of the church which are teaching that a sign of God’s blessing is your prosperity and that difficulty, poverty and suffering are a sign of personal sin or lack of faith. That is a perversion of the gospel of the Kingdom. In this false environment of peace, prosperity and pleasure people easily play the victim and wonder if God still loves them when they have a bad hair day. God is not your servant. We do not come to God for what we can get from Him. Trite faith formulas do not put God in your pocket. God is not a vending machine into which you place a dollar of faith, a dollar of confession, a dollar of offering and then get whatever you want.

We die to the old man of sin and give our new lives to God for His glory, even if that means suffering. The truth in many parts of the world is that coming to Jesus will not make your life easier. It will make your life more difficult and more dangerous. In the year of mid 2008 to mid 2009 over 176,000 people were martyred for their faith in Jesus according to www.opendoorsusa.org . That is almost 500 people per day making the ultimate sacrifice.

These realities of suffering and persecution confront an easy gospel that tries to entice people to come to Jesus for all He will do for them and all they will get from Him. In contrast, Paul told Timothy (2 Timothy 3:12), “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” Some have turned that completely upside down and have taught that if we just have enough faith in Jesus, our lives will be healthy, wealthy and full of peace and pleasure. This “gospel” of peace and prosperity is not a New Testament gospel. We have baptized western materialism and pleasure seeking as the Kingdom of God.

It does not matter how many scriptures the television preacher uses to prove that his materialism and love of money is blessed by Jesus. Yes, much of their talk is about blessing and cursing and how we are blessed or cursed according to what we do, especially in the area of what we give to them. The Old Testament covenant of blessing and cursing, based in obedience to the Mosaic law, is preached as applicable to today.

However, we are not in the Old Covenant. The promised land of the Old Covenant has become the promised Spirit of the New. The blessings of prosperity in the land have become the blessings of being in Jesus in every situation. We are blessed in Jesus, because of what He has done and those blessings of inward life and peace are powerful enough to cause us to be joyful, even when we suffer.

The Hebrew church suffered and even “joyfully accepted the plundering of (their) goods”. Why? They knew they had a “better and more enduring possession... in heaven” (Hebrews 10:34). If we have truly seen eternity, that vision puts time and all of its stuff in context. We are not to react as victims but to be confident that after doing the will of God, we will receive the promise!

Paul spoke to the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 3:3, “That no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.” We are not necessarily appointed to prosperity. We are appointed to being like Jesus and that may mean appointment to suffering.

Many saints in contexts of suffering and persecution are allowing the mystery of the cross of Jesus to work, as they turn abuse into the grace of forgiveness and cursing into the grace of blessing. Blessing is more powerful than any curse and forgiveness is more powerful than any abuse. You may not be able to choose what happens to you but you can choose your attitude and your response. Quiet confidence, peace, joy and forgiveness in the face of adversity is a major testimony that Christ lives in you!

C/ WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Jesus used another metaphor and said that we were to be as wise as serpents but harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16). Yes, we are blessed to be a blessing! You cannot bless others unless you are blessed yourselves. We are to give as those who have received freely! These are primarily blessings of grace, forgiveness, healing, deliverance and loving all, even those who act as enemies, but we are also blessed in every area of life from health to relationships to finances. We are to be wise in handling resources, astute in business and finances and commanded not to go into personal debt. As John Wesley, the founder of Methodism used to say, "Make all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can."

Blessing always brings great responsibility towards those who suffer and towards those who go! How to handle blessing is another whole subject but basically the New Testament recognized two main areas for receiving and giving offerings. One was for the poor and the other was to send apostolic teams to serve in new areas. But if we make blessing the goal, then it is a short step to making pleasure, security, comfort and absence of risk the goal as well.

One reason Jesus makes the danger clear, right up front, is to persecution proof His disciples and put responding out of creative love and forgiveness deep into their DNA. These are first things!

Yet even in the comparative safety of the west, when folks have come to Jesus, we tend to ask them to cut off all their old relationships out of fear that their old friends would drag them back. There is no boldness even in the face of normal temptation. We forget, "Greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world." (1 John 4:4). We make these new converts huddle with us in fear of the world and then become proselytes who look like us, talk like us and walk as we walk. They became a part of the Christian subculture or ghetto and then, when asked to go and win their old friends to Jesus, they realize that they have no old friends. Those relationships are all broken.

We respond out of fear of the world around us and then wonder why we have so little influence on that world. We make safety, security and comfort the goal and then wonder why we live in fear. When we make blessing, especially financial blessing primary, we lose the treasures of faith, love and relationships. We have well developed theologies (heresies?) of blessing but very weak theologies of persecution and

suffering. Paul cites a list of his sufferings (II Corinthians 11:23- 33) as proof of his being a “minister of Christ” and concludes (II Corinthians 12:11) that he will “take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak then I am strong.” We need many more who can cite sufferings as proof of their ministries!

One distressing feature of most traditional church communities of all levels of orthodoxy is that the majority of young people leave the practice of their faith as they become adults. Might this be due to the fact that we were not made to be consumers of safe religious experiences and passive observers of religious practices no matter how contemporary the worship or how interesting the messages?

We were created for the adventure of faith and love. We were made to live on the edge between the kingdoms and bridge the gap so that many can also enter into this adventure of walking with God. God is not safe. God is not nice. He is love but His love is wild, unpredictable and described as consuming fire, mighty waters and rushing mighty winds.

Our natures were made for Him. We were not made for theological correctness and comforting rituals. We were made for risk and relationship.

Our young people see little reality in church as we know it. They see a lot of behavior modification, self help talks, rules and regulations and outward conformity. They know what to do in the community to be accepted, promoted and safe but little of the adventure of the born again who are like the wind “which blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.” (John 3:8).

Walking with Jesus was never meant to be safe. It was meant to be risky. It was meant to be dangerous. That is what Jesus promised,

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

To seek suffering is spiritual sickness. To be prepared for whatever comes from following Jesus, even suffering, is spiritual health. Some portions of the church suffer most from antagonistic governments. Some suffer from the hatred of violent religious movements. Some suffer from portions of the church who attack any who do not ascribe to their doctrines, practices or particular lifestyle. Paul spoke of these various sufferings in II Corinthians 11:26- “perils of my own country men... perils of the Gentiles.... perils of false brethren”.

Walking with Jesus will bring us to the place where we are tested and come to know that He alone is our friend, shield, protector, Lord and life.

FAQ**1/ Why talk so much about the danger of following Jesus? Does that not just drive people away?**

Jesus in Luke 14:26- 33 declared that we cannot become his disciples without counting the cost of total surrender. He put the cost up front. We try to hide the cost and emphasize the benefits! It is a truism that what you win people with is what you win them to. Jesus wants to win us to sacrificial service to the least, to the risk of faith and love and to an attitude of leaving all to follow Him. Thus He seeks to win us with a call of absolute surrender to Him for Himself alone. He seeks to win us with Himself alone and with the call to live as He lived.

If we win men to identify with Jesus through an appeal to their selfish, pleasure seeking nature, we must continue to entertain and meet the felt needs of that nature. When some carnal expectation fails, they leave and say that Christianity does not work.

One cannot entertain consumers into becoming disciples. The call to lay our lives down must be first. However a famous quote puts it this way, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found to be difficult and not tried."

The point the quote misses, of course, is that it does not work in our own strength but only by grace through absolute surrender.

2/ So you do not believe that the New Covenant is a covenant of material blessing?

No. The New Covenant is not a covenant of material blessing. It is a Covenant of Glory which says that when we give our lives to Jesus, He will bring Glory to God through our lives no matter what we go through. The miracle of the cross will work to transform even our suffering into His Glory.

The Old Covenant was a covenant of temporal blessing and it still applies in general to families, societies and nations. Sin and selfishness bring sickness, fear, alienation, loneliness, poverty and destruction while "righteousness exalts a nation". Nations are not blessed because of capitalism or democracy but because of the degree to which the general society follows the Ten Commandments.

The New Covenant is a better covenant since under this covenant God comes to live IN His people and not just AMONG His people. His people become His temple. And the glory of this temple is to bring glory to God no matter what we walk through.

Chapter Four MONEY BAGS, KNAPSACKS, SANDALS AND GREETINGS

*“Carry neither money bag, knapsack nor sandals and greet no one along the road”
Luke 10:4*

A/ MONEY BAGS AND MISSION

As we read down the passage, we find Jesus instructing His disciples to find a person of peace, enter their home and eat and drink with them. His instruction is that they would stay with that person and serve them in their home. If we do that and especially if we begin the journey without money, we are dependent upon that person for our daily living. Thus the money bag, while literally true, also becomes a metaphor for power in relation to the other and how we handle differences in power.¹²

If we take our money with us, we have the power to create a little island of our own preference in the middle of any culture and that is exactly what western missionaries have done all around the world. You can go to any nation and find a nice compound of western comfort behind strong high walls. Inside that compound will be homes, a day school, a church and maybe a medical clinic, orphanage and Bible school. People have sacrificed finances, time and much energy to create these centers where the western person feels comfortable, powerful and in control.

Mission is then defined as the task of getting as many individuals as possible from the surrounding culture to come into your space to be educated and trained, ostensibly to be the leaders in that culture. However, if the surrounding culture is Hindu, Buddhist or Islamic, the most rebellious thing a member of that culture can do is to become a Christian. Thus this attraction/extraction model tends to draw those young people who are rejecting their culture. Inside the mission compound they change their names to a “Christian” name, change their dress and train to function inside that cultural island. As Marshal McLuhan is famous for saying, “the medium is the message” and as these young men and women go through their training they become convinced that the only way they can be a leader is to operate from the centre of such a compound, wearing a suit coat, speaking from a podium or ruling from behind a desk purchased with foreign

¹² *We will use money bags, knapsacks and sandals as metaphors for power, culture and ways of doing things. I do not believe that this does violence to the text or intentions of Jesus but rather experience has shown how appropriate these metaphors are!*

money while being sponsored by more of that foreign money.

The problem increases since creating such a centre is expensive and thus relatively few of them can be built. They are also vulnerable to being destroyed and to become the focus of any anti-Christian and/or anti-western sentiment in that culture.

Plus administrating and managing such a centre with large budgets, differing professional services and constant maintenance generally requires western expertise and finances if it is to be run the way the western donors want it to be run. The stated goal may be that the “nationals” will be given the oversight at a time when they are “ready” but that day never seems to come. The golden rule being, “He that has the gold makes the rules”!

Another reality is that complicated dies. Such a centre simply cannot be maintained without outside support. Simplicity multiplies. The principle enunciated here by Jesus is that only what can be multiplied and maintained in the local culture is acceptable to express His Kingdom.

The complicated, foreign, and dependent of the Chinese church was destroyed by Mao. What was simple and carried in the heart, multiplied.

But perhaps the most pressing problem is that individuals so educated are rejected by their family, friends and culture and thus have very little influence on their culture. All the money spent has not brought influence in the culture but rather rejection by that culture. We have accomplished the exact opposite of what we set out to accomplish.

B/ KNAPSACKS AND CULTURE

I trust that Jesus had nothing against knapsacks especially since I carry one most of the time. The knapsack, suitcase, Land Rover or cargo ship is a means of bringing along all of our stuff. The knapsack is a metaphor for all of our cultural baggage- our likes, dislikes, preferences, dress, mannerisms, musical tastes, social mores, marriage customs, foods, etc., etc. The knapsack relates directly to the money bag because if we have enough money we can recreate our culture where ever we are. And that is exactly what western missionaries have done all around the world. This creates a deadly confusion in the hearts and minds of the people with whom we are seeking to share Jesus. What is the Kingdom and what is our culture? Often the answer seems to be that the two are the same! Often elements in a culture that hate things western (and there is much of western culture which Jesus also hates) also reject Jesus because western missionaries have mixed Jesus and western culture so completely that in many minds they are identical.

Early western missionaries were notorious for teaching people with perfectly good languages and wonderful musical traditions to sing hymns in Dutch or German or English. We may cringe at such cultural arrogance but are we really free of it?

We still want people to come to us. When we draw people to us, into our space, into our culture, where we are comfortable and in control we tend to do something which Jesus expressly forbade us to do and that is to make proselytes (Matthew 23:15).

A proselyte is someone who looks like us, talks like us, prays like us and generally keeps all the rules and regulations written and unwritten of our religious community. The focus is upon the outward appearance and public performance. Our church cultures are full of people who tend to look the same, pray and worship the same and abide by the same rules of public behavior. There may be some communities where fancy dress is the norm or some where it is a sin to wear make up or some where you must be casual to be accepted. Outward conformity may be rewarded by public acceptance and approval but underneath the surface there is often competition for position, desire for prominence, jealousy, gossip and secret sin.

Eugene Peterson speaks of these dynamics in his translation of Galatians 4:17, *“Those heretical teachers go to great lengths to flatter you, but their motives are rotten. They want to shut you out of the free world of God’s grace so that you will always*

depend on them for approval and direction, making them feel important."¹³

It is almost a law that strong outward conformity to legalistic codes of behavior, high performance expectations and strenuous public religious activity become a cover for secret sin. We either live by grace or addiction!

The dynamic may look like this. Someone was addicted to substances and/or a dangerous life style. They began by doing anything to be accepted by a certain crowd. The crazier or the more dangerous the behavior, the more admiration and acceptance given by their peers. Over time they may become tired of that life style and seek to change. They may have a genuine conversion experience and completely change their life style. But if that need for acceptance is not met in the Father, they are easily manipulated and easily get on a performance treadmill of religious activity and outward conformity. They will change their dress. They will give their money. They will attend every meeting. They love the acceptance and the approval that they receive for their faithful, committed behavior. However, after a time they will feel used. They will react in hurt and bitterness and may even return to old addictions. They changed one addiction for another. They exchanged gang activity for religious activity. They never learned to live by grace and the free love of God.

A strong desire for acceptance and approval from figures seen to be authoritative and spiritual and a strong desire to become known as spiritual in that community can give tremendous energy to drive behavioral change and outward conformity. This is the making of a proselyte who adopts a whole knapsack of outward behaviors but whose heart has never been consumed by Jesus.

The issue is heart transformation. Again, quoting Eugene Peterson but this time from his introduction to the book of Galatians, "*Through Jesus, Paul learned that God was not an impersonal force to be used to make people behave in certain prescribed ways, but a personal Savior who set us free to live a free life. God did not coerce us from without but set us free from within.*"¹⁴

All of the commands of Jesus, as condensed in the Sermon on the Mount, have to do with heart attitudes such as forgiveness towards those who have wronged us, making restitution towards those we have wronged and seeking God in secret rather than making a public show of our religious activity.

God is an honor and trust union of the Father, the Word and the Spirit. The basis of the universe is loving relationships not reason or law. Discipleship is not primarily about right doctrine since God is not a theological computer. He is love. His universe is

¹³ Eugene Peterson, *The Message*, Navpress, 1994

¹⁴ Ibid, *The Message*

relational. Discipleship is primarily about relationships from a free heart.

We do not go into the home of the man of peace with a knapsack of our personal cultural values but with a heart of love, respect and freedom. The Kingdom of God is within. That is all we are allowed to carry! That is all we are allowed to share. The goal is to make friends, not proselytes.

C/ SANDALS, METHODOLOGIES AND BRUCHKO¹⁵

So what does Jesus have against sandals? He was probably wearing a pair while he said this. I believe that in the Luke 10 context, sandals represent how we do things, how we walk out purpose and relationship with Jesus.

The story of Bruce Olson, pioneer missionary to the Metilone Indians (who named him Bruchko), a stone age tribe of Central America, is very inspiring. He literally walked into the bush with nothing and into one of their villages. He certainly had no money bag or knapsack. He lived among them as one of them and learned their language without any contact, supply, medicine or support of any kind from his American homeland. Several times he almost died from fever and was constantly battling parasites. Over the first couple of years he finally led one young man to faith in Jesus and began to believe that soon many others would follow.

However he became more and more frustrated with his first convert since he seemed to balk at any thought of sharing his faith with the rest of the community, constantly asserting that it was not yet his time. Olson could not understand why this new disciple refused to share anything with the others.

Since the culture of the tribe was oral, their history was passed on by each member memorizing their legends and reciting them at special recitation evenings as their turn came up in the rotation. Olson had listened to many of these recitations but did not get their significance until one day his convert told him that that evening was his turn to recite. His recitation that night included the account of a dream of one the elders from long ago about a light skinned man who would come to them and tell them the truth about God's Son from stacks of banana leaves. The convert recounted the dream, gave its interpretation and spoke of its fulfillment in Olson and the message of God's Son from the Bible. That night most of the tribe in the encampment became followers of Jesus.

Olson had left his money bag and knapsack behind but he still had his American sandals on. He wanted his convert to speak individually, privately to each person of the tribe. His convert could not understand that way of doing things. His world was oral and communal rather than private, print based and individual. In the oral world, the new

15 Bruce Olson, *Bruchko*, ISBN 9780884191339

flows out of the truth of the old and includes all. Moreover, his view of time was not western. He did not feel time pressure. He knew that his time to recite would come.

We all tend to ethnocentricity, which means to believe that how we think and how we do things is “normal” or “right” and how others do things is “unnatural” or “wrong”. Of course, we are not talking about the moral absolutes of love, truth telling, forgiveness, sexual purity and humility. The New Testament is clear about the relational absolutes of our relational God being the standard for free and pure hearts but how we express those heart realities and live them out can have huge variations according to the diversity of cultures which God, the ultimate artist, has created for the sheer joy and love of creating.

D/ THE CAMEL TRACKS STORY¹⁶

One south east Asian country had seen the normal missionary activity over the past hundred plus years as various denominations came into the country, built compounds, clinics, schools and Bible schools. They actively taught that those baptized needed to change their names from Arabic to Christian. They actively taught that they needed to change their dress so that they would not be identified with the local Muslim culture. The result of this was that the new converts had little influence on their culture as they worked, lived, married and raised their children within the westernized, Christian community. Their spiritual lives were centered around buildings and foreign professional ministers. The churches in the nation were divided along the denominational lines of the mission boards..... some would say a normal situation!

After one hundred years of work by several mission societies in that nation of 150+ million people the number of baptized believers stood at about 100,000.

About fifteen years ago, two young men from that culture came to Jesus and made some simple commitments. They would not change their names or their dress. They would not identify with the existing westernized Christian communities. They would seek to respect their culture and use elements of truth within it to bridge from their culture to Jesus.

They found that there were verses in the Koran which spoke about Jesus. The sura Al Imran (chapter 3, verses 42- 54) speaks of Jesus being born of a virgin, doing miracles, being righteous, coming from God and returning to God. Another verse instructs the faithful to read the Old and New Testaments before they read any other book. Their Muslim tradition spoke of four books that were necessary for faith, the Koran, the Hadethas, the Old Testament and the New. They found that by reading the Koran together and asking questions from these passages, men of peace came forward to ask more questions, to ask for New Testaments, to invite them to their homes and to ask to become followers of Jesus through baptism.

When asked what they thought about Mohammed, they quoted the Koran where Mohammed says he is only a seeker after truth and one who points to it. When asked about Jesus they pointed to the verse which spoke of Jesus returning to God. The

16 Kevin Greeson, *The Camel Training Manual*, www.churchplantingmovements.com

Koran declares that Jesus never died in contrast to Mohammed who did die. No further comment needed! They avoided controversy over what they thought and used the respect in the culture for the Koran and let the Koran speak.

