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“Discipling In The Marketplace... Individualism vs. Community”

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Rev. Garth will show how transformed disciples can renew congregations and focus their ministry to respond effectively to injustice, crime, poverty, racism and other daunting evils. He will weave together scriptural insights, and events from his own experience to highlight the relationships and characteristics of a disciple-making congregation. A powerful paradigm for transformation!

A wise man, Oscar Wilde, once said, “Nothing is more obscure than the obvious.” The purpose of this presentation is to explore the “obvious” implications for discipling in the marketplace and how to present the Gospel in a world that is rapidly changing and individuals who are opposed to the proclamation of the spoken Word. As we consider discipleship in the marketplace, a model that is badly underrated and not explored to the fullest extent, we have to pause to look at the nature of the world, our call, the context in which we speak and the nature of the people to whom we speak. As I speak to you today, there is a **Cultural Disestablishment of the Church**. The attitude of many persons in the Caribbean is that the church does not have any automatic claim to be heard. Therefore, the simple point I am making is that the church now has to compete with many other voices as we are in a pluralistic world.

As disciples who function inside and outside of the church, we also have to face the **Devalued and Diminished worth of the Word**, as individuals have become cynical about what we proclaim. We proclaim Christ in a world where people have inflicted upon themselves a **Self-willed incapacity to listen to the Reflective Word of God**. We minister at a time when there is an enormous gap between word and deed.

As we look to the future the Church **must** think seriously about a Biblical perspective and a societal perspective on the matter of discipleship in the marketplace. This is an obvious future that seems to be rather obscure in the thinking of the modern church. Brethren, it is a future that will require new ways of thinking and new approaches to discipleship. It is also a future already anticipated by Scripture and already experienced by the Church in its early history. It is a future that God intends the Caribbean people to come into and we, His church, are His agents to affect this purpose.

Why is the Church constantly playing catch up when it comes to anticipating the future? Perhaps, it is because the Church on the whole would rather not take the risks with its discipleship programmes and methods. What has worked well in the past, it is assumed, will

work in the future. Untried initiative is met with skepticism by too many missions and discipleship committees who are more comfortable with 'proven' methods.

Loren Cunningham was not discouraged by this attitude when he set out 40 years ago to lead a new missions movement of young people. Had he not trusted God and seized upon his vision of waves of young people crashing upon the shores of the continents, Youth With A Mission, would never have been launched and 12,000 Full Time staff, 13,000 Mission Students and 32,000 Short Term missionaries would not be presently ministering in over 700 locations in 135 nations with YWAM.

If those missions committees had looked at the world around them in 1960 they would have discovered the changing demographic and technological contexts that would enable the impossible to be possible in almost fifty years. A huge population was underway globally.

I would like to remind us today that a disciple is someone who has a desire to know Him and to make Him known. A Christian disciple is one who follows Christ, one who submits to His authority, one who hungers to learn His truths and follow through obedience. Someone has said, "As the soldier follows his general; as the servant follows his master; as the scholar follows his teacher; as the sheep follows its shepherd, just so ought the professing Christian to follow the Lord Jesus Christ."

God is continuing to convict me in my ministry to **quit making decisions for the sake of making decisions and get to making disciples**. I am coming to see more each day that the only persons, who matter in any local church, in order to carry the burden of prayer and ministry of evangelism, are disciples.

Frankly, I don't want to be found guilty of calling people to a church membership which in many cases is no more than a cheap substitute for discipleship. What the Churches in the Caribbean need in order to transform individuals, is not necessarily more church members, but more radical disciples and ultimately disciplers. In fact, we need to be busy making disciples out of our church members we already have. There is a ministry we have to have in Caribbean Churches today of Christianizing the Christians.

Meanwhile, the world passes us by. The internet connects people, communities and nations together into a global village. Globalization integrates economies on the way to one marketplace – a virtual one. There is the cry of the poor, 2 billion of whom live on less than \$2 (US) a day, is drowned out by the din of world stock market. The plague of AIDS wipes out whole population groups and puts forty million orphans onto the streets of mega cities.

