

CONGRESS OF EVANGELICALS IN THE CARIBBEAN Evening Plenary, October 27, 2009

Action of a Disciple: Model ... Doing

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1. Introduction

Three years ago I attended a weeklong Seminar on Spiritual Direction/Formation and the morning devotions were taken from Revelation 1 – 5, with special focus on Chapters 1, 4 & 5. I had never experienced Revelation in that way. At one time in my life, I read every book I could find on “The Return of Jesus Christ”, indeed on Prophecy, with a view to understanding end-time events. The Book of Revelation was therefore approached by me with that mindset and evoked fear, curiosity, confusion, and of course the eager expectation that I would receive the promised blessing for reading that book of scripture.

Three years ago, my view of the Book of Revelation went through a perspective transformation – indeed a paradigm shift. I began to see the last and final book of the bible as one of the most exciting, affirming and challenging messages among God’s 66 love letters to His children. I began to see the unveiling of Jesus, My Saviour & King – the Lion and the Lamb, in a new, fresh and wonderful way. I owe this amazing shift in my thinking to God’s use of Dr. Larry Crabb, Christian author, teacher and Spiritual Director, as he introduced me to the work of Dr. Darrel W. Johnson, author, professor and pastor.

Dr Johnson in an expository journey through the Book of Revelation provides reasons for entitling his book, *Discipleship on the Edge*. He sees the Book of Revelation “*not a crystal ball revealing esoteric secrets that enable one to escape the harsh realities of life on earth, but a down-to-earth manual on how to be a disciple of Jesus facing the harsh realities of life on earth; in particular, how to do this the way Jesus did and does*”.

He uses the image of *the edge* as the “place” where Jesus calls His disciples to be – living on the edge of the final in-breaking of the Kingdom of God between this world and the next; living on the edge where the in-breaking Kingdom of God presently comes up against the Kingdom of this world; living before the sharp two-edged sword that proceeds from the mouth of the Risen Jesus. He informs that “*the whole book (of Revelation) is written to bring us to the razor-sharp decision: Who will be the Lord of my life and of the world? Whose way leads to the establishing of God’s rule among the Nation?*” (p.15).

The heartening, hope-filled and exciting promise of God in the Book of Revelation is : Look! “*Things are not as they seem!*” Look, you will see the beauty even in your mess. Look! In the midst of chaos and crisis and confusion, history is moving into God Reality. Look! And you won’t fear. God’s reality of love will take away all fear. (1John 4:18).

2. Understand the times (1 Chronicles 12:32)

With this sacred and Sovereign promise, I turn with confidence to **look** at the times we live in. “The men of Issachar... understood the times and knew what Israel should **do**” (emphasis mine, 1 Chron. 12:32)

As believers, followers, disciples of the Jesus of Revelation, we must with discernment and wisdom understand the times. We must engage in “double listening” – even as we listen to God, we listen to the world. And we do this because our mandate is clear:

“... Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”. (Matthew 28: 19-20)

YFC International, in a paper examining global forces shaping Youth Ministry in the 21st Century, identified seven major global change-drivers: Demographic, technological, social/lifestyle and cultural, ideological, environmental, economic, religion/theological and political. (Art W. Deyo, International Liaison Director, Asia/Pacific, YFC/USA World Outreach Office). In a recent meeting of parliamentarians of the Americas and the Caribbean which I attended to examine critical issues relating to Food Security, the Global Economic and Financial Crisis and Migration and Human Rights, the major challenges and crises of the world were listed as: Food, Fuel, Finance and Climate change. Some staggering statistics were shared, including the prevalence of under nourishment in the total population of the Caribbean as being 23% (2003/05 FAO). In Latin America and the Caribbean 51 million people (9 million under the age of five) were estimated undernourished (hungry) in 2007/8, mainly due to high food prices, caused in part by speculative price spikes; world –wide 10 million people die of hunger and hunger related diseases a year; 30 thousand children die everyday from poverty and malnutrition. (WFP).