Communities of disciples were formed in homes, tea shops, places of business and work. When some of the traditional believers were told of this movement they dismissed it as impossible. They said these new disciples would not keep their faith, that it was too difficult for them to live outside of the protection of the Christian community. Yes, there were many challenges but this movement is now over one million baptized believers and growing. When compared to the traditional movements, that is ten times the disciples in one tenth of the time!

This is a very different way of doing things than the missionaries who had sacrificed so much to pioneer the Kingdom in that nation. Yes, the denominational missionaries were committed, sacrificial and hard working but they carried their money bags, their knapsacks and they kept their sandals on. It is still almost impossible for some of these folks to believe that Jesus could work in that nation without their leadership and outside of their paradigm.

E/GREETINGS AND PURPOSES

Why should we not “greet anyone along the way”? It seems unfriendly and non relational. It seems counterproductive since we are in the business of meeting people and seeking the persons of peace.

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” Luke 10:1

These seventy were not to wander down the road into just any village but only where Jesus was about to go! Jesus had a strategic plan and they were to walk it out. Jesus was clear that He only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19) and only spoke what He heard the Father saying (John 12:49- 50). He ministered out of the depth of His relationship with His Father. He was not responding only to human need. Yes, whatever we do unto the least is done unto Jesus. Yes, Matthew 25 and Isaiah 58 are anchors and standards in all that we do but there were many in Israel that Jesus did not heal. There were many dead who were not raised up. There were many hungry who were not fed. Jesus walked through the reality of human need in step with His Father. There were many Samaritan villages which He did not enter but He did enter one as He fed Himself on the will of His Father (John 4:34).

Human need can be overwhelming and all consuming. If our response is based solely in need, we will burn out, become angry at all who do not see what we see and then angry at God for not giving more resources. We are not wandering down the road trying to meet every need. We are to know what God is saying, see what God is doing and walk with Him in that. This is not your world and this is not your church! This is the Father’s world and this is the church of Jesus Christ.

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds.” II Corinthians 3:9- 10

Paul knew that he was a laborer with God and that, as a wise master builder, he knew the limitations of what he was to do. He laid the foundations and let others build on it! It is God’s field and it is God’s building. You cannot do it all. Keep your focus on what you have been given grace to do and do that one thing well.

The centre is not human need and man's well being. That is humanism. The centre is God and His glory. That is following Jesus.

FAQ

1/ When believers walk in the culture as you describe is there not the danger of syncretism, the mixing of things from that culture and belief system with things of the New Testament?

Yes, that is always a danger. However, we are very good at seeing things from another culture which may not be righteous when mixed with the gospel of the Kingdom but very poor at seeing our own syncretism.

Some from the west may be disturbed if a Muslim background believer prays five times a day or keeps the Muslim fasts even if that believer is clearly praying to Jesus, looking unto Jesus in all things and risking his life to do so.

However, I am much more concerned about how western materialism, selfishness and greed have entered so many and made much of the church a prosperity cult.

I am much more concerned about how many have embraced the emphasis of our culture upon gifting, personality, celebrity and privilege and have turned whole sections of the church into personality cults. We have baptized greed as godly desire and selfish lifestyles as the blessing of God.

2/ If you do not take any money, how can you do works of mercy and help the poor? Is that not part of our task?

Yes, we raise funds for two basic purposes, which are to send apostolic teams to new areas and to help the poor. That is part of our task.

However, the question is how do we fulfill that task? What do you think is the best way to help orphans in a society of village farmers. Should you build western style institutions to western standards which require ongoing western funding and expertise to run or should you help local families and train them to take in orphans? In the western orphanage they would have hot showers and flush toilets while in the local homes there would be no indoor plumbing. What would be best?

The western style institution takes a lot of money and can help only a very few of the orphans in the population. It requires a lot of expertise and thus is difficult to multiply.

The locals cannot run it or multiply it as a means of caring for the orphans in their villages and towns. It is too complicated and takes resources they do not have. Such institutions enforce the poverty, inability and dependency of the local people. They create resentment. They also create children who cannot live in their local communities; who now want western lifestyles and opportunities.

What if we help the local families care for their own children and orphans in their own homes? What does that look like? It might look exactly like what some friends are doing in Kenya when they helped a local family with gifts of bicycles so that they could earn money as “bicycle taxis” and take in twenty kids. The children live like any child in that culture and the model is simple and multipliable in the culture. That model gives some hope of actually providing homes for all of the orphans since it can be multiplied with local resources. This model empowers, releases creativity, initiative and creates independence.

We could never build or staff enough western style orphanages to meet the need, so why do we keep doing such finance and expertise intensive projects? They make us look good. They make us feel powerful. And yes, these dynamics are changing but there is still a long ways to go in many areas. We need to think local, simple, multipliable, creative, sustainable and empowering.

3/ What about needs that you cannot meet?

Do you trust that God sees needs even more deeply than you do? Do you pray for laborers for that field? Do you pray for multiplication of limited resources? Do you pray for creative new ideas to solve old problems? Do you look for strategic partnerships with those who have different callings, gifts and resources? Do you open doors for them? Or do you limit God to what you can do?

Brazil has a large problem with street children. These kids do drugs, sniff glue and steal in order to live. In some instances the local police have been known to shoot them like stray dogs. We have friends who are creating homes for these orphans by building houses where 10 or 12 children can live with an adopting mother and father. Their homes are wonderful but thousands of kids remain on the streets. An association of churches in Brazil has asked the government to do something about the street children. Is it really the responsibility of the government? Our friend told us that if each of the leaders of evangelical churches in Brazil would adopt one child, there would be no children on the streets.

Are you confronted with needs you cannot meet? Take Mother Teresa’s advice, “Start with what is at your feet.” Do what you can do, do not focus on what you cannot do.

4/ How do you know where God is sending you? Jesus gave them specific cities where He was going. How are we to know where to go?

We are to listen and act. That is why the foundation of the church is the prophets and the apostles. We may have a lot of good ideas but do we listen? Do we recognize the language of dreams and visions like Peter in Acts 10 or Paul in Acts 16? Do we recognize the open doors of relationships and divine appointments like Paul in Acts 18:1- 3?

Do we listen to the long term desires of our hearts? What has God placed in you? What do you dream about, pray about, think about? What do you have faith and grace for? Are you willing to start right where you are?

Chapter Five YOUR PEACE AND THE MAN OF PEACE

“But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house’. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.” Luke 10:5-6

A/ PEACE BE WITH YOU!

The standard greeting across much of Muslim culture is “As-Salamu Alaykum!” which translates as “Peace be with you.” The response is “Wa-Alaykum As-Salaam”, “And peace be with you.” This is exactly what Jesus is saying. He is an eastern man in an eastern culture.

Do you know you are an ambassador of the Kingdom carrying the presence of the King wherever you go? Do you know your authority as an ambassador to minister the peace of the Kingdom? Do you minister a peace that will rest on the house? Do you go into new situations with fear or peace?

Do those that do not yet know Jesus feel that you accept them and bring peace rather than condemnation and superiority? Our Master was called “the friend of sinners”. Have we earned the same name? Prostitutes sought him out because they knew His intentions towards them were righteous and that He accepted them. Tax collectors were comfortable with Him because they knew He did not condemn them.

The first priority is to minister peace. Sometimes we almost delight in confrontation, alienation and generating rejection since this allows us to say we tried to share but they rejected us. The religious spirit takes pride in persecution and confrontation about words. Maybe they are rejecting our methods and not Jesus? The first task is to minister peace. The Truth carries you. You do not have to carry the Truth! Relax in His arms. Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life came as a friend who desired to serve. You are not the defender of the Truth- the Truth defends you. Peace be with you!

B/ FINDING THE SON OF PEACE

This person is called “the son of peace” because they are a seeker. God has been working in their hearts and we are to discover where God is at work. We are to discover where Jesus is about to come. How do we find such a person?

The brothers who pioneered the Camel Tracks would sometimes go into a mosque and ask to read the Koran with the men there. They would read from the Sura “The Woman” and begin to ask questions about its meaning. Their questions were designed to generate more questions. Questions that often led to questions about Jesus and about the “Ningel”, the New Testament. Sometimes they would be asked back for another conversation. Sometimes one man would follow them out and ask them to come to his home and bring him a New Testament. They might have several conversations with him and then be invited back again only to arrive and find the house full of close family and friends and to be instructed, “Now tell them everything you have told me.”

Visions and dreams are so common amongst Muslim seekers¹⁷ that one way of starting a conversation is to simply ask if they have had any dreams or visions. If that person has had a vision of Jesus, they may be very surprised at the question. They will be even more surprised if you ask them if the vision was of a man in shining clothes to whom they felt strangely drawn.

When you do find a son of peace, your peace will rest on the house. If not, your peace will return to you as you go your way. This anointing, this presence of the Holy Spirit, this peace is powerful and a large part of the testimony you carry. When you do find a son of peace, he will recognize the peace you minister and that will be a large part of him opening his heart and home to you. Yes, there are some people skills involved and yes, we need to be wise but this does not work because of people skills and training. It works because God is working in them and through you and Jesus calls this dynamic a dynamic of peace. What a powerful work of God to bring peace in hearts where there would naturally be division or even hatred.

A person of peace may be the first convert in a village or social group. Their testimony may be dramatic and open that village or group to receive Jesus. This is what

17 Jim Rutz, *Mega Shift*, Colorado Springs, Colorado, Empowerment Press, 2005, page 79

happened with the woman at the well in John 4 and the demoniac in Mark 5:19.

A person of peace may be the one with the most influence in their social context. There are many testimonies coming out of north Africa of Muslim leaders becoming followers of Jesus and then leading their mosque to become followers of Jesus as well.

This influential person of peace is part of the story of Peter and the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 as well as in the story of Paul and Silas and the conversion of the Philippian jailer. In both of these cases “he and all his family were baptized”.

The person of peace may be the first convert but your goal should be to see the whole family baptized at one time. We are often too quick to baptize and thus separate one family member from the others. You would be better to seek an exploratory bible study with the whole family and to lead them all to become followers of Jesus and baptize them as a group. Thus the baptism celebration is also the celebration of the planting of the church.

FAQ

What About the Man of Peace in Urban and Western Culture?

We have had several conversations about finding a person of peace in urban or western cultures. The context of Luke 10 is clearly eastern and rural where three generations and families of several siblings plus servants could make up a household of twenty to forty members. To live among them and teach the person of peace to become the pastor/elder of their family and friends and to see that multiply through family patterns is what is happening right now through many third world cultures. These patterns are fueling rapidly multiplying church planting movements.

How do we apply these principles from Luke 10 in the western or urban world where individualism and fragmentation is the norm and extended family relationships are not?

Does the teaching of Jesus in Luke 10 extend across all cultural boundaries? Of course- this is Jesus we are talking about! In the west the “families”, the people that we spend the most time with, tend to be various sorts of interest groups. The problem is not with the harvest. Still waiting for the harvest to come to you? Remember Jesus never said they would! He commanded us to pray for laborers who would go. He will you send you out as the answer to your own prayers. Some contemporary western examples....

The team leader of a multifaceted ministry in England joined the local cricket club and got involved in all aspects of the club. The result? Several club members have been baptized as followers of Jesus.

A friend in Germany heard clear instruction to go to her local pub. “Lord, I have never gone to a pub in my life and why now?” She went and was led to join a table of several ladies who were esoteric spiritualist seekers gathered for their weekly talk. They accepted her into their conversation. After a few weeks of listening and softly answering a few questions they invited her to take a whole evening and share about her relationship with Jesus. She did so in that very interesting house of peace. The follow up was a BBQ with the husbands and they found out that one of the husbands had been reading the Bible and wondered “If anyone could help me understand it?”

Another German friend began to hang out in a local park with the homeless, punks and other people on the edges. The result? Several baptized followers of Jesus and a community of Jesus in the park. One man has a story of horrific childhood abuse and had been living on the street for 15 years.

Want to be a pastor? Why not become the pastor (well, coach/trainer) of your son’s sport team? A close friend did that and met a dad that he felt drawn towards. At a certain point that dad stopped showing up at his son’s practices and games. My friend kept calling but the dad never picked up until just before Christmas. He picked up and began to talk about being in total despair and on his way to commit suicide. That was the first of many talks and now this dad and his wife have become followers of Jesus.

We met Peter in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, who is pioneering a ministry there. He advertised hang gliding lessons with the equipment supplied for free. Young guys love adventure and want to do that stuff there just as much as anywhere but they have few resources and fewer opportunities. Peter is creating his own hang gliding house of peace amongst the young men.

In New York city there is a movement in the Spanish speaking culture which flows through what they call “contact groups”. Individuals who are excited about Jesus invite friends, family and business colleagues to their homes or to a restaurant where there is food, a movie, conversation and prayer for the sick. As folks come to Jesus the contact groups can become house churches and new contact groups are formed.

One of the best introductions to simple church planting in urban settings is Neil Cole's *Organic Church: Growing Church Where Life Happens*, Wiley Press, 2005.

In urban and western settings the house of peace tends to be a social or interest group. These groups can vary from affluent business men to recent immigrants. The Holy Spirit is the most creative person in the universe- why does much of the church seem so uncreative? Ask Him. Dream with Him. Walk out the adventure of faith and love with Him.

Find your person of peace.
Your destiny is where your harvest is.
Your harvest is where your destiny is!

Chapter 6 MANDATED EATING AND DRINKING

“And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.” Luke 10:6- 7

A/ RELATIONAL INTEGRITY AND MULTIPLICATION

Once you find your house of peace- stay there. Or as Peterson says in the Message, “Do not move from house to house looking for the best cook in town.” Once you find a house of peace, honor that house. Demonstrate relational integrity, faithfulness and friendship. If God has led you there, stick out any misunderstandings and difficulties and stay there. Work it out.

The command to remain links with the command of Jesus to make disciples, to train all to obey the things that Jesus commanded. We are not counting decision cards. Your house of peace connection is not a one time event. This is the long term! Stay in relational connection and do not leave them until the job of discipleship is done and then you still continue as friends. You teach them to be the pastor of their family and friends in their own house. A new friend may be comfortable coming to your house but their family and friends will not. You do not want to gather to yourself. You want to go to new houses and teach your man of peace to do the same. You want multiplication. By yourself you can only see growth by addition but when your disciples do the same, you start to see multiplication.

By the fourth generation it is out of control but the key is to multiply quality relationships. Jesus had twelve disciples and stuck with them for three years. He kept sending the crowds away, especially when they wanted to make Him king. He poured His life into the twelve. He did not add to the twelve since He did not want to dilute the quality of the relationships which He shared with them.

I have heard many testimonies of the intimate, joyful friendship enjoyed by folks as they started a church in someone’s home. They grew and soon felt they needed a building and as they grew they lost the quality of those first relationships. Instead of friendships, came programs and as they became successful numerically, they lost their first love.

This is the result of growth by addition.

Jesus did not dilute the quality of relationships by allowing others into the group of twelve. You can easily imagine that others wanted to join but He did not let them. If each of the twelve had then had their own groups of disciples those groups could enjoy the same quality of relationships. The growth is through multiplication and through releasing new generations of disciples. This is not some top down multi level marketing program but the natural expression of healthy relational life.

This work is long term, low key and relational. This is not event, hyped and performance. Events and programs do not produce disciples. Only disciples produce disciples.

B/ EATING, DRINKING AND ACCEPTANCE OR BELONGING, BEHAVIOR AND BELIEF

We have found every culture to be the same in one way. When you eat with new friends they are always anxious to know if you enjoy the food. Why? If you enjoy the food, you show acceptance and enjoyment of their culture, of their likes and dislikes, of their gifts to you and, ultimately, of them.

This command to eat and drink “such things as they give” is a very shocking command in a conservative Jewish culture which forbade the eating of many things as “unclean”. Eat whatever is set before you? This was a cultural divide that Peter needed a very strong dream repeated three times to understand and get over. Because of that dream he was ready to eat unclean food with unclean Gentiles in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 and then defend that decision before the other apostles in Acts 11.

Notice the order in Luke 10 7- 9... We are to eat, serve and then declare the Kingdom. Eating together shows acceptance but in the culture of that day it was even stronger. To break bread with another meant that you were committing to be their friend for life. Jesus repeats the eating commandment twice. Then we are to serve and then we are to declare “the Kingdom of God has come near to you.”

Let us put that another way, first belonging: friendship and community then secondly, behavior: serving, meeting needs and lastly belief: truth and the communication of the Kingdom- belonging, behavior and belief. Most of the traditional evangelical community has reversed those three things. We have tended to demand that people first agree with our version of truth, believe the same way that we do and then behave like we do and if they do so, then we will accept them- they can belong. Our acceptance is the reward we give to others for believing as we do and imitating our behavior.

Jesus did not do that. He went to Zacchaeus’ house (Luke 19) and because of this counter cultural acceptance and friendship, Zacchaeus received conviction and grace to change his behavior.

The first requirement to be a good apostle is not long academic training but someone who is able to enjoy all kinds of people and who is able to eat and drink with them! How is your training program?

C/ BEING WORTHY OF WAGES AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY ISSUES

Talking about money within a single culture, economic group and language is difficult enough but when you add cultural, economic and language differences, you have a real problem. When we seek to build cross cultural relationships no single issue has created as many problems as the handling of finances.

Jesus gives us insight into how to avoid these problems. He says that as the sent one, you depend upon the hospitality of the house of peace. You, as the laborer, are worthy of your wages. This is all about responsibility and if one does not accept responsibility right from the beginning they probably never will.

When someone with more resources comes to someone with less, it often happens that those with lesser become dependent upon those with more. Dependency destroys integrity, personal honor and self respect. We are not to create dependent relationships. In John 15, Jesus looked at His twelve disciples and called them friends. We do not want to work with or be slaves. We do not want to be projects. We want to be friends and be treated as friends.

However, friends do not want to be a burden or take food from another's children. Yet friends sacrifice for each other and such sacrifice is an honor in every culture. One test of the house of peace is the test of hospitality- will they be a person of peace? Will they take responsibility to care for the sent one and for their own family and friends. Are they giving people?

Jesus is very clear that daily provision is the only responsibility of the house of peace to the sent one. This is in contrast to religion which always oppresses the masses and takes from them. Religion builds its temples and gives offices, cars, houses and lands to its priests. Whether the people are rich or poor they are oppressed for money and told they will be cursed if they do not give and blessed if they do. The Old Roman Church sold indulgences for blessing in the next life while we moderns sell blessings in this life. Religion always has blessing for sale! Religion always has guilt and curse for those who do not buy the blessings on offer. Religion keeps people in poverty. By this standard much of what is called the church of Jesus Christ has turned into a money cult no different than any other religion.

Jesus told His disciples that they had freely received and thus should freely give. The Kingdom of God is freely given and freely received. What we win them with is what we win them to. Win them with Kingdom? They will live in the Kingdom. Win them with rice? They will want more and more rice. If you view people as a source of finance and manipulate them for money, you disqualify yourself as a minister of the Kingdom.

But money is a big issue! And yes, we often feel limited by lack of resources. However, the growth of a movement is not dependent upon money. All movements start with faith, passion, vision, sacrifice and little money. It is not money which motivates. Passion, faith and vision motivate. It is the heart of God burning in your heart which motivates!

When movements fail it is not for lack of finances. Many mature movements have lands, wealth and buildings but they fail for lack of vision, faith, integrity and passion. They have stopped being movements and have become monuments to past glory. God is not looking at what you have in your hands so much as what you have in your heart. Resources flow to vision and faith.