Of the current world population of over 6 billion people, 50% are under the age of 25. In the next 20 years it is reported that 3 billion young people will enter into the marketplace looking for employment. Many of these young people will not have the knowledge or skills to find regular employment. To survive for their families they will operate micro businesses buying and selling products and services. To provide for their families they will spend most of their waking hours working in the marketplace. These young people represent an incredible harvest field because seven out of nine new Christians come to the Lord before the age of 25. Brethren, to reach these

young people the church must reach them where they are in the marketplace. Yet, in all of this, the church seems to be increasingly irrelevant and the missionaries and disciples of the Church are marginalized.

So the time is ripe for a “**sea change**” in the way we do discipleship. A “**sea change**” is an entire shift in our thinking and our methodology towards discipleship. Within my scheme of thinking the simple truth is, **if we are not willing to change we will not be able to change anything in life.** Without change, we risk the temptation to retreat into our cultural Christian ghetto surrounded by our spiritual walls of the fear of compromise, suspicion of technology and reluctance to risk. Some may even think that this is the place for the Church to be, to wait for the coming “rapture” but it is not the place God wants it to be. There are many lies about ministry in the marketplace and the Church must confront them if we are to transform marketplace ministry and make disciples. Let us look at some of them:

1. **The Marketplace is material and not spiritual**

When we examine this misconception about the marketplace, we must respond quickly and say that the marketplace is very spiritual; and has been controlled by the wrong spiritual forces. This is because as Christians we have allowed this to happen. Satan’s empire is entrenched there. We are commanded to set the captives free. Jesus’ ministry was primarily in the marketplace. He influenced men and women with backgrounds in education, business and finance, media and entertainment, government and politics, church and organizations, healthcare and law and law enforcement. Jesus wants us to be in “the game” of life, but be advancing rather than hiding. (John 17:15)

2. **The Marketplace is “Off limits” to the fullness of the Kingdom of God**

The spirit of God is not geographic and can influence and pull down strongholds in every arena, context and dimension. There are kingdoms in every realm and God wants His Kingdom to rule and set captives free. The captives are in the world and so must we be, to bring them truth to set them free and make disciples of them. ((Psalm 24:1)

3. **Real ministry takes place in the Church**

We are called to be a counter culture and not a subculture. We are not called to do “church” in business, but to bring the Kingdom of God to every phase of life, which includes business. We are to be in the world, but not of it. (John 17:13-15)

4. **The anointing as ministers for the marketplace is less than the anointing for ministry in the church.**

All but one miracle in the book of Acts was in the marketplace. The Lord has anointed His beloved to serve Him and others in a variety of ways and with a variety of gifts. A person can be a janitor who is serving God with his heart and soul and making a kingdom difference, while another man can be serving behind a pulpit preaching the good news. To the measure they are both obedient to what God has called them to do, God is well pleased with both. (Matthew 25:23)

Over the past decade many local churches have been talking about the need to change the model we follow, expanding beyond the Sunday, Wednesday Friday framework to spread the gospel and to disciple individuals. It is basically spreading the gospel through a new paradigm.

This is not revolutionary in this post-modern age, yet translating that into nuts-and-bolts, daily reality poses a challenge that will last for years. In 2005 a book was published by demographer George Barna entitled, “Revolution.” It raised a lot of questions in the church and among other things; it forecast a 50% drop in church attendance by 2025. It also advocated more house churches and informal networks to break out of stodgy, tradition-bound religion. Many criticized Barna for departing from New Testament norms of church government, although he raised numerous complex issues that congregations will grapple with over the next two decades. Ironically, though, in a recent report updating the status of house churches, Barna noted that just 4 of every 10 regular house church attendees (42%) rely exclusively on that as their primary church experience. According to Barna, those who attend a conventional church are generally content to show up and accept whatever the church has on its agenda. He indicated that most conventional church-goers have no desire to help improve the ministry of their congregation, no desire to be involved in discipleship, nor do they feel a need to increase their personal spiritual responsibility.

Before tying yourself into knots of anger at such statements, consider the numerous signs of churches expanding past sanctuaries lined with padded pews (or chairs), whether it includes stained glass or a windowless, multi-purpose room setting.

In his book, “The Forgotten Ways.” Alan Hirsch, writes of a church in Australia that sold its buildings to invest in a shopping mall so it could have a presence in the marketplace, where discipleship and real transformation could take place. I learned of a similar experiment in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where a church purchased the shopping centre where it meets. This location has opened numerous doors with non-believers.