The world is in crisis – economic, social, political and moral! The Caribbean, our region, is part of this human maelstrom of escalating fear, desperate lack for many, wasteful over consumption for others, breakdown of our major institutions, loss of values and loss of soul!

3. Understanding our Mission

Even as we examine these horrifying statistics, we remember and return to the message of Revelation- God is in control. “Things are not as they seem”. Jesus the Authoritative, Omniscient, Omnipresent High Priest still rules. This earth is His. This world belongs to Him. And He says to us;: *“Do not be afraid, I am the First and the last. I am the living One. I was dead and behold I am alive for ever and ever. And I hold the keys of death and Hades”* (Revelation 1:17-18). And so we take courage and with “bold love” we seek to understand and clarify our mission and mandate as His disciples.

Perhaps this is a good time to define what and who is a disciple. I turn to one of God’s faithful disciples who is now with Jesus, having lived a life of loving commitment and who left his legacy in writing. David Watson, deceased British clergyman, who was described by James I,

Packer as a man who took “*God at his word*”, in his book entitled *Discipleship*, states, “ *a disciple is a follower of Jesus. He has committed himself to Christ, to walking Christ’s way, to living Christ’s life and to sharing Christ’s love and truth with others, (it is) the process by which we encourage another person to be such a follower of Jesus; it means the methods we use to help that person to become mature in Christ and so be in a position where he or she can now disciple someone else.*” (p.66)

Two decades ago, David Watson claimed, “*Christians in the West have largely neglected what it means to be a disciple of Christ. The vast majority of western Christians are church-members pew-fillers, hymn-singers, sermon-tasters, bible-readers, even born-again believers or Spirit-filled charismatics, but not true disciples of Jesus. If we were willing to learn the meaning of true discipleship and actually become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed, and the resultant impact on society would be staggering. This is no idle claim. It happened in the first century....The call to discipleship is a call to God’s promised glory. In view of the urgency of the times, we are to live lives that honour Christ, that heal the wounds within his body, and that hasten the coming of the day of God. This is not a day in which to play religious games. Time is running out fast.*” (p. 16/17) (emphasis mine)

We have come together because we have accepted this call of God on our lives. We have listened to the often “still, small voice of God”, and the constant shrill, cacophony of the world, and we like Francis Schaeffer ask, “*How shall we then live?*” What deeds do we do? What action does a disciple take? And, of course, we turn again to His ever unchanging Word, His manifesto for Kingdom living and discipleship forming, found in Matthew, chapters five to seven. Let us examine briefly, Chapter 5: 13 -16.

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A City on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Believers/Disciples are the “salt of the earth”, and the “light of the world”. This earth and this world rightly belongs to God, with all the resources and all the people. (Psalm 24:1) And therefore our Lord God has every right to delegate to those who believe and follow Him, both the privilege and responsibility, to preserve and enlighten His planet.

In Matthew 5: 13 – 16, Jesus, in very clear and practical terms, sets out what He expects of His disciple followers. The earth is rotten, decaying and dying, “salt” acts as a preservation, to transform from death to life. The world is covered over in darkness, and “light” comes to bring transformation to this darkness. What a mandate! What an awesome privilege and responsibility.

As disciples of Christ, it is imperative that we grasp what our Saviour, Lord and Master is asking of us. What does Jesus want us to see and understand more clearly from these words? What fundamental message or messages does He wish to leave with us that would become for us a way of life, a reason to be, to become and to do? Each of us would need to reflect, meditate and wait

on God for insight and revelation. I would however, like to share four truths that have been gleaned from Jesus' exhortation:

Firstly, disciples are fundamentally different from non-believers. Disciples with the life of Christ within them are “new creatures”, not simply better but “new”. The disciple of Christ is enveloped and endued with the light and life of Christ. The unbeliever is steeped in iniquity and sin, surrounded by darkness and death. (A reality that we often find difficult to accept especially when our significant others are involved).