One person says they cannot go because they do not have a car. Another goes on the public transport and uses that time to talk with other passengers and finds people of peace on the bus. Another has no money for a car or for public transport and so walks and by walking finds time to pray and meets another walker who is hungry for Jesus. Our limitations create opportunity for God's interventions.

If you are waiting for more money before you will obey, you will never obey. God is not impressed by what you say you would do if you had abundant resources. He is waiting to see what you will do with what you have now.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men." Romans 14:17- 18

When Jesus issued the commandment to make disciples He commanded us to do something for which every culture has exactly the same amount of resource- time. To make a disciple involves the investment of time in that individual to lead them to a pure heart, to teach them to depend upon Jesus who lives within them and to teach them to multiply that time invested into others. The only resource needed is time. We all have the same amount of time and how we spend that most precious resource shows what our hearts truly value.

But how can you travel without finance? Travel without finance is difficult but reaching another village or country is not fully dependent upon finances. If you make a disciple of the person across the street and they do the same with a family member in the next

town and they do the same pretty soon you may have disciples in the next country! The primary resource needed is time! Relationships multiplied will cross all boundaries and limitations.

If you are speaking in a large venue to a large crowd of people, who is the most important person in the room? You are. You are the speaker. In every culture, such a person feels honor, importance and may even become famous for their public ministry. Jesus was the best at drawing a crowd of anyone who ever lived and yet we read that He sent the crowds away (Matthew 14:22, 15:39, Mark 6:45, 8:9). In John He spoke so straight about the cost of following Him that many of His disciples “walked with Him no more” (John 6:66). Jesus knew that success was not in the crowds. One day they wanted to make Him king and the next day wanted to kill Him. What men give to you, men can take away from you.

In contrast, if you are speaking to one man in his home, who is the most important person in the room? The one in front of you. You are the guest, you are the servant. Relational discipleship is about each person knowing that God loves them enough to send His son or daughter to them. God loves each person so much that He does not send just a message or a book or a TV program but a son or a daughter.

Jesus focused His life on the twelve. The message of that focus is that each one of them mattered to God. That is the message carried into the heart as we go and invest in the one and the few. That is one of the primary messages of discipleship the Jesus way- you matter to God! God desires fellowship and friendship with you. And the primary way you communicate that message is that you invest time in relationships with people. To do this is simply to be imitators of Jesus.

The other key factor is that if people come to your home and you care for them, they will become dependent upon you. Plus, while they may come to you, their family and friends may not. Thus growth stops at that one generation. As you go to their home, it is where their family and friends feel comfortable to come. As the person of peace takes the responsibility for hospitality so they will take responsibility for their family and friends and multiply the next generation of Jesus Christ. That we go to the house of peace is the genius of Jesus to avoid the creation of dependency and release responsibility for new generations of disciples.

FAQ

1/ So do I hear you speaking against mass media ministries?

Yes, you do! Jesus spoke face to face to twelve men and asked us to follow Him and do as He did. He sent the crowds away. Why do we think we have a better way?

Some of the largest crusades in history have taken place in Africa with up to a million

decisions in one crusade. Nigeria has had many of these large crusades and now has some of the largest churches in the world. In the south of the nation 80% of the population would claim to be Christian and yet Nigeria remains one of the most corrupt societies on the planet. Rwanda prior to the genocide could claim to be 90% Christian and yet believers who attended the same churches hacked each other to death with machetes. Many have signed decision cards but few have been trained to obey all that Jesus commanded.

The huge numbers at the crusades make the evangelist look good and enable him to raise enormous sums of money but the fruit is disaster. Why? We are not doing what Jesus asked us to do. In fact the massive numbers, the large platforms and the huge amounts of money involved may be one of the only messages received- ministry is about position, power, money and numbers. Position, power, wealth and numbers characterize much of the African church but integrity and righteousness do not. To believe it is all about money and power also seems to mean that any means to that end are justified. BBC¹⁸ carried an item which spoke of how Nigerian political and business leaders are contributing millions to build some of the largest church buildings in the world. They are giving a tithe of what they have stolen through corruption so that the other ninety percent will be blessed!

It sounds so good to talk of being in thousands of homes via television but if that was so good why did Jesus ask us to make disciples and then show us how by His relationship with the twelve? Christianity is not just information about Jesus. Christianity is Jesus living in you walking with a few. The Incarnation of Jesus is to continue through us to the world. Mass media create movie star ministers and movie star life styles. Media makes ministry into performance. Jesus modeled ministry as relationships that multiply through the culture.

Media ministry is two dimensional- performance and money, talk and take. The ministry of Jesus is three dimensional- personal presence, integrity of character and relationships of love and truthfulness (with no demand for money!).

2/ Do you want to keep people poor?

No! Although it is a truism that the more money which flows into a mission from outside, the fewer and fewer results from that mission. Why is this? It is not because second and third world people are worse at handling money than westerners.

It may be that as a mission matures more funds go into expensive institutions like schools and hospitals. However, I believe that the basic reason is that the more money

18 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8219131.stm>

that comes from outside, the more outsiders think they have the right to control what those receiving the money are doing. When an outsider is controlling the decision making process it kills faith, responsibility and initiative which are only nice ways of saying that the outside control prevents Jesus from building His church through the local believers.

The solution to this problem is not “keeping people poor”. The answer is a living faith in Jesus as the source of all things and a living faith in the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of sacrifice, creativity and multiplication. The solution is to empower friends to create and steward their own resources. This may involve micro finance and business training. The poor in the third worlds are not poor because they are lazy. They work very hard. The main reason is systemic corruption which denies them the just return on their labour.

In the past we have tried to partner with western friends whom we thought shared our vision and values. However, when we came to a conflict their pressure on me was, “Why can you not simply tell them (the team in Central Asia) what to do?” Their belief was that, since I was financially supporting the team (primarily for travel and acts of mercy), I should be able to tell them what to do and they would have to do it under threat of losing that support.

My response was that I could not do that since I did not work with slaves or subordinates but with partners and friends. My friends in Central Asia have to make the decisions that they will have to live with. We agree on the vision- that is our discipline. We agree on the strategy- if it does not fit the vision, we do not do it. We are committed to each other as friends and partners. My responsibility is to give counsel, wise or foolish but in the end, they have to walk as they feel Jesus is asking them to walk. That has meant that I have supported decisions that I felt were not wise. However, in most of those cases experience proved that my friends did the wise thing. It has also meant that I have supported decisions that proved to be very unwise and we have worked through the consequences together.

Friendship and partnership are much more important than protecting yourself from some suffering if the price of that protection is command and control.

Chapter 7 DEMONSTRATION AND DECLARATION OF THE KINGDOM

*“And heal the sick there and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you.’”
Luke 10:9*

“Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you”. Luke 10:19

A/ HEAL THE SICK AND DEMONSTRATE THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

So much of the Christian world is made up of words... books, TV, radio, CD, DVD and in some ways that is appropriate since we are communicators of good news. We are to “Sanctify the Lord God in our hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear;” (I Peter 3:15). We are to study, understand and be ready to testify about the Lord sanctified in our hearts! However, Paul declares to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 4:20) “For the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” That quote is in the context of his moral authority to persuade but it points to a huge problem. We cannot convince people of the reality of the Kingdom by words alone and Jesus did not expect us to do so.

He commanded us to heal the sick and only declare the Kingdom when we had first demonstrated its power and presence. This demonstration was to take place in the home of the person of peace. It was not to take place in a special crusade with a special evangelist while a choir was singing and creating the right atmosphere.

The anointing is not dependent upon the feeling created by professional musicians singing for an hour. The anointing does not come down. Can you imagine Jesus refusing to pray for people until Peter had led an hour of worship and had declared to the crowd that the Holy Spirit had come?

The anointing is the expression of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and resting on you. We need to read Luke 4:18- 21 again! We are no longer in the old Covenant where the anointing came and went over special people.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The anointing does not come to go. He comes to stay. We are the habitation of God, not a visiting place.

The problem with words is that anybody can talk nice, sound spiritual and even quote scripture but they may be speaking out of the top of their head. You can fake it with words and you can manipulate crowds with emotional, dynamic presentations. The challenge of praying with one or two sick or demonized people in a room and no crowd dynamics, is that you cannot fake it. They do not yet know Jesus. They do not know you. They either get healed and delivered or they do not. You either know Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit or you do not.

This is not about how much scripture you quote, how spiritual you sound when you pray or how loud you shout. (You would feel pretty silly shouting and jumping around in someone's kitchen anyway!) People only get healed because of our humble dependence upon the indwelling Holy Spirit and simple faith in His ability to love and heal them.

Human need puts us naked before God. Do we carry the Kingdom or not? Can we demonstrate the Kingdom or not? Do we love people or not? Is the Holy Spirit truly living within us or not?

Healing the sick also means to simply serve people in practical ways. The old saying is, "People do not care what you believe until they believe how much you care." Some time ago a friend began hanging out in what was called "The Drug Park" with the street people, addicts and homeless there. He drove them around, gave them small gifts of cash and generally let them use him. Yes, they spent most of the money on cigarettes, drugs and booze. Yes, he knew he probably drove them to get cigarettes, drugs and booze but he served them. After a while the street people began to believe that he actually cared about them and began to ask him questions. In time "The Drug Park" became known as "The Prayer Meeting Park". Practical serving led to healing, deliverance, salvation and a church in the park.

It is a constant testimony across the world where simple church planting movements are multiplying that many of the new house churches begin with some act of the Holy Spirit in healing and deliverance. Often the person of peace is someone who has been healed or delivered or heads up a home where their child or spouse was healed. What you have convinced someone to believe in with your words another may be able to convince him out of with his words but when you have seen the love of God heal or deliver a loved one, you know what you have seen.

Some Christians, especially in the west, talk a lot about how the secular culture no longer believes in absolute truths or trusts any authority figures. They talk about how this humanistic culture only believes what they experience and only trusts what their

friends tell them. They call this a post modern mind set where experience is truth, emotion is proof and confirmation is the testimony and shared experience of friends. Many Christians despair of sharing about Jesus in such a culture of moral relativism.

True, this secular culture does not believe in absolute truth or want to listen to talks about truth from people presenting themselves as authorities. But there has never been a culture more open to the supernatural and to the demonstration of the Kingdom of God. However, there is a catch! They will not come to our meetings to see the demonstration. They think that what we do is hype and all about money and when you see the offering talks at big crusades and on TV they are right. That is all about money. Why should they trust us? We have to go to them, in their context, among their friends and simply do the Kingdom stuff where they can see it is real.

There has never been a generation to whom it is easier to demonstrate the Kingdom. But we have to obey Jesus and go to them. We have to do it among them, where they can learn to trust that it really is about people and friendships and not about money and power.

B/DECLARE AND MODEL THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

There have been many “apostolic restoration” movements since the 1970s and one common emphasis of them all was the restoration of the authority of the five fold ministry gifts with a strong focus on the ministry of the apostle as an authority over the church. Phrases such as “coming into alignment”, “recognition of divine order”, “submission to kingdom authority”, “coming into order”, serving upward”, “submission to delegated authority”, “spiritual covering”, “honoring authority”, “recognizing the man of God” and “spiritual fatherhood” all became common currency of those various movements. The mental picture driving this is the pyramid of political order, business organizations and the kingdom of darkness where honor and wealth flow up while command and control flow down. The authority, prestige and wealth of the person at the top is relative to how many are in the various levels of the hierarchy below.

It is common for these movements to talk about making disciples but in their context that means creating a slave- some one who must ask permission to do almost anything. The purpose of this discipleship is to enforce hierarchy. In the Kingdom of God the purpose of discipleship is to share hearts and lay down lives to create friends (John 15).

These “new” apostolic movements all promise freedom in the spirit and are often characterized by high volume contemporary worship, dancing, flag waving, free prophetic singing and prophetic utterance. One of their favorite scriptures is “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty” (II Corinthians 3:17). All good except that the freedom is between the four walls and only involves how you move your body during the meeting. The leadership structure is a strict hierarchical pyramid and if you deviate from what is considered submissive behavior in any way, you are considered unfit for leadership. A man who challenges anything is an Absalom and a woman who questions anything is a Jezebel.

Hierarchy may be the only way a large and complicated organization such as a government, the KGB, the Mafia or the kingdom of darkness can work since any one person can only be in one place at one time and thus must delegate authority and receive reports back up the chain of command. Some one has joked that organized religion and organized crime are much the same but that the Mafia has better restaurants. However, there is a lot of work being done in the business worlds on flat

structures and on the power of leaderless organizations.¹⁹

The body of Jesus Christ is a flat organization. He is not limited. He is omnipotent and omnipresent. He is in all places at all times. He sees all and knows all. He does not need reporting up any chain of command and He does not need to delegate any authority.

He never gave any man any authority over another. Yes, “over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19) but nowhere does He give any man or woman authority over another. As a matter of fact He expressly forbade any exercise of such authority- **“it shall not be so among you”!**

“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.’” Matthew 20:25- 28

You may ask but is the “apostle”²⁰ not the top of the ministry gifts? That is a perception problem and not based in the New Testament. In the world of that day, about one third of the population were slaves, another third were freed slaves and another third were slave owners. This was not chattel slavery such as existed in the United States or like what exists now in North Africa where Arab Muslims own black African slaves. Under the rules of the Roman Empire the slaves had to be well cared for, had to be released after a period of service, could be highly educated, could be highly trusted members of the household who managed the business affairs of their owners, educated their children and could buy their own freedom from their own earnings. Freed slaves often went back into slave status because they had better lives as slaves than as free men.

The word “apostle” simply means “sent one” but we have lost the significance of that meaning. The slave of lowest status was the “apostle”. Why? Journeys in that time were often dangerous and difficult. If you were on a diplomatic mission or carrying a great deal of wealth, you would travel with an armed escort to protect you from robbers. If you were carrying something of little value, you went off alone. The master would send his least valued servant to make the delivery. Unprotected, that “apostle” could be robbed, or abducted and sold as a slave. If you were of the least value to your master you were the apostle. Romans 1:1 has a much different sound in this light!

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of

19 “The Seven Day Weekend” by Ricardo Semler

“The Starfish and the Spider” by Ori Brafman & Rod Beckstrom

20 This section is a summary of *Apostles Slaves of Christ*, Dr. Brian Dodd, Appendix 1 of this Manual

God”.

The culture of the day would understand that Paul placed himself as the least of the slaves. But what has this got to do with the Kingdom of God?

Everything! The gospel of the Kingdom is supposed to be good news to all who hear it. And it is! The gospel of the Kingdom is that Jesus is your King, your Lord, your Master, your Head, your Glory and He lives in you and is your hope of Glory.

It is not good news to be told that, in order to be in the Kingdom of God, you must submit to me! To be told that any man is your spiritual head or covering is a denial of I Timothy 2:5

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.”

It is interesting that we are so clear on our individual salvation being only through Jesus and that Jesus is our individual Head. We reject Catholic and Orthodox dogma about the priest forgiving sin and quote I Timothy 2:5 to do so but when it comes to practical, corporate life in the Kingdom of God, we preach orthodox and catholic dogma about submission to human leadership. We are told that we can only function in the Kingdom if we are submitted to a human head. We are told that our relationship with Jesus as a corporate entity must be mediated through someone other than Jesus. When this happens Jesus becomes merely a figure head. However, Jesus is and always will be the true, functioning Head of His body.

Our teaching of personal Lordship and then corporate submission to human headship is schizophrenic. Is it any wonder that believers are so confused and so unfruitful?

It is also little wonder that a common “problem” the congregational leadership has with new converts is that they are “rebellious”, “independent” and need to learn to “submit to authority”.

The problem is that the new convert has encountered their King, the voice of the King is ringing in their heart, the Spirit of the King is moving in their being and they are on fire to walk with their new King who has filled them with His purposes and love for people. The congregation around them has become indoctrinated into the massive disobedience of a religious culture that only cares for itself and has little relationship or interest in the world around them and is going nowhere.

Too strong? I think not. Most congregational churches are about the same now as they were twenty years ago. However, during that whole time they have been declaring and praying for revival and prophesying that it will all happen soon. They kill the life of Jesus in the new convert and then hold revival meetings trying to bring the life back that

they have driven away.

It takes a lot of psychological force, emotional manipulation and behavioral conditioning to make the new convert conform to this religious system and accept as normal the lack of obedience of the rest of the congregation. The scriptures are abused and twisted to convince the new convert that these disobedient and spiritually cold but nice people are actually their elders in the faith! This is the process of making a proselyte rather than a follower of Jesus. This is the process of institutionalizing someone to the point that they have more loyalty to the institution than they do to Jesus.

This loyalty to leadership and institution becomes very akin to the loyalty demanded by the Mafia. You are loyal even when you know that what those above you are doing is wrong. You are loyal even when truth issues are violated. When loyalty demands are higher than truth demands you are no longer in the Kingdom of God. You are in a cult. You are in a criminal organization and often the religious leaders act like thugs when you confront them with truth issues!

What does this have to do with Luke 10? We are to declare that the Kingdom of God has come near after we demonstrate the Kingdom by healing the sick. What is the dynamic here? What happens quite naturally if someone's sick son, husband, daughter, wife or father is healed as you prayed? They would hold you in very high regard. You could easily use that dynamic to become a king. But what should your response be? Your response is to declare that the Kingdom of God is near. This is what Paul and Barnabas did in Acts 14:8- 18, "We also are men with the same nature as you." What does that mean? It means that your host can enter into the Kingdom if he chooses to do so and have the same power over sickness and demons that you do. You are only an "apostle" who is demonstrating the Kingdom so that your host can see it and enter into that Kingdom and know King Jesus for himself.

We demonstrate the Kingdom by expressing the authority of the King over the kingdom of darkness and we model the Kingdom by remaining as servants to all. We never become mediators between God and man. We never assume spiritual headship over another.

This is of particular sensitivity to those from Muslim cultures. Some are passionate seekers after truth and willing to die for what they understand that truth to be. Muslim actually means submitted to God. However, to be told that in order to enter the Kingdom of God, he must submit to a foreign religious culture, hierarchy or enter a foreign building is offensive in the extreme because he feels in all his spirit, and rightly so, that such submission is simply wrong.

We demonstrate the Kingdom of God in his home and in his culture. We are never the king but always the servant and our service is to demonstrate the Kingdom of God in

such a way that he can freely enter it through Jesus alone and live in it by submission to Jesus alone. Of course, this is true for any culture or people group.

C/ WHO IS IN CHARGE?

The first question in any human organization and in every congregational church is, "Who is in charge?" The organizing picture in our minds is the pyramid, the hierarchy and to make it in the organization you need to know how to fit into the power structure. The new apostolic movements tried to stop the inevitable conflicts about direction, vision and allocation of resources in the local church by asserting strong central authority and control. They said this was a "restoration" of what was in the early church but this was really the old papal system.

Take pope, cardinal, bishop, priest and substitute apostle, prophet, pastor, elder . This creates many little popes, a lot of slaves, a lot of problems and has nothing to do with the early church. Pyramids are for dead people. Pyramids are built by slaves! Why are so many still making bricks for Pharaoh?