Lately, churches in New Orleans that have attracted newcomers have used unconventional means to reach out, including broadcasting a worship service over a loudspeaker. That touch prompted a service with 6 persons and through discipleship ballooned to 60 persons.

Brethren, no matter what form or venue, Caribbean Churches face tough challenges in the years ahead. Seeking to meet the needs of a lost world will demand shedding our traditional resistance to change. The message is the same, but its delivery will have to be as familiar in patty shops and malls as in front of an organ or piano.

How Do We Disciple Busy Adults

As we think about the model of discipling in the marketplace and the matter of Community vs. Individualism, we have to first of all recognize the reality that adults are busy. It is estimated that many work from 50 to 60 hours a week or more, being involved in leadership in the community and in church, and juggling their personal and family lives. In other words, there’s a decreasing amount of discretionary time among adults. Because this is our reality, it demands that whatever we do we **must focus** on individuals discipling others rather than individuals

discipling large groups. However, we must still work as a team in terms of **organizing discipleship**, rather than as individuals, in order to accomplish greater results.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the learning styles of adults seem to be shifting. Adults still learn best when they need to learn something rather than when someone tells them to learn something. But many churches continue to expect adults to attend Sunday night discipleship training at the church. For most adults, this limited offering doesn't fit into their busy lives. **What structures and relationships can be created to disciple today's busy adult?**

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCIPLING BUSY ADULTS:

Decentralize Discipleship Opportunities.

In the church culture of recent years, church and discipleship were primarily centralized in location and methodology. Today in our secular culture, we **must** return to the days of Acts and the founding of the New Testament Church. We need to become disciples as we go into various arenas of life: parenthood, the workplace, our leisure activities, children's activities, school, government, and community. **Jesus Himself modeled this beautifully. He made disciples in the fishing boat, in the marketplace, on the seashore, and at weddings and parties in the community.** What might this look like in our world?

What can we use to disciple busy adults?

1. **Music, audio, and video.** Music, as well as audio and video from Conferences and Bible teachers, can be used almost anywhere.
2. **Support groups.** When adults ask questions of faith, it might be appropriate to introduce them to a group of people facing a similar need.
3. **Internet.** Discipleship happens around the world as people network with other Christians.
4. **Dialogical sermons.** Biblical sermons directed toward perceived human or world needs can become the basis for a dialogue and can be used to facilitate group or one-on-one discipleship efforts.
5. **Retreats, seminars and workshops.** Today's pleasure-seeking, leisure-oriented adults are reluctant to make long-term commitments. A retreat location offers adults leisure and discipleship.
6. **Phone calls.** Use the phone to touch base, offer support, and deal with life's teachable moments. Calls can also be used to follow up with adults who read articles or use media to do discipleship by themselves.
7. **Travel and leisure time.** Encourage adults to use discipleship-oriented multimedia resources as they make their daily commutes or as they travel on vacation.
8. **Meal times.** Invite families, work associates, family members, church members, neighbours and other acquaintances to a meal (in a home or out at a restaurant) for group or one-on-one discipleship discussions.

9. **Intergenerational experiences. My experience teaches me that so much can be learned from older and younger believers. Many of the ideas presented could be adapted to facilitate intergenerational experiences.**

Integrate Spiritual Foundation with Life Experiences

Every local church should have Christian coaches to disciple adults as they go through life's teachable moments. Coaches should focus on topics such as parenting, care-giving, leadership, teaching and the list goes on. They should provide their experience to guide adults through gaps of knowledge or experience. In other words, coaching moves adults from frustration to action and intentional living – a disciplined life.

Churches should seize teachable moments because these are moments that provide entry points and opportunities for discipleship. Therefore, we need to learn how to listen for and discern these moments.

Another critical thing for us to do is to **sustain spiritual growth beyond church events**. Many churches find it difficult to help adults sustain their growth beyond a significant spiritual event. However, we should consider the avenues for discipleship which I just described.

The “As you Go” Great Commission

The Great Commission calls us to “go” and make disciples. The church places great emphasis upon the word, “GO.” One mission group challenges young people to missions with the statement “What part of the word ‘GO’ do you NOT understand?”