Secondly, disciples must permeate the unbelieving society. Our mandate is clear, we are not to stand aloof from the death and darkness of the world. Indeed we are strongly admonished to, “*keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven*” (The Message v.16)

Thirdly, disciples can influence non-Christian society. Jesus in His use of these analogies to describe His followers – “*you are salt...you are light*”, provides strong evidence that as “salt” we can **substantially** hinder social decay in this life; and we can by our good **deeds** dispel the darkness of evil.

Fourthly, disciples of Christ must retain our Christlike distinctiveness. The challenge of every disciple is that, even as we permeate and immerse ourselves in non-Christian society, we maintain who we are in Christ – distinctive followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus in His High Priestly prayer to the Father on behalf of His disciples, understanding our vulnerability and propensity to sin, prayed thus: “*not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one*” (John 17:15)

Having established that Jesus' expectation of His disciples is that we be as ‘salt’ and “light” to a dying and dark humanity – the questions we may now seek to answer are:

- How do we bring salt and light to God's earth and world?
- How do we act/live as God's salt and light?

4. The Disciple in the Church and the World

We will seek to do so as we briefly examine how the Church of Jesus Christ, Jesus' disciples, function in the world. The unequivocal nature of Christ's command is clear – be salt and light! Where we run into trouble is our interpretation, and these are many and varied, as to how this mandate is to be carried out. How do we as disciples effectively relate to the world? What do we **do**?

Over a century, a distressing polarization has evolved and debate ensued, creating a distinction between evangelism (winning of souls for Christ) and social concern (caring of bodies for Christ). For decades evangelical Christians denounced and renounced social responsibility, viewing it as a departure from the “true gospel message”.

Thanks to the gracious mercy and faithfulness of an all-seeing and all-loving God, men and women disciples came to discern and accept the truth. The Lausanne Committee & the World

Evangelical in An Evangelical Commitment of June 1982 declared the **two** to be partners and stated that “*the gospel is the root of which both evangelism and social responsibility are the fruit.*”. Winning souls, feeding bodies and building minds are all part of God’s mandate for His beloved followers as they worked in His beloved world.

Increasingly, within the evangelical community, the *old human polarization* was replaced and renewed by the *fresh divine summation* found in the Great Commandment of Love, “love your neighbour...love you enemy”(Mat. 22:39, 5:44), and the Great Commission of Service, “Go and make disciples” (Mat . 28:19)

Today, believers are fairly united in the commitment that our mission on this planet involves relieving human need as well as spreading the good news of salvation. Disciples of Christ continue to care deeply both about giving glory to God through worship and prayer, and about relieving human misery through acts of mercy. Indeed even as God calls us out of the world, He sends us into the world to carry out and complete the work which He began: “...*to preach good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour*”. (Luke 4:18,19)

5. The Disciple in the World of Politics

Even as disciples of Christ struggle to live in tension between the Church and the world, and may find some fulfillment in so doing especially in the fields of social welfare and education, the **world of politics** (an important sphere of influence particularly in the lives of Caribbean people) evokes enormous fear and confusion, within believers, and hostility, belligerence and open enmity between believers who are politically involved and those who are not. I can well recall, with a great measure of sadness, the furor and hostility that came from believers when the Pastor of an evangelical church left his pulpit to answer what he felt was a call from God to contest an election. The loudest condemnation came from evangelical Christians.

Several issues have been identified as contributing to the ongoing controversy regarding believers’ involvement in politics.

One such issue is the confusion in the definition of the word *politics*. I recall my own relief, when years ago I was struggling to find some meaning to my calling to politics, when I read the Lausanne Covenant’s definition of politics as “*the art of living together in a community*”. I felt a definite identification with such a mandate and saw in that description, a reflection of God’s call on my life to serve.

Another major cause of controversy has to do with the relationship between ‘social concerns’ which as I said before are readily accepted, and ‘political concerns’ which are often rudely debunked by evangelical Christians. Should we care who forms a government; what legislations are passed; how a budget is divided (today, I read, with a loud Amen, that developing a Budget should be considered a moral process); whether the gap between the rich and poor widens, who are our international friends, what kind of investment do we attract to our shores, to whom we sell our passports and our prime lands? Should disciples of Jesus Christ care about these issues?