But Luke 10 is painting a different picture. What was in the early church? When you go into another person's home you are always the guest, always the servant. You are never in charge. You do not start to tell them how to arrange their furniture, order their household or demand your favorite foods. Your job in demonstrating the Kingdom is to disciple your host to become the pastor/shepherd/ bishop/ elder (all used interchangeably in the New Testament- see Acts 20:17 & 28) of their family and friends. The natural authority, influence and expression of the Kingdom of God in the earth is through simple relational structures like family and friendship networks.

The sad reality of many traditional church systems is that they have become destructive of the authority of the home and the programs of the institution compete for family time and energy. One result of this is that the majority of the children raised in believer's homes leave the faith upon entering their young adult years.

When you declare the Kingdom you also declare that your new disciple is a member of the Kingdom of priests, a royal priest, a holy nation (Peter 2:1- 10), a son or daughter of the Heavenly Father (I John 3:1- 3), has access into the Holiest Place through the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19- 25, 12:22- 24), has the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide into all truth (John 16:13- 15 and I John 2:24- 27), has a new heart upon which God writes His laws (II Corinthians 3:3), has Jesus as their glory and Head (Colossians 1:18) and has

everything in Christ (Ephesians 1- 3 and I Corinthians 3:21- 23).

How does human leadership fit into this? The primary task of servant leadership is to demonstrate the Kingdom by demonstrating your trust and confidence in who they are in Christ and trusting God to lead them. Human leadership is about loving and releasing people unto the Lordship of Christ in all things.

“Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers of your joy; for by faith you stand.” II Corinthians 1:24.

Through out I and II Corinthians Paul is seeking to counsel and persuade the Corinthians to deal with their issues and bring discipline to a brother in sin. He does not write to the elders and command them to do this! He does not follow any protocol of delegated authority or chain of command. He writes to the whole church and pleads with the church to act according to what they know to be righteous since he loves them and has always served them at his own cost.

Leadership in the Kingdom of God is leading by example and giving counsel. Counsel deals with wise or foolish and leaves the final decision with those who will have to live with that decision. This is about leaving the children of God to face their responsibilities before God and to leave Jesus to build His church. Leadership in most of the contemporary church is about permission giving. It deals with yes or no. They tell you what you can or cannot do. That is about command and control which produces spiritually deformed children who do not know how to partner with God.

It is commonly assumed that in a large organization there has to be command and control. Probably, but was the church of Jesus ever meant to be a large organization? If we obey Jesus and make disciples in homes and multiply that, each church is small and each member can readily exercise their inheritance of hearing and obeying the voice of the Master while waiting on one another. Jesus modeled a church of twelve. The church of Jesus Christ was meant to be His body.

These small organisms multiplied across the Roman Empire until ten percent of the Empire were followers of Jesus. They did this with no central office, hierarchy, means of enforcing hierarchical control or any central fund raising and distribution system. Each believer carried the DNA of the organization in their heart. Each believer carried the leader of the organization in their heart. Each believer faithfully reproduced according to the DNA of the Master. It goes wrong when human leadership comes between the Head and the members of His body! It goes wrong when organism becomes organization.

We have seen church as we know it for so long that we cannot imagine the church Jesus wants! Jesus wants His church back! We have been so conditioned to accept,

need and trust human leadership that we cannot imagine that Jesus could actually direct His body.

We have been so conditioned to “need” human leadership that an expression of trust in Jesus as the functioning head of His body is considered rebellious independence!

Which best characterizes the church as Jesus envisioned it in Luke 10? Oak tree or strawberry plant? An elephant or a rabbit? Yes, God made both but which characterizes the churches resulting from obedience to Luke chapter 10? The answer is very clear! Strawberry plants and rabbits. Praise God for elephants and oak trees but why do men keep trying to build oak trees and elephants? You can build a throne in an oak tree or on an elephant and all the world can see you on your throne and see what a great ministry you have. But you look silly trying to sit on a strawberry plant or trying to ride a rabbit.

Yet if you plant one strawberry plant in a field it will send out runners and start other strawberry plants. Each plant will put down its roots and seek its own Water of Life and each will spread its leaves and soak up the love of the Son and soon the field will be covered with strawberry plants. They will be linked by relationship but will not be dependent upon each other! And you will not be able to tell which was the first strawberry plant!

If you leave two rabbits alone for two years you will have a least a million rabbits. After two years two elephants will produce one more elephant and consume a lot of resources to do so.

The “problem” with leaderless organizations is that it is difficult to use them to create personal wealth. Hierarchies create flows of wealth. Someone has said that a man will not understand something if his salary depends upon him NOT understanding it. As they say, if you want to understand how something works, follow the money. A huge stumbling block for many in professional ministry positions is this issue of the salary and the financial security.

A new friend is pursuing a doctorate of ministry at a local seminary. Many of the masters and doctoral candidates there are discussing simple, organic church and beginning to believe that it is the biblical model. However, they have a massive problem. They have studied for years to be able to apply for professional ministry positions in large congregational churches. If they accept the consequences of their thinking about organic church and that the command of Jesus is to make disciples, not build institutions, they will have to find another means of supporting themselves and their families. They will not be in charge.

Who is in charge?

Jesus!

D/ ALWAYS A SERVANT AND NEVER A KING OR WHAT ABOUT ELDERS?

Looking through Luke 10 across the rest of the New Testament you can see at least 15 direct and 15 indirect references to the church in the home (See Appendix #2). These are homes where the man of peace has been mentored to become the shepherd/pastor/bishop/elder of his own family and friends.

Yes, but what about the ordination of elders? Does that not imply hierarchy? How does that fit into this organic vision? First we probably need to stay away from the term “ordain”. “Ordination”, as used in religious institutions, strongly implies the giving of position and power to one by another further up in the hierarchy. Instead, the process Paul speaks about in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, is better characterized as simply recognizing the grace of God upon an individual as proven by mature fruit. We also need to emphasize the eastern cultural reality of the honoring of those who are elder in years, life experience and time in God. This is not a western style elevation of youth due to gifting, personality or charisma. This is an eastern honoring of those who are able to elder due to successful life experience.

Thus Paul went through Crete and established several house churches. Then in Titus 1 he directs Titus to go back and recognize elders and instructs him to look for character and relational integrity rather than gifting or personality when he does so. Looking through the lens of Luke 10, this would be one elder per household who would then be recognized to serve outside of their own households and able to give counsel to the other gatherings of the church of the city.

Some heads of households would not have the fruit in their lives necessary for them to be recognized as elders. Those that did would be the elders of the church of Crete. What changed in the new elder's home? Nothing. What changed in the home where one was not recognized as an elder? Nothing. However, the elder would be recognized as one who could help the other house churches in the area.

Let us look at Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders in this light. The same process of planting, testing and recognition took place in Ephesus and, when Paul called the elders together on his last trip to Jerusalem, he warned them in Acts 20:29- 30:

“For I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw the disciples after themselves.”

He sees two dangers. One from was the “savage wolves” from without. He also spoke about that in II Corinthians 11 when he spoke about false apostles who were only concerned with power and money. He spoke about this outward danger again to Titus,

“whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things that they ought not for the sake of dishonest gain.” Titus 1:11

The second danger was from within. The danger from within is that some of the elders would draw the disciples to themselves. What is the dynamic there?

An elder would be someone recognized inside of his/her own house church and outside his house as an elder of the church of the city. I would see the responsibilities of such servants as first to ensure the health of the individual house churches by demonstrating and modeling the kingdom; second to be available for healing ministry through the laying on of hands; third, networking with the other local churches, that is the church in the city or local geographic area; fourth, to help them multiply new house churches in that area and ; fifth to facilitate extra local serving opportunities as Paul did by taking gifts from the Macedonians and Corinthians to the churches in Judea who were experiencing famine.

Instead of fulfilling these five servant functions some elders would use their gifts to pervert the kingdom and draw other disciples to themselves from the other house churches. If they would continue in their home and continue to follow the Luke 10 mandate of going, they would always be a servant. They would be always going and always helping new households to become followers of Jesus.

But if elders draw disciples to themselves, they can become kings. They can use their gifts, their anointing, the force of their personality to usurp the place of Jesus over His church. They can build a base for position, power and wealth and sabotage the multiplication process. Paul says that those who stopped the servant going and began to gather to themselves could only do so by “speaking perverse things”.

However in contemporary Christendom those who draw the largest numbers to themselves are viewed as the most successful and host conferences to teach other leaders how to duplicate that success. According to Paul they would be teaching others how to speak “perverse things”.

So yes, elders were recognized. However, they did not function by telling others what they could or could not do. They did not give or withhold permission. They served

people and modeled walking in the one another commandments. Making decisions about how others could serve was not their job. Permission giving is not New Testament eldership.

New Testament elders are mature, fruitful house church leaders who are recognized as being able to serve other house holds. If they begin to draw to themselves, they pervert their ministry. If they become permission givers they take the place of Jesus, the Head of the body.

Are you an elder? Do you love people? If you do, you will give them the same freedom in Jesus that you desire for yourself and model humility, truth speaking and the giving and receiving of wisdom.

E/ JESUS, THE REAL HEAD AND NOT JUST A FIGURE HEAD

Again, we are to demonstrate the Kingdom by how we honor the King. How does the church in the home function? How does a group of Royal Priests function? How do the members of the body of Christ express their common Head? How do the living stones of the temple of the Holy Spirit express their honor and worship to the God who is at home in each of them? The metaphors for the body of Christ in the New Testament range from body, through temple to family and army. The metaphor of audience is never used! The body is not made up of passive observers who pay to watch super leaders do the ministry. We are not divided into clergy and laity, gladiators and spectators. If we believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer then we need to see that worked out as every member expresses the Spirit who lives in them.

There are around forty verses which command us to do the one another stuff like “love one another”, “wait on one another”, “bear one another’s burdens”, “speak the truth to one another” and “submit to one another in the fear of God” (for a complete study of this see Appendix #3). If we add the verses which speak of neighbors or brothers the number of relational commandments becomes more than seventy, and of course, among them is the commandment to “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

However, there are only about six verses which instruct us to honor those over us in the Lord. Which set of verses gets the most emphasis in congregational churches? Right! Those few about submission to leaders. This is error by selective emphasis. These verses are used to justify a hierarchy while the majority of the scriptures which speak of a body of holy priests under one High Priest are ignored. This is like the abuse of scripture in the American south where a select, few scriptures were twisted to justify slavery or in South Africa where they were abused to justify apartheid and where the majority of scriptures about equality and brotherhood were never mentioned.

Also, almost all of the verses which speak of honoring elders are in the context of the “one another” reality. Thus all of the structural relationships outlined in Ephesians 5 are preceded by “submitting to one another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:21). The instruction in I Peter 5:5, “Likewise you younger people submit yourselves to your elders.” is followed in the SAME verse by “Yes, all of you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility,”.

Yes, there are leaders. Yes, it all rises or falls upon leadership. But as Peter says in I Peter 5:3 we are not to lead “as being lords over those entrusted to us but by being examples to the flock”. Lead by being the first to suffer, the first to lay down your life, the first to forgive and the first to say “I was wrong will you forgive me”.

We lead primarily by example and by influence. A leader who demands submission has lost all moral authority. Do you want bosses and slaves or brothers and friends?

This is not a religious, slave or subservient mentality. This is not some kind of false humility. Yes, we are King’s Kids. Yes, we are the head and not the tail. Yes, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places. But we are to follow the instruction in Philippians 2:5,

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus , who being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross.”

Let that same mind be in you! Thus if Jesus will be the real Head of His body and not just a personal Lord of its individual members, one of the main disciplines of the body is that we learn to lay aside what may be rightfully ours and wait on one another. That is one of the main messages of I Corinthians 11:27- 34. The “reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep” is not for some personal, private, unconfessed sin. It was their attitude towards the body of Christ demonstrated in how they ate together.

We eat the bread to show that we are one body. We drink the cup to show that we share one life. We proclaim His death until He comes again. We declare the death that made us one. When we come together to eat, we are to wait for one another. What was the problem in Corinth? The Lord’s supper is a real meal. It is not a symbolic meal. The wealthy brought a lot of food and drink and ate until they were full and drank until they were drunk while the poor went hungry. The wealthy were shaming the poor. They were not “discerning the Lord’s body”. The poor are just as much a part of the Lord’s body as the rich. In shaming the poor they were dishonoring Jesus and all that He had died for.

The solution? “When you come together to eat, wait for one another.” (I Corinthians 11:33) And if you are so hungry that you cannot wait to eat? You are to have something to eat before you come so that you do not eat yourself into judgement (I Corinthians 11:34). And if there is a poor man unable to feed himself or his family? Make sure he can eat at home as well so his need is not exposed before all so that your charity preserves his dignity as a member of the body of Christ.

Waiting on one another has many implications. If I have really seen Jesus as my Head, I will honor and wait upon those who are older and more mature in Him than I am. I will recognize Christ in them. That is what is being talked about in Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.” That scripture is not talking only about Jesus. Yes, that is true of Jesus but that hardly needs to be said. What is amazing is that one can so walk in the grace of God that the consistent expression of their daily life is Jesus. That scripture is talking about what we see as the outcome of someone’s life. Do we see Jesus in their lives? That is the faith we are to follow. Individuals in whom we consistently see Jesus Christ never need to demand that anyone submit to them! If I am really walking with Jesus as my Head, as a mature member of the body of Christ, I will recognize and receive from the newest member of the body. I will see Jesus in them. And if I am secure in Jesus I will never demand that someone submit to me. If they do not see Jesus in me and if the Holy Spirit does not speak to them, why should I? How could I?

FAQ:

1/ What about “spiritual fathers”? Do we not need spiritual fathers to mentor us and to release us into our destiny?

Yes, Paul called Timothy “a true son in the faith” (I Timothy 1:2) and obviously walked in a dynamic mentoring, encouraging and releasing relationship towards Timothy. Paul also expressed a desire for more true fathers in contrast to the many teachers who were available (I Corinthians 4:15- 17). The problem with the spiritual father as seen in the pyramid structure is that it becomes a system of control, funding and promotion. This is what happens when there is the demand that each one must have a spiritual father and that each son must honor his spiritual father by tithing to him.

The examples given are Joshua under Moses, Elisha under Elijah and Timothy under Paul. The lesson taken from these examples is that you must have such a fathering relationship to “release you into your destiny”. However, the truth of the examples cited is that neither Moses, Elisha or Paul had a spiritual father. These examples cut both ways. It is good to have an elder brother, mentor, spiritual father but it is not mandatory or necessary. That lack did not keep them from fulfilling their destinies!

Actually, Paul even uses the fact that he did not have mentors in the faith as a validation of his having received his revelation of Jesus directly from Jesus.

“But from those who seemed to be something- whatever they were it makes no difference to me: God shows personal favoritism to no man- for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.” (Galatians 2:6)

And he said this speaking of the apostles in Jerusalem- “those who seemed to be

something"! True spiritual fathers press their sons into the One Heavenly Father and carry the words of Jesus in their hearts to never take a wrong place in the relationship. Those who have seen Jesus do not take themselves or any other leader too seriously.

"But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."
Matt. 23:8- 12

And what about spiritual fathers who demand that their sons tithe to them? Paul would say that the demand for money disqualifies them from being a father of any sort and speaks to the Corinthians about his fatherly attitude,

"And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours but you. Children ought not lay up for the parents but the parents for the children" (II Corinthians 12:14)

2/ What about apostle Ivan or prophet Jimmy? True or false? How do we know?

According to Jesus in Matthew 7:21- 23, the false may work miracles and signs and wonders but still practice lawlessness, not do the will of the Father and not know Him. Genuine miracles done in Jesus name do not authenticate a ministry. Gifts never authenticate. Rather it is character and relational integrity that authenticate a ministry, a gift and a person.

According to Jesus in Matthew 23 the signs of the false are that they bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders (like mandatory tithing), love positions, titles and public recognition.

According to Jesus in Matthew 20:25- 28, the false is exposed by a leadership culture of power and privilege rather than following His example of sacrificial service.

According to Paul in Acts 20:30 the false is exposed by its practice of drawing men unto themselves by "speaking perverse things" (like mandatory spiritual fatherhood).

According to Paul in II Corinthians 11 the signs of a false apostle are how they place themselves as an authority over the people and how they take money from the people.

The false is exposed by its addiction to power and money. The false uses genuine gifts, genuine miracles and the supernatural to draw to itself and to use the people of God for money. Much of the contemporary church is a combination of money or personality cult. The bride of Christ is being ravaged.

A harsh statement? A friend in Nigeria testifies that the only scripture preached from the pulpits in her area is Malachi 3 . The leaders press their people to tithe and give offerings enticing them with promises of blessings if they do so and sowing fear of cursing if they do not. These leaders drive Mercedes while their people cannot afford to feed their children. You say, "That is Africa." Well, if you want to see the true nature of something it is often helpful to see it taken to its logical conclusion.

Take the American prosperity gospel and extend it to its logical conclusion. It does not look so bad in America since everybody can at least feed their kids. What does giving to get look like in Africa? It looks like the robbery of the poor. And that is exactly what it is- Robbery.

If the faith preacher has so much faith in his sowing and reaping, why does he not simply give everybody in the crowd \$100 and then receive the harvest of his faith and his offering? The reason he does not do that is because he knows it does not work. He knows it is a lie.

Why do so many continue to give to these lies and frauds? They want to believe the lie. This is the "Christian" lottery- maybe this time I will have enough faith, maybe this time the preacher has enough anointing, maybe this time it will work for me, maybe this time is my time for my financial breakthrough!

In a conversation some time ago a with conference speaker this person made the statement that, "Most traveling speakers are prostitutes. The pastors pay them to give the people a spiritual experience to keep the people coming and the offerings flowing." When a body becomes a business, that is prostitution. What of the body of Christ?

Another friend often says, after hearing of another bit of financial nonsense in Christendom, "There are many parasites on the body of Christ."

The late John Wimber once took a taxi from the airport to a speaking engagement and sought to converse with the taxi driver but when the driver found out he was a Christian leader he launched into a diatribe about every celebrity Christian financial and sexual scandal. He knew them all! When he began to wind down Wimber asked him, "But if there was a Jesus and if He did have a church, what do you think His church should be doing?" The taxi driver responded, "They should love each other and help the poor." The world knows what we should be doing and how we should be living. It is a tragedy that many who call themselves Christians do not.

3/ What about those that say the body of Christ is not a democracy but a theocracy and thus we must submit to the authority delegated by Jesus to the

five fold ministry?

Yes, the body of Christ is a theocracy but if you submit to the authority of another man you are not in a theocracy. You are in a monarchy. That is why God and Samuel in I Samuel 8:7 did not want to give the people a king, "They have not rejected you but they have rejected Me, that I should reign over them."

There is no delegated authority in the Body of Christ. There is only distributed authority from the King to every member and we are to use that authority to serve one another. Be careful when leaders begin to talk a lot about Saul, David and Solomon. Our examples are not David and Solomon. Our examples are Jesus and Paul.

We are in a theocracy and Jesus is the King.

We are all His servants and brothers and friends to Him and to one another.

Do you want bosses or brothers?

And what happens when brothers cannot agree? If you are committed to walk and work together, you will have to wait upon one another until you all hear the same thing from the Master. And if you cannot agree? Like Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36- 40, you agree to disagree and get on with the job.

4/ What about error and heresy in simple churches?

Let me quote Roland Allan "True doctrine results from the true experience of the power of Christ rather than mere intellectual instruction. Heresies are not produced by ignorance but by the speculations of learned men."²¹

Do we trust the Holy Spirit as much as Jesus trusted the Holy Spirit? His trust was that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. That was His trust as He left the disciples after His three years with them. Do we make people dependent upon us or upon the Holy Spirit? Could we have written John 16 to our disciples?