YWAM entitles its directory of mission opportunities “The Go Manual.” Naturally we understand that going means leaving one place and going to another. It means that to do missions we must GO somewhere else. Yet, if we examine the use of the word in the New Testament it can also mean “as you go” (Matthew 10:7). So Jesus is not just calling a select set of disciples who can leave their present location to serve him on the foreign mission field or to lay down their marketplace career to GO into missions full time. He is actually calling all his disciples to make more disciples and to do it “as they go.” Along the way of life they are to introduce others to Christ, in the city, in the workplace, in the marketplace, in the schools, in the places where society gathers and ideas and information is exchanged. These are the places where nations are disciplined.

The Road Less Travelled

Today, the “as you go” way of missions is a road less travelled by the mission movement. However, it is the highway God has prepared for His church to travel if it is to come into its destiny to disciple nations. The tragedy, though, is that while many Christian professionals travel this road they are not empowered to present the gospel nor equipped to disciple the peoples they encounter along the road.

Roland Allen in his classic book, **The Case for the Voluntary Clergy** makes the point well, “Stipendary clergy cut off by training and life from the common experience are constantly struggling to get close to the laity by wearing lay clothing, sharing in the lay amusements, and

organizing lay clubs; but they never quite succeed. The truth is, to get close to men, it is necessary really to share their experience, and to share their experience is to share it by being in it, not merely to come as near to it as possible without being in it.

A New Missions Force – Marketplace Missionaries

The challenge before the Caribbean church is to equip marketplace missionaries; not just professional missionaries, and that means equipping the whole people of God to reach out to the world with the whole gospel of God. Yet, marketplace Christians are valued by the church; not so much for their marketplace position nor for their calling to serve God in the marketplace, but for the money they can generate to support the professional missionary.

These marketplace Christians are encouraged to “partner” with the church and Missions Agencies who are seeking to reach the lost. Rather than considering this partnership as both parties directly involved in the task, the church sees the resource potential of Christians in the marketplace as their only contribution. It seems the church cannot see beyond that to the opportunity for those Christians to be commissioned as marketplace missionaries to reach the nations and teach them through the spheres of commerce, healthcare, education, science, technology and government. This is a myopic view of a huge segment of the body of Christ with tremendous potential to disciple the nations.

A powerful Reminder to the Church

As we go forward to make disciples and to empower our members to become disciples in the marketplace, let us remember that it is not by **money, manpower or methodology**. We are to go with the **Power of Christ**, a power that is **supernatural, Pentecostal and effectual**. Let us never forget that we have authority to **Release Divine power and Resist demonic power**.

We are not only to go with the **Power of Christ** but also with the **Programme of Christ**. We are to bring people to **Believe on Christ**, to see that they **Belong to Christ (in union with the Triune God)** and to bring them to **Behave as Christ**. This can only be accomplished as we embrace the **Presence of Christ as we go**.

Conclusion: Forward to Nation Discipling

The challenge for the Caribbean Church is not only to choose to **GO** but to choose to go to the right places, which include the marketplace. It is estimated that by the year 2050, 80% of the world's population will live in cities where only 200 years ago most of the world lived in the countryside. Today, frontier missions are done in Borneo, but it is the urban jungle of Calcutta or Beijing where the harvest is really ripe. This is where there is great opportunity for evangelism and for the discipling of nations. To rise to this challenge, marketplace missionaries must be equipped by the church to integrate their faith and work. They must be empowered to think **strategically and intentionally** about how their marketplace activity can serve the purpose of God to disciple the nations. The Church must commission them to travel the “as you go” road of marketplace activity to reach the nations and to teach them so that they may bring their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem.

Let the church arise at the crossroads of society, in the workplace, in the marketplace of the cities of the world. **LET US GO BACK TO FIND THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS AND DISCIPLESHIP, BACK TO SCRIPTURE AND BACK TO THE EARLY SUCCESS OF THE CHURCH AND LET US GO FORWARD TO OUR DESTINY AS LEADERS OF THE CHURCH, TO OUR DESTINY AS BELIEVERS THAT DISCIPLE NATIONS.**

BROTHERS AND SISTERS THE CALL TO START IS A CHARGE TO FINISH. MAY GOD CONTINUE TO GIVE US THE TOOLS SO THAT WE CAN FINISH THE JOB!!!