To whom should political responsibility be left? As pervasive and abusive as politics often is, should it be left in the hands of the corrupt, the manipulator, the deceiver and dissembler, the radical and the revolutionary? Can a Christian disciple bring to bear his/her influence as salt and light to not only rescue the spiritually perishing but also to rescue the tragically drowning victim of abuse and work to advocate for justice and for transformation of the system/the institutions that spawn the abuse? Should Jesus' disciples be lobbying for the passage of the Child Abuse Protocol into meaningful and enforceable legislation? Should we even interest ourselves to know the content of such instruments as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (all our governments have ratified these documents) –do we care? Do we wish to bring our Godly influence to bear on the implications of these instruments? Should we be working to change a system which is prepared to continue to give hand-outs to the poor and to keep them powerless for another vote, for another five years, or should our voices be heard in the public square as people of light and life? Should we take such risks? Or is it safer to pray in our churches for issues that we neither understand nor seek to understand?

Will we continue as disciples of Jesus Christ to be safe in our calling, selective in our choosing, and sparing in our caring, or will we heed the powerful call of Isaiah, the prophet, to *“Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out: spare not, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes”*. (54:2)

You may continue to ask what is the biblical basis for this political involvement? Isaiah 59 boldly asserts God's concern for justice. Many Old Testament passages make clear that God hates injustice and oppression, whether it is in Israel, Palestine, Jamaica, Haiti, Indonesia, Rwanda, United States of America, Grenada, Cuba. And God loves and promotes justice on His earth and His beloved world. (Psalm 11:7, 89;14, Isa.5:16, Jer.22:13, Amos 5:24).

In seeking to clarify the challenge of being a disciple in the world of politics, three critical imperatives have been identified:

- (i) Being God's salt and light,
- (ii) Having a biblical worldview, and
- (iii) Doing justice and preaching grace.

I've already articulated God's mandate to His disciples to be salt and light. I can personally testify that in my journey to serving in the political sphere, the question that finally brought it all together for me was, “how could I be salt and light in my country, in particular in the political leadership of my country – a place which I did not initially choose but to which I felt called?” I spent much prayerful time listening to God's response to my question.

Having a biblical worldview or as John Stott calls it, “a Christian mind”, is imperative in today's post-modern, post-Christian world for a disciple of Jesus. John Stott, in his book, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, sees this imperative as *“a way to approach today's complicated questions...to develop a Christian mind...a mind which has firmly grasped the basic presuppositions of Scripture and is thoroughly informed with biblical truth - it is only such a mind which can think with Christian integrity about problems of the contemporary world”* (p.31).

Darrow L. Miller, a strong proponent of a biblical worldview, in his book *Discipling Nations*, makes a bold plea for the bringing to bear of a biblical world view in the discipling of nations leading to “transformational development”. He asserts, “*It begins through the proclamation of the gospel and involves the exchange of lies for truth...and death for life. But...that is only **the beginning**. God intends that whole cultures be reformed to reflect His goodness and glory. To get there, individual Christians must begin thinking about worldviews and laying a kingdom foundation for cultures.*” (p.74).

Whether we accept Miller’s proposition in part or in full, as Christians we know that our view of the world has significant impact on how we carry out our Master’s mandate in the discipling nations. And we are reminded that our goal is nothing short but “the mind of Christ” (1Cor.2:16b)

Our worldview, or view of the world is developed as we renew our minds. Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:2b, “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will*”. As God’s Spirit renews our minds, we begin to see things from His viewpoint. As our lives are transformed we bring with us this transformation as we impact the lives of others. We, God’s disciples, who are called to have the mind of Christ, are we afraid to challenge the minds of those who without the abiding life of Christ “can do nothing?” (John 15:5b).