5/ You seem to say that all who lead large ministries have wrong motivations, that those who ride an elephant only do so to be seen?

Yes, it could seem that way. However, there are many servant leaders in many different contexts. God created elephants and oak trees. There are good leaders on elephants and many followers who love to feed the elephants. However, the point is not

²¹ Roland Allen, "The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church", page 126, (London World Dominion Press), 1927

to find a few good hearted elephant riders with right motives and thus justify all those with questionable motives that are trying to ride the elephant of personal ambition. The point is to be followers of Jesus and to do things the way He commanded us to do them.

Are we followers of Jesus or followers of successful men? The reality is that even with the best of motives, when we do things that Jesus did not do and did not command us to do, we always end up in a wrong place. We are followers of the example and commandments of Jesus! However, I find it impossible to understand how anyone with a clear revelation of Jesus and His Kingdom can remain content feeding elephants.

Chapter 8

REJECTION, ACCEPTANCE AND IDENTITY

“But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you..... He who hears you hears Me and he who rejects you rejects Me and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent me.’” Luke 10:10- 1

The fields are white and ready for harvest but if you are not received, shake off the dust of that place and go on! Jesus is doing some expectation management here! “Not all received Me and not all will receive you. Arm yourself with this knowledge and do not let rejection throw you.” “Understand that this is not personal. It is not about you. It is about the Kingdom of God that came near and which they are rejecting.”

Someone has said that hell is receiving exactly what we asked for; getting exactly what we wanted. Do you reject the Kingdom of God? God will respect your choices for eternity and you will discover what it is like where there is no grace of God. Do you want to be left alone? You will discover how dreadfully alone you are without any of the presence of God. Do you want to do things your way? You will have eternity to appreciate the lonely fruit of your ways.

There is no such thing as positive cold. You cannot make something colder by adding more cold. You can only make something colder by removing more and more heat energy. Absolute zero is the absence of all heat energy- there is no energy left to be taken away.

There is no such thing as positive darkness. You cannot make something darker by adding more darkness. Darkness becomes darker by taking away more and more light. Total dark is the absence of any source of light.

There is no such thing as positive evil. One does not become more and more evil by receiving more and more evil but by rejecting more and more righteousness. Total evil is the absence of all righteousness.

There is no such thing as positive hatred. You cannot make a person hate more by adding more hatred. Someone hates more as they reject more and more love. Total hatred is the absence of all love.

Do you reject the Kingdom? Do you reject God? Do you reject His righteousness and His love? He will honor your choice and not allow His Kingdom, His love, His Light, His righteousness and His grace to flow towards you and when He does that, you will realize that He is the source of all that is good.

God did not create evil. God does not allow evil. He simply allows us to have our way. Reject Him? He will honor your choice and you will be left with absolute loneliness and darkness.²²

This dynamic of acceptance or rejection is terrifying. The freedom of the human being to make choices that matter for all eternity is wonderful and fearful.

However, it is also amazing that Jesus makes a total identification with us as we go into the harvest. For someone to accept or reject us is to accept or reject Him and to accept or reject Him is to accept or reject the Heavenly Father. We are His body and He makes us totally one with Himself. That is the same truth which confronted Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:4- 5) when Jesus asked him, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me? And he said, 'Who are You Lord?' Then the Lord said, ' I am Jesus whom you are persecuting'."

Jesus makes another complete and total identification in Matthew 25 when He commends the righteous for visiting the sick and imprisoned, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and housing the refugees. He tells them, "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." He continues that identification when He tells those on His left, "inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." To reject them is to reject Him.

Jesus makes a total, complete and absolute identification with the poor, the suffering, the least and the broken. He places His face on every hungry orphan and sick baby.

Many times people of good will ask hard questions. "Where is God in the face of so much suffering? How could God allow such things to happen? How can He be a God of love and not act? Does He really have so little power or ability? Or how can He be a God of power who created the universe and not act? Is He so weak that He cannot express His love?"

God looks at the world He has created and looks at man to whom He has given

²² This argument is accredited to the young Albert Einstein on a You Tube video, "Did God Create Evil?"

freedom and with whom He has shared partnership in the care and keeping of this world and He asks the same questions. “How can you let such suffering take place? Are you really so powerless? Do you really care so little?”

True, no one of us can do it all but each of us can do something. Why do we do so little? We have the resources to feed, clothe, educate and shelter each person on the planet. We simply do not have the will. We would rather spend money on buildings, conferences, sound systems and personal pleasure rather than feed little children.

Where is God in all this suffering? He is in two places. He is in the one who is suffering. He is in the least. And He is in His body. He is in His people. God becomes visible when His people serve the suffering. God becomes visible when His people embrace the least.

This revelation of God is not of the God of power and might who could make men obey Him. Worship coerced is not worship. This is the God of the Incarnation. This is the Word made flesh whose glory men can choose to behold, the glory like that of the very Son of God full of grace and truth. This is the God who became a baby in a virgin’s womb and who grew up to say, “Let the children come unto me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven”.

Men who choose to see this glory also choose to love, worship and become like Him. They choose to let Him fill them, live in them and live through them. They choose to let the miracle of the Incarnation continue. They choose to embrace the least.

At the “top” of the structure of the Kingdom of God is the least. What is done unto the least is unto Jesus. This is the upside down Kingdom.

FAQ

1/ So God did not create evil?

No, God did not create evil. God created mankind and also the angels with a common characteristic and that is the ability to choose to worship His glory or to reject His glory.

Darkness and hatred, selfishness and lust for power are the manifestations of a will that has rejected the glory of sacrificial love.

2/ So God is not in absolute control?²³

²³ For a deeper look at these issues we recommend, *God of the Possible: a Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*, Greg Boyd, Baker Books, Grand Rapids MI, 2007 and also *Who is God* and

No, God is not in control in the sense that each detail is predetermined by Him. Our choices really matter and have eternal consequences. We are not creatures subject to a mechanical fate. We live in a Kingdom where grace and wisdom make a difference.

Yes, God's over all purposes will be fulfilled! All that He has purposed in Christ will be accomplished. But it is like you having an overall plan to travel from Oslo to Brussels. You can fly direct. You can take a train. You can drive. If you drive, you can take a ferry from Oslo to Germany or Oslo to Denmark. You can choose from many different highways. You can hire a yacht and go most of the way by water and then take a car from Antwerp to Brussels or navigate the canal systems to Brussels. You can choose to take a ferry and walk the majority of the way. Every plane journey, car journey or walk can take different routes. Every journey could involve accidents and delays. Many things can happen. How will you respond to them? There are many ways to reach your destination!

The glory of God is that through the miracle of the cross He can transform the worst of human failure into His glory. Forgiveness is more powerful than any violation. Blessing is more powerful than any curse. Love never fails. God can take any journey, any detour, any failure and turn it into an expression of grace and glory!

During one of my first trips to Central Asia I was being driven through the mountains by a driver who seemed determine to kill us all. He was passing going up hill around blind corners. After one near collision with a car coming down hill a great speed while we were passing a dump truck going up, I stopped the car and prepared to get out and walk if the driving did not change. I was told that I did not understand the driver's culture- "If God wills that we die, we will die but if not we will live!" My response was that we are not Muslims. We are not passive victims of mechanistic fate but we are followers of Jesus who walk in grace and wisdom.

God does not control us. We are not cogs in a machine.

We do not control God. There are no faith formulas to keep your life free from suffering and difficulty. No faith formula puts God in your pocket.

We cannot always choose our circumstances but we can always choose our responses to our circumstances. We are never the victims unless we choose to be so.

But all does work for the glory of God and we can "glory in tribulation" knowing that it produces hope and hope that does not disappoint "because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:1- 5).

And we know that nothing can “separate us from the love of Christ” and that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who love us” (Romans 8:18- 39).

Chapter 9

REJOICING OVER RELATIONSHIP

“Then the seventy returned with joy saying, ‘Lord even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’ Luke 10:17- 20

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so Father for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father and no one knows who the Son is except the Father and who the Father is except the Son and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Luke 10:21- 22

A/ ALL AUTHORITY

These verses from Luke echo Matthew 28:18- 20 and it is very telling how these scriptures get applied. Jesus declares that He has all authority in heaven and on earth and declares that He gives His followers authority over “all the power of the enemy” but nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus give any of His followers authority over any other of His followers.

Nowhere in the New Testament is authority over one Holy Priest given to another Holy Priest. The predominate commandment is that we are to “be filled with the Holy Spirit... giving thanks always for all things... submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Ephesians 5:18- 21. The reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit is to work out in our mutual honor to all those who are likewise filled with the Holy Spirit. If the throne of God is in the heart of your brother how can you place yourself above him?

However, Jesus does give us authority over “all the power of the enemy”. It is wonderful when you see healing and deliverance. This is the simple expression of the Kingdom of God. This is making manifest the kingdom which is here. The Kingdom of God has come. It is here. What about when you pray and nothing happens? Hebrews 2:8-9 holds the truth of “all authority” and the reality that all are not healed in the living tension with which we need to hold it as well-

“You have put all things under His feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

We see Jesus but we do not yet see all things under His feet. We suffer as He also suffered. I Corinthians 15:20-28 carries the same truth. “He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” He is Lord of all but not all is under His feet. He has all authority but not all worship before Him.

The Kingdom is here but the Kingdom is to come.

The Kingdom is now and the Kingdom is not yet.

The Kingdom has come and the Kingdom is coming.

The Kingdom can come because the Kingdom already has come.

The Kingdom keeps coming as each new person begins to love and obey the King.

This is our faith whether we see the promise fulfilled or whether we suffer waiting for its fulfillment (Hebrews 11:40). We may not yet see all things under our feet but we see Jesus!

B/ THE HIGHEST IS RELATIONSHIP

However, the highest is not authority over demons. Jesus did not die so that you could have a ministry. He died so that you could enter into relationship with His Father. Eugene Peterson's translation of Matthew 11:25- 30 expresses this so well.

Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: "Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You've concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father that's the way you like to work."

Jesus resumed talking to the people but now tenderly. "The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I'm not keeping it to myself; I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen."

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me- watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Before man fell, before man needed redemption, before Satan began to rule over the earth, before humanity was corrupted and before there was any human need, God had a purpose in His Son. That purpose was to create mankind for relationship with Himself. He desired sons to share His heart. He desired brothers for God the Son to multiply His heart. He desired a living temple for the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit could share and multiply His heart of worship for the Father and the Word.

God's desire was that the mystery of fire and passion in the center of His being would be multiplied in the hearts of mankind who would freely choose to enter into that same mystery of passion and fire. One person cannot be called love. A single person can only be characterized as loving. God the Father, God the Word and God the Spirit is a

relationship of three persons in mutual submission, trust, honor, respect and love. God is love!

Jesus is and was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world because the mystery of love is a life laid down in honor, trust and sacrifice for the good of the other. Love is not primarily a feeling. It is not secondarily a feeling. It is a total commitment of my life for the good of another. The fruit of that commitment may be powerful feelings but that commitment may first bring suffering and sacrifice.

All that God, the Father had purposed and prepared throughout eternity and presented in the time of the Old Testament, He committed to God the Son. The Father was completely confident that God the Son would only do what He, Himself, was doing. The Father was confident that the Word would only say what He Himself was saying. The Father completely trusted God the Son and God the Son completely fulfilled that trust even to death on the Cross. God the Son never sought His own will but only the will of the Father. Thus the Father says that if anyone will not receive God the Son, they cannot know Him. The Father honors God the Son in all things and only receives us through Him.

All that Jesus had received from the Father throughout eternity and manifested in time, He completely trusted to the Holy Spirit. Jesus trusts the Holy Spirit to only reveal the Word and to never speak of Himself, the Holy Spirit just as God the Son only revealed God the Father. All that God the Son died to accomplish, He placed in the hands of the Holy Spirit and is now waiting for the Holy Spirit to bring to fullness in the earth. Because the Holy Spirit completely honors God the Son, God the Son completely honors the Holy Spirit and will forgive all sin against Himself but He will not forgive the sin of rejecting the Holy Spirit. No one can come to God the Son except through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

All that the Father, the Word and Holy Spirit have purposed through eternity and presented in time, they have committed into the hands of the family of the Father God, the body of Christ and the living temple of the Holy Spirit. The God who is a perfect community of mutual honor, trust and submission has limited Himself and the outworking of His purposes on earth to His relationship with mankind.

His purposes will be accomplished through relationships rather than through acts of raw power. He is a love relationship. Love is the highest. He invites us into that relationship. His purpose is not just to redeem fallen humanity. His purpose was to manifest to all and through all the Glory of God the Son through our relationship with Him.²⁴

²⁴ My first encounter with this understanding was listening to DeVern Fromke speak in the late seventies. I will never forget the passion and humility with which he spoke. His book *The Ultimate Intention* is a

Jesus did not die just so you could live a good and happy life now. That is religious humanism. Jesus died so that you could live for the glory of God. For Stephen of old that meant death by stoning. What will it mean for you? God is the judge of what is to His glory. You are not.

Jesus did not die so that you could be happy in heaven. That is still religious humanism. Man is not the centre and measure of all things. Jesus died so that you could live for the glory of God here and now and also then and there.

C/ I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” John 15:13- 15

The One who legitimately could claim all position, title, honor, glory and authority did not do so! He looked into the eyes of men who would soon betray Him and called them His friends. When He did this He absolutely, totally and for all time destroyed all possibility of any hierarchy representing His kingdom. Pyramids are for dead people!

Before the throne is a sea of glass! There are no mountains or valleys on a sea. Every valley has been exalted and every mountain has been brought low. We are all brothers and sisters before the throne! This is why there are forty “one another” commands in the New Testament! The highest is friendship!

In every hierarchy, the people below are always subordinates. Hierarchical leaders may use the language of friendship but it is code for command and control. Pyramids are built by slaves. In every hierarchy the people above you are your bosses. You may practice submission but often the true motivation is to take their place. You may use the language of friendship, honor and respect but success is rising through the ranks. Those above you and beside you are your competition.

Jesus commands us not to lead as the Gentiles who exercised power over their subjects. We are to exercise leadership the way Jesus did. The goal of His leadership was to share all His heart and to lay His life down for His friends (John 15:15). You really only lay your life down for friends. If your goal is climbing the ladder you will never have friends- you will only ever have people that you use.

Eugene Peterson’s translation of I Corinthians 10:14 is confronting, *“So, my very dear*

classic.

friends, when you see people reducing God to something they can use or control, get out of their company as fast as you can.”

The goal of discipleship is to create friends- to model relationships of equals that will model the relationships of Father, Word and Holy Spirit. The goal is relationships in which our world can see the love, mutual honor, trust and service within the Godhead.

The example of Jesus as narrated in John 16 is even more startling!

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” John 16:7

The disciples could not imagine a worse event than Jesus going away! Jesus, the best leader that ever walked on earth, is telling them it is better for them that He goes away! And we think we are important, indispensable even? Who do we think we are? Jesus knew it would be better for the disciples to have the inward leading of the Holy Spirit than even His flesh and blood leadership! Jesus wanted His friends to know the same inward fire that He knew.

Our job is to take away every obstacle which would keep our friends from knowing the inner leading of the Holy Spirit and the practical, personal Lordship of Jesus over their lives and our collective life. Often we are the biggest obstacle! The goal of discipleship is a friend who completely trusts the Holy Spirit within him to guide him into all truth.

So much human leadership is focused upon developing people who are dependent upon us, who defer to us, wait upon us, honor us and support us.

Creating dependence is creating our own kingdom.
It is treason against the King of Kings.

Jesus was willing to trust all upon the ability of the Holy Spirit to lead men into Truth. Are we? That is why Jesus said He HAD to go! That is why He instructed His disciples to make disciples and then go to the next village and find the next man of peace. They were not to create dependence upon themselves. They were not to stay to become kings. They were to introduce friends to the King of Kings and then leave them to His care.

D/ THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND FREEDOMS OF FRIENDS

Of course, if friends are to embrace the Kingdom of God in their lives they will have to embrace some basic responsibilities. That is where the problems arise! Often people do not want the responsibilities of freedom. They would rather have the freedom of slaves which is freedom from responsibilities. They would rather have a king tell them what to do! There are always those that want a king and there are always those who want to be king but in so doing both show that they have never seen the King!

I see four basic responsibilities or freedoms in the Kingdom of God. To encourage your disciples to embrace these freedoms is one of the main responsibilities of the one making disciples.

1/ To seek the King for yourself!

That means you become a self feeder! That means you let His grace rule in your life. You either live by grace or addiction! And a wrong dependence upon others for their approval, their control and their attention is relational addiction. These are unhealthy and toxic relationships. Unless we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Master we have no life in us (John 6:53) and nothing to give to one another.

It is often heard from congregational church attenders that their pastor “feeds them well” or “doesn’t feed them anymore”. If you are feeding an eight month old baby that is normal but if you are still feeding that boy at eighteen years both you and he have a very big problem! Why would a mature person want somebody else to feed them?

2/ To fulfill the “one another commands” with a few.

If you cannot be church with your spouse or if you cannot be church with two or three, further public worship is only a show.

Ephesians 4:15, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- Christ- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every

joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” is one of the most important “one another” commands although that phrase is not used in the passage. However, the words “whole body”, “every joint supplies”, “every part does its share” are used and the meaning is very clear! If we do not speak the truth to one another in love, there is no maturing of the body.

I must have love and conviction to speak all truths, even uncomfortable truths, to my friends. I must have humility and trust to receive the truth from my friends and my spouse. Immaturity and arrogance destroy this process. If I do not love you enough to tell you the truth then really, I reject you and destroy friendship. If I cannot humbly receive the truth from you then I never really loved or trusted you as a friend.

Much of the body of Christ remain in a state of spiritual retardation and colossal immaturity because they only hear general truths proclaimed from a pulpit. That is one way truth. We need two way truth. Truth given and received from the hearts of friends. If you will make disciples you need to model speaking and receiving truth heart to heart and face to face.

Jesus was an eastern man but He broke through the eastern culture of face saving and avoiding uncomfortable truths. He broke through the honor culture to speak the truth to His generation and to His friends. Each culture has its issues and problems with truth speaking. Without a humble, passionate commitment to truth we easily become people of the lie.

Accountability is not top down. That is another word for spiritual abuse. Accountability is relationships of trust and love whereby we are able to speak and receive truth from one another. If a man will not share with his band of brothers then who will he share with?

The world is not offended by humility, confession and failure. They are offended by hypocrisy, coverup, arrogance and lies. We are followers of Jesus who is the Truth!

3/ To disciple your own children!

If you cannot disciple your own children, how can you disciple the nations? If you do not have relational integrity with your own children, with whom will you have it? If you fail as a father what other successes matter?

One of the reasons that so many children of Christian homes do not follow Jesus as they become adults is that their parents have pursued Christian life and ministry as a business rather than a relational activity. The children see the real motivations. They see the hypocrisy and the performance mentalities.

The main test for eldership is character as seen in the family and testified to by the world around. Our children and the people we do business with are not impressed by our public prayers or how much scripture we can quote. They see our character, how we treat our spouses and whether or not we pay our bills. They see whether you have life skills and integrity or are merely acting a part in a religious drama.

4/ To multiply your relationship with the King through making disciples.

The basic command of the King is to make disciples! Matthew 28:18- 20 is the great commission, not the great suggestion. This is not about events or programs! Disciples are made by a relational process based in the transparency and humility of doing the “one another” stuff together!

Only disciples make disciples. But if your disciples are not making disciples then neither are you! Success is in the grand children. Success is in the third generation! Our Father is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

If we would do as He commanded and train the nations to do all that He commanded, He could do as He promised and build His church.

FAQs

1/ What about buildings? Is it not true that the New Testament church did not build buildings due to their poverty and persecution?²⁵

True, there is no historical or archaeological evidence of any purpose built structures for meetings during the first three centuries of the church. However, this was not due to poverty or persecution. Many believers had money and although there were periods of persecution there were also periods of peace and freedom. They had resources and freedom to build buildings if they had wanted to do so.

There was also intense cultural pressure for the early church to build and use special buildings for meetings. From the Jewish side there was the example of the synagogue system with its buildings and rabbis. From the Roman side there was the example of the pagan temples and its priests. More over, the early church faced violent persecution because they did not have special religious buildings and priests. To the Romans, if someone did not have a temple with an alter, they were atheists and the early church was actually persecuted for being atheists.

The cultural pressures were there, finances were available and there were periods of freedom from persecution which may have been even greater if the early believers had

²⁵ This is a summary of Frank Viola's excellent presentation of this issue in “Pagan Christianity”

built buildings. The early saints did not build buildings by revelation and conviction. They believed in the priesthood of all believers and thus they neither supported nor sanctioned a special priestly class. They believed that the Kingdom of God had come and embraced all of life. Therefore they did not believe in special holy places. The whole earth is the Lord's! Jesus died to sanctify all of life and all of human activity to God. They met in homes to demonstrate their belief that their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit and that God does not dwell in temples made with hands but rather in a living temple made up of living stones. The living stones came together where ever life happened to demonstrate Jesus in their midst.

Consistent with their belief that the temple of God is the people of God, they did not invest money in bricks and mortar but into people. Offerings in the New Testament were taken for the victims of famine, for the orphans, the widows and for the poor.

We could largely satisfy the needs of the poor for housing, schooling, food and water if the finances invested in buildings, sound systems, offices and administration of the various Christian institutions around the world would be invested in the true temple of God, the children of God. Matthew 25, which states that whatever is done unto the least is done unto Jesus, will be the standard by which those who call themselves followers of Jesus will be judged. That is the standard by which Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats.

Buildings are not about loving people and serving Jesus. Buildings are about our own little kingdoms. Buildings are about projecting power and prestige. They are monuments to our pride and our need to be like the other religions around us.

Every dollar invested in a building is one less dollar available to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, serve the sick and visit those in prison. Every building is a monument to selfishness and arrogance. Every dollar thus invested will be judged by Jesus as goat money.

Those who use Old Testament stories about building the tabernacle or building the temple are simply wrong in doing so. We are not in the Old Covenant but these attitudes are so entrenched! The Jerusalem council became enraged with Stephen when he concluded his history of God's dealings with the Jewish nation by declaring that "the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48). Stephen threatened their whole religious system and way of making a living when he declared that a temple made with hands was not the place of God's rest.

The first martyr of the church age gave his life for declaring that God was now living in people rather than religious buildings. Anyone who dares attack the idolatrous attraction to buildings (our edifice complex?) faces similar strong reactions to this day.

Do you think talking about “goat money” is too harsh? Let me share three stories with you. One is from near where we live when we are in Canada.

A group of young adults had taken a missions trip to a third world country and as part of that trip had visited and ministered in an orphanage. They found that the children were going hungry because support had dropped and the price of rice had doubled in that year. Upon their return to their large, wealthy church and just prior to giving a talk about their trip, the senior pastor met with them and forbade them to speak of the needs of the orphanage in their presentation. Why? If they knew of the need, some of the congregation would give money for the orphans and that would mean less for the church and the church needed every penny for the building program.

A second story is from an Armenian city which suffered terribly from the Armenian earthquake of December 7, 1988 which killed at least 25,000 people across that country. On visiting this city I was told that an area of the centre was still rubble from the earthquake and that people living in the rubble suffered even to the point of rats gnawing on their little children. In driving around the town I was shown a brand new Armenian Apostolic Church (their state church) of impressive stone which cost 2.8 million dollars where the candles and icons slept warm and dry at night. We also came to a brand new Armenian Evangelical Church with rooms for computer labs and English classes. It too was a beautiful stone building. I was told it cost 4 million dollars to build and the computers and hymnbooks slept warm and dry at night.

We then had a meal with a couple with five children plus grandma living in a two bedroom apartment along with another brother, his wife and their baby. They were asking for help since the brother had no work and could not afford his own place. I asked if this brother was looking for work and was told that he had been working on the construction of the new, independent, charismatic church in town. This was a church where the who's who of the charismatic world came to speak. So I asked why he was not still working there and was told that he had not been able to continue since his weekly pay had not even covered the cost of his bus fare to get to work. The fact that a church would not pay a poor man a living wage made me angry.

Then that afternoon we were driving to another appointment and my host said that we would drive past the church under construction. It was a very impressive building with three story white stone columns across the front. My mind was trying to take in the obvious wealth contrasted with the oppression of the poor who were building this idol temple when I glanced to the other side of the street and my jaw dropped. Across the street was a full city block of rubble left over from the earthquake of twenty years ago. People who slept wet and cold in the rubble while rats attacked their kids woke up every morning and looked out at the Christians building a palace to house their pride.

The third story is from a poverty stricken area of Central Asia where Ivan²⁶ works. Ivan had come to Jesus in prison through members of a very traditional denomination. That was the only expression of the church that he knew and he loved them very much. Once Ivan was out of prison he began to travel the nation to plant churches. While they were both in prison, he led a friend, Alexander, to Jesus and once out of prison, that friend went to a district with no known believers to make disciples.

Alexander soon led a small group of disciples to Jesus but the chief of police came and asked him to leave the district because, "He wanted no trouble there." The head of the local mosque came and asked him to leave, "Or there would be trouble." Alexander stayed and one evening while he was leading his wife and two brothers in worship three men came and shot him to death through the window.

When Ivan told me this story he went on to say that his friend's death had caused him a lot of questions and even depression. I asked Ivan if this was because he became afraid. The question was almost insulting to him. He did not fear for his life but wondered if the sacrifice and danger was worth it. Now I was puzzled. Why?

Ivan told me his question was why should he risk his life and the life of his friends to form groups of disciples in new areas when the denomination would come in, build a building, install pews and a pastor and the new disciples would leave. The new converts were Asians. They would sit on the floor for hours, drinking tea and talking about Jesus. However, when the group would become fifteen or so the denomination would build a building and install a Slavic Bible school trained pastor from outside. The Asians would begin to leave until the only folks left on the pews were some elderly Slavic grandmas.

Ivan began to go to the leaders of the denomination and ask why they had to build buildings for the groups of disciples. They had houses to meet in. They did not need another building in the village. There were even empty houses. They needed bread for their bellies and shoes for their children's feet. They want to sit in a circle and drink tea and talk about Jesus with friends. They do not want to listen to a young stranger from the former colonizing power preach at them. The leaders did not like his questions and kicked Ivan out of the denomination as an heretic!

Since that time Ivan has discovered that there are many people all around the world that think as he does and that he is not a heretic. He has gone back to the folks who excommunicated him and asked them to "bless him out" and, after some time, they did so. Ivan is now making disciples according to Luke 10. Alexander did not die in vain!

The waste and arrogance of building monuments to our traditions and religious pride

²⁶ Names changed for security reasons.

cannot be overstated. Every such structure is a testimony to our colossal disobedience and total rebellion against the words and example of Jesus.

However, we do need more living communities of healing and hospitality to provide for the homeless, the addicted and the abandoned. Not large institutions but small communities to provide family for those who have never experienced the practical love of God. Not a rehabilitation centre where you go through the program and then leave but small communities of witness and healing where individuals can stay on a permanent basis if they so desire and that can be multiplied through the culture. These are not run by experts but mostly by those who come from the same backgrounds and who have found healing through community, worship and work.

There are new communities developing in many inner city areas where the members work together, serve together and provide centers of hospitality, healing and restoration for the homeless, the addicted and the mentally ill.

The team in one Central Asia city has such a small, inner city community. One day this past fall they noticed a Uighur (Muslim from North West China) standing in the market. They asked him if he needed a place to stay. He said he needed a place and came home with them. After several months of living in the community this man heard a voice say, "These people serving you are My people. Listen to them. They are telling you the Truth." He listened and became a follower of Jesus and was baptized.

2/ What about preaching?

Do we not need to gather to listen to good preaching? Interesting question! There is a lot of focus on preaching in every building centric group of believers. The better the preacher, the more people he can gather and the more resources he can control. Preaching is a means to much influence and recognition.

We have already seen what Paul's attitude was towards the elders who would gather to themselves. He called this "perverse". His vision was consistent with the Master's in Luke 10. That is a vision of small, organic groups multiplying by relationships through the culture. Those who gathered to themselves were perverse because they stopped this dynamic of relational discipleship and multiplication.

What was Paul's attitude towards preaching? He is very clear about this in I Corinthians 2:1- 5,

"And I brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear,

and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

We do not understand the cultural context of that day and therefore miss what is going on here. One of the primary arts of that day was oratory. Great orators were the rock stars of the Roman world, moving their audiences to tears and roars of laughter. Paul knew this and as one of the most educated men of this day was almost certainly trained in this art. The Corinthians expected Paul to speak to them in this way.

Paul refused to do so. He would rather come across as weak, trembling and fearful. Hardly someone to be listened to according to that culture. But Paul did not want to draw men after himself. He wanted their faith to rest in the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. He refused to operate in the area of human gift, using human wisdom and force of personality.

The danger is that if you let some people preach to you hour after hour, week by week, conference after conference, and audio after audio, they can make you believe that black is white! Error is preached with the same conviction and anointing as truth. Not possible you say? Absolutely possible. It happens all the time. How did the prosperity “gospel” become so accepted in so many circles around the earth? How could something which has no basis whatsoever in the New Testament gain such a hold on the hearts and minds of believers? Hour after hour of preaching and teaching using scripture taken out of context and appealing to human greed and need.

Just prior to his death, Kenneth Hagin Senior, who is often called the father of the faith movement and, by extension, the prosperity gospel, wrote a book called “The Midas Touch”. In that book he rebuked his followers for their materialism and manipulative fund raising tactics.²⁷ That is not a book that the prosperity preachers, who call Hagin their spiritual father, will send to you for your next donation.

My conviction is that the prosperity teaching and threatened curses and promised blessings around tithes and offerings is exactly the same thing as circumcision was in Paul’s day. It is another gospel and deserving of Paul’s condemnation in Galatians 1:8,

“But even if we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”

Paul is giving Timothy instruction about how to deal with false teachers in I Timothy 6:3-6 and concludes that these are *“men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who*

27 “Kenneth Hagin's Forgotten Warning”, Lee Grady (3/7/08), www.charisma.com/fireinmybones/index.php

suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself."

That is very strong but very needed instruction!

In this context of questioning preaching, I Corinthians 14:26 is very powerful. *"How is it then brethren? When you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."*

If we obey this instruction, no one person can dominate, manipulate or in any way drive the flow of teaching and instruction in any one direction. This is the atmosphere of question and answer, of challenge and response. This is the flow which the Holy Spirit can direct through each member of the Body. This is the structure in which Jesus can be the real head of His body and not just a figure head while someone drives their own agenda. This is the give and take where each scripture can be balanced by another and where Jesus can speak through every member of His body.

When we go into the heavy preaching context the leaders often prepare the ground by actually declaring or subtly implying that the one preaching is the "man or woman of God" (this is an Old Testament designation and anyone who uses it exposes themselves as having no grasp of the New Covenant priesthood of all believers) who is to be listened to without question. Here spirituality is judged by unquestioning acceptance of and submission to the person and the teaching. This is the foundation of every cult. Normal questioning and accountability is squashed and a cult of leadership is encouraged. This is not the church of Jesus Christ. Question everything! The Holy Spirit cannot guide you into all truth if you do not ask Him questions.

As John of old declared in I John 2:24- 27, *"Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us- eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him."*

One of the problems with the preaching, conference context is that you must come up with something new all the time to sell more books, to sell more conferences, to sell more videos and to attract more TV viewers. You have to come up with something new to keep the money coming and the ministry machine rolling. You are not living the kingdom and going to the next village to start the next house church. You are only talking and taking. And after a while, to have something new to sell, you have to start making it up. You ask how could somebody just make it up? That is not so difficult once you have become someone who is selling the word of God. Once you have lost your integrity and become a pedlar of the word, it is a small step to begin selling lies.

What about sincere, committed servants of God who view their primary task as preaching to feed their people and to motivate them to good works? The problem of preaching still remains. Preaching to people to see them change and do the works of the Kingdom is like pushing a string. Thus the preacher gets frustrated because little happens. However, Christian leadership is not about vision casting and motivating. Those words are not Biblical words. Christian leadership is about example and influence. You pull the string by being first to do the stuff.

House to house and relationship to relationship is pulling the string. It is not about a performance world of words, appearance, personality and emotional hype. House to house is about relational integrity and the demonstration of the Kingdom.

Someone has said that disciples are not made from the pulpit. Disciples are made on the pavement.

Again, what about preaching? It has a very limited place. A case can be made that preaching is something we do before not yet believers. If I Corinthians 14:26 is to be obeyed, the body of believers will share time together in a very different way. They each have the Holy Spirit. They do not need someone to preach to them.

“How is it then, brethren? When you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. I Corinthians 14:26

3/ What about corporate worship? Do we not need to experience that dynamic?

It should be clear that “corporate worship” is not a New Testament term. It should be clear that in the first three centuries of the church there would not have been pipe organs, choirs and gowns. It should also be clear that there would not have been rock band style, amplified, jumping, dancing, celebrity led “worship” either. With this recent phenomenon has come language speaking of the “corporate anointing”, “the manifest presence of God”, “the weight of glory”, “building an altar of worship so that the fire of God can fall”, etc. This language speaks to an understanding that more healing and deliverance takes place in an atmosphere where people are experiencing this “corporate anointing” and “manifest presence of God”.

Really? How would you tell the difference between the “corporate anointing” and the feeling at a football game or rock concert? All these kinds of experiences involve a crowd of people all focused on one thing and chanting or singing and experiencing a oneness with those around them. All religions emphasize the power of unity and the power of numbers.

However, the probability of God answering a request does not go up with the numbers of people praying! James tells us that the “effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” and then points to the example of Elijah (James 5:16- 17). We are not heard due to numbers or repetition. We are heard due to humility and faith and relationship with Jesus.

How do we understand this “corporate anointing”? Darren Brown²⁸, a British illusionist who was once a charismatic Christian, would say that the orthodox use candles, incense and chanting to move people into a state of slight euphoria which they then attribute to the presence of God created by the rituals. Darren would say that the charismatics use lively worship, dance and repetitive preaching to move people into the same suggestible, euphoric state and attribute that to the presence of God created by the activity. Interesting!

Ever wonder why so many, who testify to being healed in crusades, lose that healing afterwards? Darren Brown’s answer would be that the atmosphere of the meeting creates a euphoric state or a mild hypnosis where the crowd is open to suggestions such as “Feel the anointing!”, “Is the pain gone?”, “Do you feel better?” Under hypnosis one does not feel pain. Once the suggestive state wears off the pain comes back and you “lose your healing”. You lose a healing you never had.

When did “worship” become an hour or two of intense singing led by a professional band anyway? When did the purpose of this singing become entering a euphoric state? New Testament worship is a life laid down unto Jesus in sacrificial obedience.

“I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1- 2

There is nothing in that scripture about an emotional high to be attained by an hour of singing. In this pursuit of feelings we are conformed to the world. We want an emotional experience and often have little intention of actually obeying Jesus once we leave the site of the experience. Is all corporate worship bad? Of course not! Is everyone simply there to have some kind of emotional masturbation experience when they “breakthrough”? Of course not.

However, the point is that this is completely outside of New Testament reality or any instruction from Jesus. Extra biblical stuff always ends up in problems no matter the original intentions of those who started it.

28 Darren Brown, www.youtube.com

The understandings that underpin these corporate worship events are destructive of New Testament realities:

1/ Worship as an event in a building led by professionals puts us back into the religious mode common to all religions. It makes worship a performance whose quality is judged by the artistic excellence and the emotional experience. In short, it makes worship a show whose purpose is an emotional high as judged by the humans doing it. Man is the centre. This is religious humanism.

2/ Worship as an event and a performance reaches back into the Old Testament for its justification. In the Old Testament God lived in the tabernacle and then in the temple. His fire came and went. His presence came and went. The Holy Spirit came and went. They had priestly classes whose only job was to worship in six hours shifts. These Old Testament realities are imported into our contemporary worship experiences with the language of welcoming the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit falling and through the exaltation of various stars who supposedly carry an ability to minister the anointing. We are firmly back in the Old Covenant. The New Testament reality is "Christ in you the hope of glory"!

3/ A common word at these kinds of worship events is that God only meets the hungry and that we have to be hungry and desperate for God. God does meet the hungry and desperate and we have experienced His filling and refreshing as we have sought Him in our broken and desperate state. However, this language very easily becomes Old Covenant. For example, "We must cry for God to come and meet with us.", "We must seek His face and His presence." "We must build an altar for the fire to fall." "We must go up to the high places." "We must have the manifest presence of God." All this language is designed to produce an emotional fervor and expectant atmosphere.

What is wrong with that? Maybe very little but if it pushes us back into Old Covenant mind sets, we come into problems. They had the manifest presence of God in the Old Testament because God could not dwell in His people. The heathen go up to the high places! God is somewhere out there. Compare all that language with this prayer,

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the whole family in the heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" Ephesians

3:14- 21

Whether in a large meeting or small, there are some who do receive healing and some who do not. Healing miracles that last depend upon the heart of the receiver more than the place where they happen. However, we can testify ourselves and have received many testimonies of lasting healing miracles that took place as the saints prayed for their friends in living rooms and on the streets. There is no music. There is no special atmosphere. There is only a quiet faith in the indwelling Christ and the abiding anointing of the Holy Spirit to work because He loves people and loves to bring glory to Jesus. What Jesus heals stays healed.

True worship is a life lived all day and every way to the glory of God. True worship has little to do with music or a crowd. The New Testament worship was the love feast meal where they served and waited on one another. It had nothing to do with creating an atmosphere or something coming down. It had all to do with the indwelling Christ and how we honor one another as the temples of the Holy Spirit.

The hype around hunger and thirst for God is an abuse of one of the beatitudes where Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6). "Righteousness" in this verse could be more properly translated as "justice" or "social justice". This is not an individual, personal, inner holiness but right relationships, justice for the poor and provision for the orphans and widows. If this is the kind of righteousness you are seeking, you do not go to a meeting to find it! You go to the streets to do it. You are looking for Jesus in the least.

If your hunger is for Jesus, even Jesus says that He is not with the ninety-nine who are safe in the fold but out seeking the one who is lost (Luke 15:4). You are still going to the streets!

What did Paul do when seeking God? He did not go to Jerusalem where the best meetings were. He went to the desert.

What did Jesus do? He spent nights in prayer. He went out and prayed early in the morning.