As to *doing justice and preaching grace*, I owe a clarification of this mandate to Harvie M. Conn, in his little book on *Evangelism*. For him, “*to be interested in things spiritual is to be interested in **all of life**, now touched by the healing Hand of the Holy Spirit.*” He notes, “*At Calvary, Jesus united evangelism with His work of restoring society. He broke the chains that shackled the world’s cultures to their own sins; justice and mercy meet and kiss each other at the blood sprinkled throne of grace we call Golgotha. By faith the world is called to join in glorious liberty of the children of God*” (p.67, emphasis mine)

The question to be asked at this point is, where does our vision of God’s call on His disciples take us? How do we create models of doing – doing that which would lead to transformation in the disciple as well as the discipled –in the individual and in the nation?

6. A Biblical Model of Discipleship

In bringing this message together, I wish to present a brief excursion into the Book of Esther. Esther is described as a Jew in a foreign land, a woman in a male-dominated world, a minority within a minority, whom God raised up in the right time!

The Book of Esther is one of the well loved portions of Scripture. The story appeals to us as fitting to be part of God’s love letters to His people. The book which is covered in ten (10) chapters records the genesis of the Jewish feast of *Purim*. It tells of God’s deliverance of the Jewish people who were at that time in Persia during the reign of Xerxes 1 (486-465 BC), and is marked by God’s Sovereign, yet unseen intervention.

Esther, an unknown Jewish orphan, brought up by her uncle in obscurity, suddenly rises to prominence when she is chosen as Xerxes queen. At a time of grave peril of her people-genocide by a man who hates the Jewish race- she is reminded by her uncle when she hesitates to step forward and expose herself and use the influence of her position to save her people, “...*who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?*”(4:14b).

Esther unflinchingly makes her choice, she summons her people to prayer and fast, and gently as a dove but wise as a serpent she proceeds to act - **to do and act** only as a disciple of the Living, Sovereign God could do. And her confident statement of faith and renunciation resounds through the ages , “ *I will go to the King (on behalf of my people) even though it is against the law. **And if I perish, I perish***” (emphasis mine , 4:16b).

What a truly political act; what a transformational deed! What a display of true spiritual power in the face of evil human power! Of course, the Jewish people were saved; the tables were turned on the enemy. The Jewish holiday of *Purim* is still celebrated today in late February or March. “*Esther’s role in the drama remains as an example of the power of a woman who accepts her responsibility and assignment, understanding her place and position, “for such a time as this”.*(Meryl James-Sebro, *Genderstanding Jesus*, p.113)

Taking the privilege of using Esther’s story as a backdrop, I wish to briefly recount my own part in an event which had tremendous political, social and spiritual consequences for my homeland, Grenada, in the Eastern Caribbean.

On 19th October of 1983, the island nation of Grenada was plunged into one of the darkest periods of its history. The People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) which four years earlier, March 13, 1979 had seized power from the democratically elected government, had now come to a terrifying end as one faction loyal to the deputy prime minister, with the aid of the military, executed the prime minister and a number of members of his cabinet. Dozens of innocent civilians, including women and young students were killed in the gun-battle which preceded the executions.

On August 1986, seventeen (17) persons – 14 members of the revolutionary government and 3 soldiers – were tried for the 1983 murders. Of this 17, fourteen (14), including one woman, received death sentences and three were given long prison sentences.

The fateful decision of whether or not the condemned 14 of the Grenada Revolution be hanged by the neck until dead was uniquely my decision, under the peculiar terms of the Grenada Constitution. In March 1990, I was appointed by the Governor General to be Chairperson of the Prerogative of Mercy Advisory Committee having being nominated by the Prime Minister. I found myself at center stage of one of the most crucial and influential periods faced by our small nation state.

For me, the making of the decision was one of prolonged agony with lingering effects and widening repercussions. But God’s Sovereign intervention manifested itself and so a story may now be told of death and deliverance, mercy and grace, repentance and forgiveness.

Five years after the initial sentencing, the judgment on the Appeal of the “Fourteen” became imminent. My days and nights became haunted. In desperation, I called a trusted Pastor sharing with him the role of the Prerogative of Mercy Advisory Committee. He advised me to go apart and seek God’s direction. He promised to pray for me.