Do you want God? Go to where you can seek God without distraction, interruption or diversion. Meet Him in the temple of your heart. Meet Him in the secret place. It is Christ in you who is your hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Whatever else it means, being hungry and thirsty for God does not mean that you go to endless meetings. That is what some revivalists want you to believe but then they make their money by having meetings.

Going to meetings does not prove that you are hungry and thirsty. It may only prove that you have bought into a religious culture which is focused on ecstatic meetings conducted by charismatic personalities.

3/ What about consistent, extended pastoral care? Do we not need to make sure that people really are walking with God? How can you only stay with a person of peace for a short time and then leave them?

The New Testament record is that Paul rarely stayed long term in any one place. He was in Ephesus for two years with the testimony that as a result “all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:10). What is the dynamic here?

The school of Tyrannus was probably an area of sidewalk beside a brothel where Paul could interact with small groups. How could all Asia hear the word of the Lord from there? Ephesus was a business and religious hub. Paul would disciple those who came and then they would go and others would take their place. These disciples went back home and thus all Asia heard. The dynamic was sending and multiplication not attraction and addition.

Paul understood that he was laying a foundation of Christ in their lives and then trusting them to Christ as he sent them out. Listen to Paul in I Corinthians 3. The chapter is a powerful affirmation of the activity of God in the lives of His people. Paul had total faith in God’s ability to act. Listen to these phrases about God at work:

*“the Lord gave to each one”
 “but God gave the increase”
 “for we are God’s fellow workers”
 “you are God’s field”
 “you are God’s building”
 “all things are yours”
 “you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s”*

“According to the grace of God which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds upon it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.”

Where ever he went, Paul laid such a foundation and knew that his job was done. He could leave the church after three or four months and trust that God would continue to build it. What was that foundation? The foundation was Christ.

Jesus died so that you could be in Him. Jesus died so that you could hear His voice. Jesus died so that you could be filled with His Spirit. Jesus died so that He could show you His Father. Jesus died so that He could be your head. Jesus died so that His glory could be your covering. Jesus died to be the one mediator between you and God. Jesus died so that He could give you the authority of His name.

Paul, then let each man build upon that foundation. He did not try to protect them from mistakes. He was not mothering them. He was fathering them. The fire would reveal what they had built. If they destroyed what God was building, God would destroy them. Paul took no responsibility for what another man built. He had placed them in God's hand.

How did this work out in practice? The big issues of the time were what day of the week to gather and whether or not to eat meat offered to idols. You would think that Paul, the apostle, the one with the revelation, the one who founded the churches and the spiritual father would simply settle the issues with a decree. He did not do that.

In Romans 14 he sets out the issues and the principles but makes no rules except that of love. In II Corinthians 1:24 he declares, "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy: for by faith you stand." Please note, that was spoken to the most immature church in his care. In matters of discipline, he did not command but appealed. If he had taken dominion over their faith, he would have caused them to fall.

Why would he cause them to fall? He had laid the foundation of Christ. If he did not honor and trust that foundation how would the Corinthians? Paul was letting Jesus build His church. He was practicing what Roland Allan calls, "the art of withdrawal". If the father keeps making all the decisions, the sons never grow up.

There is no such a thing as delegated authority in the body of Christ. There is only the authority of Christ. Christ distributes His authority to each and every member of the body. Authority to be used to serve one another.

If you lay a foundation of Christ, you must withdraw and let them assume their responsibilities as a member of the body of Christ. If you do not they will become dependent upon you. That destroys you and it destroys them. Leadership ceases to be an exercise in influence and example and becomes an exercise of power and control.

Yes, many people want a king and yes, many want to be king. Yes, that can look successful and powerful over the short term. However, even Solomon's kingdom did not last. Some of you are already saying, "But this will encourage rebellion and individualism." Of course it will but that was the risk which Paul was willing to take. It is

better to have the hearts revealed than to have outward submission being worn as a cloak over ambition and lust for power.

After speaking at a leader's conference years ago, I overheard one man say that if he set his people free to the voice of God, as I had been speaking about, most of his church would leave him. His listener agreed. If that is true, you are building through various forms of legalism and manipulation. If so, it is better to have that revealed sooner rather than later! It is better to do nothing.

If you are laying a foundation of Christ in another, you had better be the first one to demonstrate that you trust that foundation or your disciple never will.

God has reserved a space for Himself around every man and woman. He is our glory and the one who lifts our head. One reason so many leaders burn out is that they are in the space that God has reserved for Himself. In making people dependent upon ourselves, we take God's place. You can sit on God's throne if you like but it really hurts when He sits down.

4/ What about apostles and the other five fold ministry gifts- are they not the authority of Christ over the church?

There is a popular picture of the apostle from the new apostolic reformation movements of the apostle as some one who collects churches and then rules over them. Someone who collects existing churches is not a New Testament apostle. They may be a religious administrator but nothing more. A New Testament apostle is someone who opens new areas for making disciples. They are the pioneers, the true sent ones. They are not the conference speakers and platform performers.

For years in some circles it has been standard fare to talk about the five fold ministry. It is interesting that Ephesians 4:11 is the only verse that actually lists them in this way. A lot built on one verse! There is also one verse which speaks about being baptized for the dead. Yes, there is. It is I Corinthians 15:29. Why do we not make a big deal about that verse? Well, we have problems with baptizing for the dead and so try not to talk about that verse.

However, the immature, the insecure and those hungry for power through position love to talk about Ephesians 4:11 because it seems to suggest that there are positions of power in the body of Christ. In the world of individualism and self-actualization we are obsessed with our gifts, our callings and our positions. In an understanding of the Kingdom of God as an hierarchy, we are obsessed with where we fit in the power structure.

What kind of leader seeks to be linked with one of the “apostolic networks”? What kind of a leader seeks out an “apostolic father”? What kind of a leader seeks out titles and labels? The kind of leader that is insecure and does not know who he/she is in Jesus. They are seeking power and authority through association. They are seeking security and place by identification with a movement rather than with Jesus. Is it not enough to have Jesus as your Head? Is it not enough to have God as your Father? Is it not enough to simply be a member of the body of Christ?

“No one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.” Jesus, Mark 2:22

The new wine skin is not some new way of doing church within the four walls and within an hierarchical authority structure. Nobody cares if you move the furniture around inside the four walls or how loud you shout. Nobody cares if you use incense or flags, drums or violins. However, when you say that the Kingdom of God is about friends under the One Head, Jesus, and that it is an upside down kingdom where leadership is a race to the bottom, you are in trouble. You are outside the religious box and a threat to anybody still inside the box.

The new wine skin is the upside down kingdom.
 The new wine skin is the servant leader.
 The new wine skin is the organic church of friends.
 The new wine skin is the kingdom of priests.

The new wine skin is relationships defined by friendship and by the “one another” realities rather than by power and positions in a pyramid.

Of course some will say that each has the same value and that we are all equal in our essential being but that we have different functions. Well that is true but do we use those differing functions to serve one another or do some of those functions give a few the power to give or withhold permission to others? Permission giving puts us back into relationships defined by power. This is George Orwell’s “Animal Farm” where all animals are equal but some are more equal than others.

The five fold ministry gifts are not about positions, authority or a place in a structure. If you serve the least, the world and the body of Christ- if you become a servant to all- your life may produce certain kinds of fruit. If your friends recognize that fruit, they may begin to bless you as an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor or a teacher.

Or maybe the five fold ministries are stages in our lives. We begin as evangelists telling friends and family about our new life in Jesus. As they come to Jesus we begin to teach them about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. We pastor them through the healing of the

relational issues of life through forgiveness, restitution and truth telling. We may need prophetic insight to release relational knots and to set them free. As we mature and help groups of disciples mature, we begin to move into new territories to start all over again with sharing Jesus and making disciples. We move into the phase of being an apostle, the lowest of the slaves of Christ, taking the most risks and exposed to the most danger.

Or maybe the five fold ministries are expressions of how Jesus works through our lives in loving and serving people as the needs present themselves. Because we are members of His body, He expresses Himself through us in His fullness when we need to act as a pastor, prophet, an evangelist, a teacher or an apostle.

Whatever your calling or ministry is, if you have seen Jesus, you will know that your identity and worth is not in what you do but only in Jesus. If you have seen Jesus, you will know that there is one Lord and we are all friends; there is one Teacher and we are all learners; there is one Father and we are all sons; there is one Holy Spirit and we are all His temple.

Whatever else we may think they are about, the five fold ministries are not about positions and power. They are about love and service. They are not about collecting churches and bringing them under your authority. They are about setting people free to their life and place in Christ. They fit into the new wine skin of friendship, example and influence, not the old wine skin of hierarchy, command and control.

5/ What about accountability? Does it not require positions of authority to hold people to account?

First of all when it comes to long distance accountability where pastors are under an apostle what happens? Nobody is so easily fooled as the off site authority. They can be treated like mushrooms- kept in the dark and fed horse manure.

The leader under them wants to make a good impression and so, only shares the good stuff. When bad stuff comes out, it is often in crises and the top leader does not have the time or the trust needed to deal with something that has been going on for a long time. He is expected to work some kind of a miracle and pull a solution out of nowhere like a magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat. During the time the mess was developing other local people either knew or suspected something was wrong but did nothing since that is not their responsibility. Often the senior leader does not want to question too strongly since that might affect the money flow. It is always a mess. If it had been dealt with by a circle of trusted, truth speaking friends when the issues were small, there would have been a much greater possibility of success.

In reality, a man started lying to the Holy Spirit long before he lied to his oversight. If someone will not be accountable to the Holy Spirit, why do you think they will be

accountable to you?

Truth speaking is one of those “one another” realities. Confession of faults is another. Truth speaking and confession are not about hierarchies and enforced accountability but about friendship, trust, vulnerability, humility and freedom from fear of condemnation. Truth speaking and confession only take place in an atmosphere free from competition, performance values and power struggles.

Hierarchies breed performance and pretense. You have to look good to go up the ladder. The drive to look good means that weakness and failure is covered up. Plus you advance up the hierarchy by gifting and public performance rather than by character and relational integrity. Often those who advance are those of weakest character and least integrity. They know how to play the power game. One part of that game is the little rule- If I scratch your back, you scratch mine; If I cover for you, you must cover for me. Hierarchies can have all the appearance of accountability and that is the point- appearance with out reality.

Hierarchy and ministry performance mentalities destroy friendships. Those consumed by ministry ambition do not have friends. They only have acquaintances that they use. Those so used do not react simply because they are playing the same game. It is understood that you are using others and being used by them but that is accepted as part and parcel of growing a “ministry”.

Jesus designed His Kingdom to advance through bands of brothers. He called His disciples friends. No denominational charter or code of conduct can substitute for the vulnerable heart sharing and life sharing of friends. Accountability cannot be enforced no matter how much power one may have over another. We were not made for pyramids. We were made to be the friends of God and friends of one another.

The highest calling is to be called “friends”. Let us follow Jesus as His friends and be friends with one another.

APPENDIX 1- 4

APPENDIX #1- APOSTLES, SLAVES OF CHRIST by Brian Dodd

Why do some apostles make themselves into super stars? And conversely, why do some folks claim there are no apostles today? Paul identifies it as one of the five gifts needed for the building up and maturing of the church. Why would some exalt this gift? And why would some believe that God has taken this gift away?

The answer is centered in a misunderstanding of what an apostle was in the first place (in the Greco-Roman social context), and is based on a hierarchical understanding that places apostles at the top of the church structure when the New Testament clearly places them at the bottom. The understanding of leadership in the New Testament that should frame our understanding of apostles is the foot-washing, low-status slave (John 13), and the “race to the bottom” to become a “slave of all” (Matthew 20:20- 28; 1 Corinthians 9:19).

An “apostle” in the ancient world is simply someone who is sent (Greek: *apostolos*). An apostle was someone who was sent to conduct business on the behalf of another. There was—originally speaking—nothing religious about them. They were normally an unvalued slave, who was expendable. Travel in the ancient world was dangerous, and something that individuals did not choose lightly. Who would have the right to send someone on their behalf? A slave owner or a governmental or military commander. The person sent—the apostle—did not have a choice. In the case of the government or military, the apostle sent with orders normally would be a part of an armed entourage. The slave-apostle would not have such protection. The master would pick the slave he could most afford to lose, and send that one to conduct his business in some extended location. The apostle-slave might be the same as the lowest household slave who was

given the shameful duty of washing feet (see John 13). Mattering least, and therefore sent.

Paul identifies himself as one such sent-slave in many ways in his letters: “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1). Paul’s most common self-description throughout his letters is: “I am a slave who is sent by Jesus to non-Jews to communicate the good news that the Kingdom of God has come in Jesus.” English readers of the Bible find it easy to overlook this important aspect of Paul’s self-understanding, since the 190 different Greek terms used for slavery in the New Testament are sanitized to “servant.” This is not a very appropriate translation, since in Paul’s day 1/3rd of the population of the Roman empire were masters who owned slaves, 1/3rd of the people were slaves, and 1/3rd were former slaves. Paul makes it clear what he means: slavery to Christ is about exclusive ownership—Christ is master/lord (*kurios* is the simple word for master-owner of a slave). “Am I now trying to win the approval of people or of God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ’s slave” (Galatians 1:10).

Another problem in understanding how the word “apostle” is used in the Bible is the medieval pictures we have in our minds of the twelve disciples of Jesus with halos around their heads. They were high status people with a lot of power, and there were only a few of them. This is a complete revisionist interpretation of what an original apostle was. “Apostle” was not a title for a high status leadership position. Before and after Jesus “apostles” were low status slaves with no power of their own, and they were as common as dishwashers are today. If we practiced slavery like they did in the ancient world, when you said “apostle” today no one would think of the manager, owner or executive of a restaurant. They would think of the dishwashers and busboys. “Apostle” was *not* a claim to high status or authority, but a claim to low status and expend-ability. When you attached the words “of Christ” this communicated whose business and authority the apostle was operating under. Christ is the boss, He sent the apostle and, when the apostle speaks, he is merely the conduit.

“Apostolic” is not a scriptural term. If I were speaking scripturally, I would have explained why slave-apostles (like helps, giving, mercy, etc.) were common gifts then, and should be now. There were many apostles in the New Testament who were not the Twelve or Paul, who didn’t author scripture, and would not have considered the gifting a title, status or privilege. What we need more than anything is a release of these kind of slave-apostles for the mission of Jesus to the lost and hurting. God is a sending God and commands His followers to go to those who have lost their way, not waiting for them to come to us.

Many leaders have heard the buzz and read the books and would like to be “apostolic in their leadership” and yet remain in-charge, in safety and security, in the cushy-comfort

of some Christian bunker. Can't be done. To be an apostle is to become expendable, low status, and exposed to ridicule and insecurity in this life: "For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ..." (1 Corinthians 4:9,10).

Apostles are given by God as a gift to the church and the world (Ephesians 4:11), and are needed most desperately. A church without apostles (and prophets, for that matter) is a fire without the flame. What's wrong with this Body? We have severed an essential limb of apostles through intellectualism, religious control and the flesh (and therefore most gifts lie dormant and not offered to God—the role of apostles is a mainstay in equipping the Body for service and maturity; Ephesians 4:11ff). Most apostles are not found in the church-as-we-know-it, and that is why the flame is burning hot elsewhere. Jesus is the boss—as He was sent, so He is sending these He owns to suffer and serve in order to make known the presence and coming fullness of His Kingdom. Apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church-as-God-wants-it (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5-6; 4:11).

We need them to be released. They are little "a" and little "p" apostles and prophets, nobodies who have become somebody to God through Christ. We are not talking about a new version of the "one man show" that plagues the church-as-we-know-it. They are little "a" and little "p" apostles and prophets, but capital "S" on the end: "And God gave some to be apostleS, some to be prophetS..." We don't need more individualistic superstars. We need examples of what it means to "submit yourself to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

Please Lord, send workers into your abundant harvest!

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APPENDIX #2 HOUSE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT²⁹

We begin this appendix by following Luke's record and setting out how Jesus ministered in homes. Yes, He and Paul and the other apostles also ministered in synagogues as well as the porch of the temple early in the book of Acts. However, it is clear from Acts that Paul came to a decision to no longer go to the Jews but only to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6-7). Acts also records that "many... Jews... have believed and they are all zealous for the law." (Acts 21:20). However, this portion of the church did not survive the third century, presumably because these believers in Jesus were absorbed back into the synagogue system.

So yes, there was a mix of meeting venues in the beginning but those to whom the New Testament was written met wherever life happened and that was primarily in homes.

A/ Nine references, from Luke's record, of Jesus ministering in homes:

Luke 5:19, And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down, with his bed, through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

Luke 5:29, Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

²⁹ For scholarly treatment of the church in the home in the New Testament see *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Settings* by Robert and Julia Banks (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 1994 and *House Church and Mission: the importance of household structures in early Christianity* by Roger Gehring, (Peabody, Hendrickson), 2004.

Luke 7:36, Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat.

Luke 10:7, And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. (the commandment of Jesus to establish house churches)

Luke 10:39, And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. (The home of Mary and Martha was a centre for Jesus)

Luke 11:37, And as He spoke a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat.

Luke 14:1, Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.

Luke 19:5, And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

Luke 21:11, Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?' And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready. (the love feast was instituted by the Master in a home. It was a modified version of the Jewish Passover Meal which was always eaten in homes as a family.)

B/ Fifteen direct references to the church in the home in the New Testament:

Looking through the lens of Luke 10 we understand that Paul often wrote to the church of the city and then made references to specific churches in the houses of various saints. These various house churches made up the church of the city. The elders and deacons were chosen from the individual house churches to care for the church of the city. The elders taking general oversight while the deacons administered the care for the orphans and widows in the house churches.

However Paul never wrote to the elders of the church but to the saints. He never instructed the elders in terms of what they should do but always appealed to the whole church.

Acts 1:13- 14, And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying; Peter, James, John, Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus

and with His brothers.

Acts 2:2, And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:46, So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

Acts 5:42, And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 8:3, As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Acts 10:24... Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

Acts 12:12, So when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

Acts 16:15, And when she and her household were baptized....

Acts 16:25- 34, The house of the Philippian jailer

Acts 16:40, So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Acts 28:30- 31, Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Romans 16:5, Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Romans 16:23, Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church greets you.

I Corinthians 16:19, The churches of Asia greet you, Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Colossians 4:15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodiceda, and Nymphas (some manuscripts use the female version, "Nymphia") and the church that is in his (some manuscripts say "her") house.

Philemon 1:2, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church in your house;

B/ Fifteen indirect references to the church in the home in the New Testament:

If we read these scriptures through the lens of building based communities they mean very little but if we read them through the lens of Luke 10 and the fact that the church of the first century was based in homes, they take on a very different meaning and become a part of the story of the simple church in the home.

Acts 18:7, And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshipped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

Acts 19:9, But when some were hardened and did not believe.... he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Acts 20:8, There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered.

Acts 20:20, how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house.

Romans 16:10, Greet Apelles approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

Romans 16:11, Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Romans 16:16, Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

I Corinthians 1:11, For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

I Corinthians 1:16, Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas.

I Corinthians 16:15, I urge you, brethren- you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Asia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints-

Philippians 4:22, All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

11Timothy 1:16, The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain.

11Timothy 4:19, Greet Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

Titus 1:11, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching those things which they ought not for the sake of dishonest gain.

11John 1:1, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth.

APPENDIX #3- THE “ONE ANOTHER” SCRIPTURES

Right doctrine without relational integrity is dead orthodoxy. You do not learn to be friends by sitting in a classroom listening to someone lecture. You learn to be friends by following Jesus together in daily life. The New Testament is full of relational commandments. Forty “one another” commandments are given here but the list could be extended to about seventy if you included similar verses which use words such as “brothers”, “neighbors” or “members”.