I heeded the Pastor’s advice and took time off to be with God. Kneeling at my bedside, I cried out to God. “Please God, tell me what **You** want of me”.

The violence inherent in hanging repulsed me. I was secretly dismayed and staggered at the task of consenting to hang 14 of my fellow Grenadians, despite of the heinousness of the crime. But, what if this was God’s will? How would I carry this out?

On that fateful Thursday evening in July 1991 which found me on my knees pleading in desperation to God, I reached for my Bible close by and was led by God’s Spirit to **11 Samuel 9** – an unfamiliar story for me at the time.

The story was told of King David who sought to do good to the grandson of his bitter enemy King Saul. David is said to have been motivated by the kindness of God. I found myself reading the text over and over, seeking to understand God’s Word and its message to me. The text from the Amplified version reads:

“The King said is there not still someone in the house of Saul to whom I may show the unfailing, unsought, unlimited mercy and kindness of God? (2 Sam.9:3)

This reading was no accident. Indeed I marveled at what appeared to me to be God’s answer to my cry of desperation..... Why 2 Sam 9? Was God really pointing to **mercy**? Was I seeing what I wanted to see?

On Friday, July 12, news of the verdict broke on the radio. Loud and angry cries could be heard all around of ‘death to the fourteen’.

I stayed in a posture of prayer and supplication for the week following preparing myself for a meeting with the Advisory Committee of the Prerogative of Mercy.

Under increasing burden, I decided to visit a female Pastor friend. She was out. But the Lord led me to another sister in Christ with whom I unburdened myself, told her about my divine leading to II Sam 9. We studied the Scripture and prayed together. God became very real to us during this period and before long we were both weeping in His presence. We praised God and thanked Him for His love and mercy. When our time of fellowship was over, I felt immensely relieved. Indeed I experienced what it meant to enjoy the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding. Although I did not meet my friend, I had truly met with God and left the Church, much renewed in my heart and refreshed in my spirit.

On Friday, July 19 the Advisory Committee of the Prerogative of Mercy met. And after a long, agonizing discussion we agreed on the hanging of five- those dubbed the “ringleaders”. A letter to this effect was prepared for the Governor General. When I saw the matter in writing, I was

completely overwhelmed. All my fears rushed to the fore. The deed appeared done. I was totally unnerved and sick to the stomach. Dear Lord, how could I go through with this decision?

Later that evening in talking to a sister in Christ, she said quite calmly that God's Word was clear on murder. I know she was referring to Numbers, Chapter 35 and so for the entire weekend I meditated on that portion of Scripture. As I continued to reflect on the subject of capital punishment, I returned again and again to II Samuel 9, pondered on Matthew, Chapter 5, as well as the story in the Book of Acts concerning the first martyr of the Church, Stephen who was stoned to death with the approval of Saul, who would later become the Apostle Paul. Was there any room in God's heart for **mercy**?

The more I meditated on the Scriptures, the more I began to see God as One Who intimately knows the human heart and Who dispenses justice and mercy in accordance with **His** sovereign Will, and in relation to His knowledge of the human condition.

I did meet with my pastor friend on the following Sunday. She was not receptive to what I had to share and admonished me to keep silent on the matter. As she saw it innocent blood had been shed and must now be avenged. It is the will of God.

I must admit that after that meeting, the confusion began once more. Was I wrong in thinking that what was coming to me was from God? I spent an agonizing day and night and by Monday morning, I was prepared to accept that, those found guilty of murder should be hanged by their neck until dead.

I went to Cabinet on Monday, July 22, unhappy and uncertain, but ready to concede the hanging of five. The words of Micah the Prophet kept coming to me:

“And what doth the Lord require of you, but to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God”(Micah 6:8)

The compromise weighed heavily on my heart. I was in torment.

Two days later, I visited the Governor General to deliver to him with trembling hands the note signed by me that called for the hanging of five persons. I remained tormented and pressured. I was going against all that was in me.

Still caught in indecision, I felt led to reach out to a trusted Christian brother who happened to be away on business just at that time. In a transatlantic call to him I gained renewed strength and hope. He said: “Sister, God has placed **you** in that position. You are the one who has been given the responsibility. **He** will guide you. Keep the lines between you and God clear and **listen** keenly. If God had put anyone else in that position He would have spoken to that person. He will speak to you and tell you what He wants. Listen to God”. A spirit of peace came with those words and I continued to wait on God.

I could feel the tension in the atmosphere. The local cries were getting louder: “Hang them”. Pressure mounted nationally mostly in favour of the hanging and internationally mostly against. I

spent my time in prayer and was greatly supported by two dear friends who held my hands throughout this trying period – praying me through.

After repeated calls from the family and friends of the 14, I met with a small group informing them of the role of the Advisory Committee. I also shared with them my faith in Jesus Christ and my concern for them. I encouraged them to pray, explaining that only God could now help. I knew that only a miracle would stop the hangings.

On Sunday, July 28, I attended Church Service...at the end of a soul-searching and humbling time of worship, I felt convinced that I should not give approval to the hanging of **any** of the accused. I knew that I would never be able to forgive myself if I did not follow the dictates of my conscience and what I believed to be God's will.

The next day, I proposed to Cabinet that the death sentence be changed to commutation. There was majority support.

On Sunday August 4, I chose to attend Worship Service at the Church of my Pastor friend who had admonished me to be quiet about advising mercy. By that morning my heart was at rest and my spirit at ease. I had made up my mind to do what I believed God was requiring of me.

Nevertheless I prayed to God for a special word of knowledge from the lips of the pastor who did not yet know of my decision. No sooner had I whispered the prayer, but came the 'word':

“There is someone here who has been anxious about a decision. God has told you what to do, just do it, and do not be afraid of what man will say”.

I uttered an inner shout of **Yes Lord!** And gave heartfelt praise and thanks to the Father Who always acts in **His** Sovereign Will. I had received my final confirmation that God had led in that decision. I prayed for continued and increasing strength to follow through.

The first chapter of Jeremiah was my constant source of strength, especially the following verse:

“For you will go wherever I send you. And speak whatever I tell you to. And don't be afraid of their faces, for I the Lord will be with you and see you through”.

After 26 years in prison, on Saturday, September 05, 2009, the last seven of “the fourteen” were released. Their story reflects the unfolding mercy and grace of a Mighty God Who is not hampered by who you are or what you've done in His dispensing of unconditional love and forgiveness. God in an amazing work touched the lives of the “condemned fourteen”. Avowed atheists now boldly declare that “Jesus is Lord!”. Declared Marxists can say today that God's Hand was clearly in their lives throughout the prison term. Children and siblings of the victims can openly offer forgiveness and love to the condemned.

I humbly thank God for my own part in this amazing work of grace – this “*extravagant love of God*”, such “*relentless tenderness*”! It is wholly undeserved...

7. Conclusion – Call to Risky Discipleship

I know that my Redeemer lives! I know that our Sovereign Lord reigns! I know that Our God is active in the affairs of men, that History is in **His** Hand – that He calls us as faithful witnesses, true worshipers and bold warriors to join Him in His redemptive work – to disciple nations, to offer salvation, to feed the hungry, to be makers of peace and builders of culture, to be proponents of justice and agents of change, bearers of salvation and instruments of spiritual deliverance – to bring to this sick and sorry world the only transformation possible through the Mighty, Power and Presence of His Holy Spirit working through His disciples in His Church.

Is **that** too hard for God?

Brethren, Sisteren, God is calling out disciples who understand what the world is saying and doing so that we can speak with a relevant and prophetic word on issues. He is calling us out of our sacred pulpits and cozy pews, our comfortable armchairs and sturdy walls, our safe programmes and stable ministries (which we can do without His help). He is calling us to risky discipleship, to dangerous stewardship, to incarnational fellowship. Let us go forth with one heart, one mind, one voice to reclaim the Caribbean for Christ. We salute and emulate our Cuban brethren as we shout, *“The Caribbean for Christ, Ahora! The Caribbean for Christ **Now!**”*

Amen.