These commands, sown through out the New Testament, enforce the reality of communities of friends in flat relational structures who are to act from the heart to serve each other and in so doing serve the King who lives in each one of them.

*1/ John 13:34- 35, A new commandment I give to you that you love **one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love **one another**. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for **one another**.*

*2/ John 15:12, This is My commandment, that you love **one another** as I have love you.*

*3/ John 15:17, These things I command you that you love **one another**.*

*4/ Romans 12:10, Be kindly affectionate to **one another** with brotherly love.*

*5/ Romans 12:10, Giving preference to **one another**.*

*6/ Romans 12:16, Be of the same mind toward **one another**. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

7/ Romans 13:8, Owe no one anything except to love **one another** for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

8/ Romans 14:13, Therefore let us not judge **one another** anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

9/ Romans 15:7, Therefore receive **one another**, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

10/ Romans 15:14, Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish **one another**.

11/ Romans 16:16, Greet **one another** with a holy kiss.

12/ I Corinthians 1:10 ... agree with **one another** so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

13/ I Corinthians 10:24, Let no one seek his own, but each **one the other's** well being.

14/ I Corinthians 11:33, Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for **one another**.

15/ I Corinthians 12:25- 27, That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for **one another**. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members individually.

16/ Galatians 5:13- 15, For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve **one another**. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.

17/ Galatians 5:26, Let us not become conceited, provoking **one another** envying **one another**.

18/ Galatians 6:2, Bear **one another's** burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

19/ Ephesians 4:2, With all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with **one another** in love.

20/ Ephesians 4:32, Be kind to **one another**, tenderhearted, forgiving **one another**, even as God in Christ forgave you.

21/ Ephesians 5:19, Speaking to **one another** in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

22/ Ephesians 5:21, Submitting to **one another** in the fear of God.

23/ Philippians 2:3, Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem **others** better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of **others**.

24/ Colossians 3:9- 10, Do not lie to **one another** since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in the knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

25/ Colossians 3:13, Bearing with one another and forgiving **one another**, if any one has a complaint against **another**, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

26/ Colossians 3:16, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom teaching and admonishing **one another**...

27/ I Thessalonians 4:18, Therefore comfort **one another** with these words.

28/ I Thessalonians 5:11, Therefor comfort each other and edify **one another**, just as you also are doing.

29/ Hebrews 3:13, But exhort **one another** daily, while it is called "Today", lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

30/ Hebrews 10:24- 25 And let us consider **one another** in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting **one another** and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

31/ James 4:11, Do not speak evil of **one another** brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law.

32/ James 5:9, Do not grumble against **one another** brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold the judge is standing at the door.

33/ James 5:16, Confess your trespasses to **one another** and pray for **one another** that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

34/ I Peter 1:22, Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love **one another** fervently from a pure heart.

35/ I Peter 3:8, Finally, all of you be on one mind, having compassion for **one another**; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

36/ I Peter 4:8- 9, And above all things have fervent love for **one another**, for “love will cover a multitude of sins”. Be hospitable to **one another** without grumbling.

37/ I Peter 4:10, As each one has received a gift, minister it to **one another** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

38/ I Peter 5:5, Yes, all of you be submissive to **one another** and be clothed with humility for “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

39/ I John 1:7, But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with **one another** and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

40/ I John 3:11, This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love **one another**.

41/ I John 3:23, And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and **love one another** as He gave us commandment.

APPENDIX #4 – FULL TIME MINISTRY AND FINANCES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In some circles of Christians “full time ministry” has become an idol to be pursued at almost any cost. The attitude behind this pursuit is destructive to the body of Christ. It elevates full time ministers to special saint status above the other members of the body of Christ. Some one has quipped that the pursuit of ministry positions has led to the least hood of all believers.

This idol also introduces a false dualism into our lives in that Christian ministry is “spiritual” or “sacred” work while all other work is “secular” or “worldly”. This is religious dualism and has nothing to do with New Testament understandings or world view.

Paul instructed the Colossians who worked as slaves in chapter 3, verses 22- 24, *“Bond servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”*

This is a theme of the New Testament since we are all royal priests and “one in Christ” as Paul says in Galatians 3:26- 28, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Lambs and goats are no longer the sacrifices. We are the living sacrifices (Romans 12:1- 2) and thus whatever my daily life consists of is my daily offering unto Him. There is no division between sacred and profane or spiritual and secular. Christ redeemed all

of life! Whatever we do, we are to do it unto Him and make that our daily sacrifice.

Many do ministry for money, to be seen, and to pursue status. Ministry is not our identity. Jesus does not receive such ministry as an offering. Ministry done for wrong reasons is not an acceptable offering. It is not what is done which defines what is acceptable as a living sacrifice. It is the heart with which it is done and to whom it is offered. The reward is given according to faithfulness to calling. Serving the least is serving Jesus. The Kingdom of Heaven is the upside down kingdom where the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Thus the unknown person who faithfully serves the least may have a larger reward than the well known conference speaker whose books influenced many.

All legitimate work is ministry! Whose ministry is most important? The speaker or the cook? The speaker or the one who cleans the toilets? The speaker or the driver? Without the cooks, cleaners and drivers there could be no seminar. We are the body of Christ. We are all royal priests and without our service to one another and to Jesus the Kingdom does not advance.

Jesus wants His life to be incarnated in every area of human endeavor so all can see the Word made flesh!

A/ However, the New Testament does speak of those who lived from the Gospel and that this is their “right” and that this right was commanded by the Lord:

1/ Luke 8:1- 3, tells us that Jesus and His disciples travelled without the necessity to provide for themselves because of a group of wealthy women who ministered to them from their private means.

2/ Acts 6:1- 7, tells us that the group of apostles and also the deacons ministered and were supported by the giving of the whole church.

3/ I Corinthians 9:7- 14 speaks of the right of those who minister *spiritual things* to receive *material things* in return and concludes that *the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel*. This is what Jesus did and what He commanded as normal for those who travel like He and Paul did in order to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God.

4/ II Corinthians 11:9 is Paul's testimony of how his needs, while in Corinth, were met by the brothers from Macedonia. He exercised his right to live from the gospel.

5/ Philippians 4:10- 15 commends the Philippians for their faithfulness to him and compliments them on how they alone, out of all the churches, shared with him in giving

and receiving.

6/ I Timothy 5:17- 20 speaks about giving *double honor* to elders who rule well and also teach. Some would say this points to giving a salary to local pastors. Again let us go back to Luke 10. Why would a group meeting in a home need or want to give a salary to their bishop/shepherd/elder/pastor? Why would he want them to do so? If we see elders as house church leaders who have done a good job with their families and friends and who have been recognized as able to serve beyond their own house church then this starts to make sense. They travel to give counsel, to teach and to help start new house churches. As traveling servants they are not able to work their professions and trades as previously and need to exercise their right to live from the gospel.

However, one of the constant characteristics of rapidly multiplying house church movements is self supporting local leaders and most often, at least partially, self supporting traveling leaders as well. Those who lead are self supporting. If you are perceived to be paid to say what you say, your words have little moral authority. If you are speaking at your own expense your words acquire greater authority. You must believe what you are saying!

Plus the activity of earning your own support keeps you engaged in the normal world which is where the harvest is. So many leaders are isolated in the Christian ghetto, speaking to themselves and leading by decree, that is, they act like saying a thing and doing it are one and the same. They are not accountable to normal life and to being judged by fruit.

Paul is an example for self supporting servant leaders.

B/ Paul's example and teaching regarding why he often refused to exercise his right to live from the gospel...

1/ Acts 20:26- 35 is the record of Paul's final address to the Ephesian elders and is very confronting in terms of his teaching and example. He states that he has coveted no one's stuff, that he worked with his own hands to provide for himself and his team and then says, *I have shown you in every-way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

He presents his life as an example and a norm for those who would lead others to follow Jesus. He expects the Ephesian elders to follow his example and work as he did. This is an example for all elders for all time. It is also a scripture about finances that you will never hear at a conference!

2/ I Corinthians 4:12 states simply, *And we labour with our own hands*. Paul presents this as evidence of his love and care for the Corinthians and as proof of his fatherhood towards them.

3/ I Corinthians 9:1- 19 is where Paul speaks of how other apostles have exercised their rights to take along a wife and to live from the gospel. He states again that he and Barnabas have not exercised their rights in the gospel but have continued to work to support themselves and to *endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ*. How could accepting money from the Corinthians hinder the gospel? Very simply, they could accuse him with only coming to them in hope of receiving something from them.

4/ II Corinthians 11:7- 9 records part of Paul's moral authority to the Corinthians as being that he preached to them *free of charge* and kept himself from being a burden to them.

5/ II Corinthians 12:13 again records how Paul kept himself from being a burden to the Corinthians.

6/ II Corinthians 12:14 repeats the theme of not being a burden, *For the children ought not to lay up for the parents but the parents for the children*. Those who call themselves "apostolic fathers" and who teach that their sons need to tithe to them have simply never read their bibles and expose themselves as being motivated by greed. They are not apostles as Paul was. According to Paul they are false apostles.

7/ II Corinthians 12:17- 18 lets us know that those on Paul's team walked as he walked when it came to finances. Sometimes the leader of a ministry will not talk about finances but will let one of his team do so on his behalf. He wants to keep himself above the talk of money. Paul did not do this and could point to all of his team as sharing his values and commitments.

8/ II Thessalonians 3:6- 12 is a very simple instruction. Paul counsels them to withdraw from any brother who walks *disorderly* meaning anyone who does not work! His example of working is held up although he states his right to live from the gospel and asks them to follow his example. The conclusion? "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

C/ False apostles and prophets are exposed by their love of money...

Paul was very aggressive in exposing apostles and prophets as false by their attitude towards money. In this context, it is not surprising that he was so adamant about working to set an example to the other leaders.

Jesus condemned the Jewish leaders for their love of money, position and honor. He condemned them for placing burdens on men's shoulders which they themselves did not help to lift (Matthew 23:4) and a large part of that burden was financial exploitation.

All priestly and temple systems around the world place a large financial burden on those who go to them. Religion always oppresses people and especially the poor, for money. Paul wanted no part of that and, like Jesus, was very clear in his condemnation of those who ministered for money. By his working night and day to support himself he was determined to set himself apart from those whose motivation was greed. He would rather suffer than give anyone grounds to charge him with selling the word of God.

If this was true in Paul's day, how much more in our own, where the whole world thinks every Christian leader is only in it for the money. Books are promoted, religious trinkets are sold and lies are told about 100 fold blessing if you only give and all by con-men wearing Rolex watches and designer suits. However, those who love the word of God do not sell it.

1/ II Corinthians 11:13- 20 speaks directly to *false apostles*. Paul accuses the Corinthians of putting up with abusive behavior such as *If one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face*. Those are false apostles who bring the saints under their control, manipulate them for money and use them to build their own little kingdoms.

2/ I Timothy 6:3- 10 is Paul speaking to Timothy about false teachers *who suppose that godliness is a means of gain*. And his commandment to the saints when they meet up with such false teachers? *From such withdraw yourself*. By this standard we need to distance ourselves from most of those preaching on TV and from all those who preach prosperity as proof of obedience and faithfulness.

3/ Titus 1:11 records Paul teaching Titus that there will be false teachers *whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain*. Yes, the television preachers use the Bible. Yes, they call themselves Christians. Yes, they seem very successful. But Paul says their *mouths must be stopped*. Why? The main purpose of all that they do is to raise money.

4/ I Peter 5:2- 3 is a call to the shepherds to serve the people of God willingly and eagerly and *not for dishonest gain.... nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock*. Again the theme that greed and control render our leadership false, followed by the stunning statement that *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble*. How does God resist the proud? The verb there is not passive and could read, "fights against the proud". I do not want God fighting against

me!

5/ II Peter 2:3 and 14 are clear statements that the false is identified by covetousness. How does this work? One leader has a certain kind of car or certain office furnishings and the next wants that as well. One TV preacher has a private jet and the rest all want one as well. This is not about "spreading the gospel". That is a lie. This is about covetousness.

As celebrity Christian leader after celebrity Christian leader is exposed in financial and sexual scandals it is clear how God fights against the proud. He lets the trinity of evil have its way. First is the pride of life, the pride of position, accomplishment and gift. Then the lust of the eyes begins to be fulfilled. We can have what we want. The money of the people of God is abused to finance an executive lifestyle. Then it is the lust of the flesh and sexual sin (Proverbs 22:14). If I can have any thing I want, why not any woman or man?

When Paul was instructing Timothy about his relationship with elders in I Timothy 5:17-21 he struck a balance between receiving accusations and rebuking those in sin. Accusations were not to be received from only one person. However, those leaders who were found to be sinning, Timothy was to *rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear*.

We are seeing more and more serious sin of the celebrity leaders being covered up by those around them and in ministry with them. If anyone seeks to confront and discipline them about greed and money they are told that they have a religious poverty spirit and are judgmental. If one seeks to confront sexual sin they are told that they have no mercy, are not redemptive and finally that the world needs the gift of the fallen one so that there must be restoration. There is no rebuke and there is no fear. There is only justification for sin and a drive that the show must go on.

Most "Christian" media is very good at creating opportunities for men to speak *things which they ought not for dishonest gain* but very poor at making disciples. Media is good at creating an audience and a financial base but very poor at creating sacrificial followers of Jesus. Jesus entrusted His whole life's ministry to twelve disciples and trusted them to multiply His life through face to face relationships. He had no plan B. The only plan is relational multiplication under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

We are followers of Jesus. Do not be deceived by the power of media and by its celebrity Christians. Jesus pioneered and modeled His method of advancing His purposes and that was to invest His life in a few and to empower them to do the same. We cannot improve on His method.

D/ Caring for the Poor in the New Testament

We have referred to the reality that Jesus made a total identification with the poor and declared that whatever is done unto the least is done unto Him. Matthew 25 and Isaiah 58 should be foundational passages in all of our thinking and living, as they were to the first century believers. One of the reasons for the rapid growth of the early church was their practice of picking up abandoned babies out of the gutters of the Roman Empire and raising them as their own.

James 1:27, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this; to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

Acts 6:1, "Now in those days... there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution."

I Timothy 5:3, "Honor widows who are really widows."

I Timothy 5:16, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that they may relieve those who are really widows."

The deacons represented those administering the benevolent functions of the body of Christ and they had to deal with the challenges of how to help, who to help and how to sort out those that were asking for help but who really did not need it.

This concern for the poor was the only financial instruction to come out of the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 and the record there does not mention anything about finances. We learn of that from Galatians

Galatians 2:10 "They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do."

However, it was the collection from the churches to help the poor saints in Jerusalem during a time of famine that gives us the clearest picture of how Paul thought about collecting and giving finances to help the poor.

I Corinthians 16:1- 2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."

First of all the collection was commanded but there was no specific amount or percentage demanded. Rather each was to give as they were blessed.

Secondly note that Paul wanted the collections to be completed before he came. Many of our prosperity preachers want to take up their own offerings. Why? They trust their

ability to manipulate people to give. Paul wanted no manipulation or coercion. In the quiet of their own heart before God, the people were to make up their minds about what to give. He modeled his trust in the Holy Spirit to speak to the people of God.

II Corinthians 8:1- 8, ... the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.see that you abound in this grace also.

The offering was for the saints and this *fellowship of ministering to the saints* was entered into with much sacrifice and joy. It is hard to be joyful over paying for bricks and mortar, electricity bills, fuel bills and the salaries of secretaries and janitors to keep a building going. It is another thing to know the fellowship of sacrificing for brothers and sisters.

II Corinthians 8:13- 15, For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack- that there may be equality. As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

This *fellowship of ministering to the saints* was about *equality* and meeting needs so that your needs could be met down the road. How do we see brothers and sisters in need? How do we see our responsibilities towards them? How does the concept of equality enter into our thinking? How does *waiting on one another* apply here?

Some celebrity preachers flaunt their wealth and life style as indicative of the favor of God and proof of their message and to manipulate their listeners to give more since they are "good ground" for them to sow their finances into in hope of financial harvest. They flaunt inequality and mock the poor as "bad ground" in which to sow finances This is a total lie.

God declares the "*poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those that love Him*" (James 2:5).

Proverbs declares that "*He who has pity on the poor, lends to the Lord*" (Proverbs 19:17).

II Corinthians 9:1, "Now concerning the ministering to the saints....

The offerings were for the saints, not for the leaders. Even in the book of Acts where the offerings were *laid at the apostle's feet*, the main purpose of the offerings was to care for the saints and especially the widows and orphans. The offerings were not used to support an executive life style of the leaders.

II Corinthians 9:5 “ ... as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.”

New Testament giving is to stay in the realm of generosity and never become legalistic obligation or coercion. The New Covenant is a covenant of a new heart from God, like God's, a heart of generosity. Do we trust the generosity of God through His people or not?

II Corinthians 9:6, “... he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

The promise of sowing and reaping is made regarding giving to the poor and this giving releases a harvest of *all grace, an abundance for every good work (9:8)*, and will *multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness (9:10)*, *causing thanksgiving through us to God (9:11)*, makes them *glorify God (9:13)* and increases *their prayer for you (9:14)*.

Thanksgiving, prayer and glory to God are listed as being multiplied as well as seed to sow again in the future.

James 2:5, “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him.”

James chastises the church for giving preference to the rich and confronts them with the fact that to do so is to show *partiality* and to become *judges with evil thoughts*. The standard is *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. We are still asking the question, “Who is my neighbor?” That is a huge question in the global village where we know the suffering of so many. It is also a huge question within each village where you know the person across the street or on the street. James' conclusion?

James 2:15- 17, “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled.' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does this profit? Thus faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead.”

The New Testament knows nothing about giving to support buildings and lavish life styles. The whole focus is people and that focus is intense with the Master saying that what we do unto the least, we have done unto Him.

Jesus, may we serve You with whole hearts and clean hands.

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SOME OF MY FAVORITES

Houses That Change the World, Wolfgang Simson (Waynesboro, GA: Om Publishing), 2001, 303 pages. This is the book that started it all for many! Complete, readable and powerfully convincing. Thanks so much Wolf!

Organic Church, Neil Cole, (San Francisco, CA, Jossy-Bass), 2005, www.cmaresources.org. Does God only move far far away or long long ago? The account of a movement which started in California and is going around the world.

Simply Church, Tony and Felicity Dale (Austin, TX: Karis Publishing), 2002, 120 pages. A very good introduction to all things house church. Great website at www.house2house.org

Pagan Christianity: The Roots of our Church Practices, Frank Viola and George Barna (Tyndale House). The most heavily footnoted book many will ever see as the pagan roots of modern church practices are documented and exposed.

Church Planting Movements, David Garrison (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention), 1999. A free 30 page booklet is available for download at www.churchplantingmovements.com. The full book and many other resources are also available to order

Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours, Roland Allen (Grand Rapids; Erdmans), 1954. An Anglican Missionary to China, Allan said that his books would not be read until at least twenty years after his death. He still speaks! A classic.

The Global House Church Movement, Rad Zdero (Pasadena: William Carey Library), 2004. A great introduction to the house church movement from a good friend.

For training, example, challenge from David Watson, a foremost disciple making pioneer, go to www.cpmtr.org Practical and powerful!