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Prophet Jim Smith. December 2004

The Marks of a Missionary Church. Part 3

3.Raising up ministries.

I have already referred to this, because I think it is so vital.

We are looking for the offices of the Church (Eph.4: 11)

We are looking for the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit
(Romans12:3-8: 1 Corinthians12: 7-11)

We are looking for people being called and committed to Ministry – the teaching, the speaking, the serving ministry of the Church towards the community and society in which we are placed.

Often ministries are not allowed to develop, or they are lost. And when they are lost, the Church loses its vision and its power. Why does this happen?

Sometimes the Church doesn't want the disturbance which comes from hearing and obeying the voice of God. It's too challenging. It is so much easier to carry on in a quiet and comfortable way.

Sometimes the Leaders do not want ministries raised up and released, because such ministries are seen as a challenge to their authority.

Sometimes Pastors and leaders do not exercise sufficient discipline of new ministries, Eventually the new works crumble away, and become ineffective. We must pray that the Pastors and leaders will have servant hearts, so that ministries can grow and develop.

4.Changing society

The kingdom of God must touch every level of society. We are commissioned to go out into the world to be salt and light, to challenge evil in every form, and to instill kingdom principles into government, politics, economics, education, business, medicine and all the levels of our Nation.

5.Challenge, reclaim and establish.

Our function is to expose the lies of the enemy (John 8:44); tear down his strongholds (Colossians 2:15) and to establish the principles which Jesus taught - love compassion,

freedom, and the opportunity for the human spirit to rise to its greatest heights - to be like Jesus it's creator.

The opportunities and dangers.

When considering this call on the life of your Church, it is necessary to reflect on both the opportunities and the dangers which any Church could face. I have just outlined them here. They need much prayer and discussion. I suggest that you might consider them in the light of the Holy Spirit's examination of the Churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

The opportunities.

Building a Church in line with God's revealed plans.

Having a powerful spirit filled vision for ministry.

Seeing the power of God at work daily, even hourly.

Having powerful worship and teaching.

Having a range of gifts and ministries which can be used.

Really make a difference in your village, town or city.

Preparing the way for the Lord's return.

The dangers:

Losing your first love. Becoming a lifeless ineffective Church..

Becoming lazy and complacent.

Unable to resist the pressures of the enemy.

Refusing to allow the Holy Spirit to search the hearts of the members.

Outbreaks of heresy.

Losing the servant heart.

When we call on God to make us a Missionary Church, all these possibilities and all these dangers face us. It takes a lot of prayer and wisdom to walk in this way.

How do we become a Missionary Church?

First:

Know what you are now, and what you want to become.

Seek God for a change in the heart and attitude of the Church. We need to cry for the lost state of those around us, for the brokenness of God's creation, to see with God's eyes.

Repent and intercede for ourselves, our Church and the world

Seek God for the servant heart.

Second:

Begin discussion and prayer for a new vision. Pray for a new move of the Holy Spirit.

Begin discussion and prayer for the five fold ministry, for raising up of gifts and ministries. Seek out an apostle? A new commitment to service.

Seek for a new vision for what God is calling you to do.

A willingness to work with others who are in it with you.

Why bother?

Missionary Churches are exciting places. It was exciting to be at Antioch, where God was at work, and the Church was thriving. But it was, and is also very disturbing to be in such Churches. Things are always happening, growing, changing. Mistakes are always being made, new opportunities always coming which require new resources. The Holy Spirit gives no rest - how can He? The natural human desire is to want to be safe and comfortable. It's do easy to say "But we like our Church the way it is!"

Is that what you really want? To be a comfortable Church? Again, I suggest you read the letters to the seven Churches in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. Each of these Churches started out with great hope, yet only one of them receives the commendation from God.

The Missionary Church and Africa

If the Church in Africa is to become a Missionary Church, then what is its mission? Each of the Offices of the Church would give a slightly different answer to this, and taking their teaching as a whole, the fuller picture would become clear. However, as a prophet, I am clear what God is saying to the Continent of Africa, as well as to the individual Nations within it. Each Nation has its own word, and I have written them in the book "God's words for Africa." Here, I want to look at the wider challenge. In giving this wider vision, I hope that I am encouraging the development and growth of individual

Missionary congregations. The big vision helps in the growth and development of the smaller ones.

God's word for Africa

God has raised a banner over Africa.

The banner of love, of freedom, of service.

"In this continent" says the Lord

"I will show my power.

From here a river will begin to flow, to the

**North and to the South, to the East and to
the West.**

**A river of cleansing for my broken and dying
world.**

Nations of the world will be blessed.

But first my people must be cleansed,

be filled with new power, with new fire.

**The leaders of the Nations must be cleansed,
and become the servants of the people they
lead.**

**The leaders of the Churches must be
cleansed,**

**and given the servant heart, the shepherd
heart**

to feed and lead my people.

**My people must be cleansed, and in
confessing,**

**I will fill the Churches with a new fire - as has
never been seen before.**

Then the river will begin to flow.

**I will send hundreds, thousands out from this
continent**

**to bless, to heal, to intercede for my broken
world.**

Come now to my cross.”

This word needs careful analysing, testing and checking. (It has been expanded and explained by me in the book “Here am I. Send me.”) For us in this book, the key question is "What does it say to a Missionary Church?"

1. It gives a vision.

God loves Africa, and he has a purpose for Africa - “A river will begin to flow...” Each Missionary Church can be a part of God’s wider plan for Africa. Each one can be a little stream, flowing with all the other streams to create the mighty river. This is a powerful challenge to each and every Missionary Church.

2. It encourages the discipline of repentance.

One of the things which hinders the work of God is unrepentance in the hearts of God’s people. “But first my people must be cleansed.” Are we willing to allow the discipline of repentance to touch us as individuals and as Churches? It’s easy to say “Alleluia” to this, but be warned. The spirit of repentance is like a fire. Once it is lit, it will burn through the Church, revealing falsehood, exposing the divided heart, purifying and cleansing. This is a painful process, but it is a blessing. The Holy Spirit wants to purify the bride, so that God can work more powerfully. King David has laid out the path of repentance quite clearly in Psalm 51 - and who better than he who committed adultery and murder.

Step 1. “Against you, you only have I sinned” (v4)

Spend some time thinking about this truth. The lost son, (Luke 15:11 - 32) had to come to the same point: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

Step 2. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (v7)

Once we know our sin, we need the cleansing of God, which comes through the blood of Jesus - “The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin” (John I : 7) This is also the step that many want to avoid, or make easy. To know the true nature of our sin is a painful and even frightening experience, but without it, we can never know true repentance.

Step 3: “You desire truth in the inner parts.” (v6)

As we are praying and thinking about these things, the enemy will do all he can to spoil our repentance. He knows he must, because this is such a powerful and life giving moment for us. (See I Samuel 7: 7) These are the things he will say to us:-

Your repentance won’t change anything.
You’re making a fool of yourself by doing this.
Your Nation/Church has gone too far from God.

You don't have the power to change anything.
You've done this before, and it didn't work then.

God's reply:-

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.
A broken and contrite heart God you will
not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

“Cleanse me with hyssop and I shall be clean;
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Ps. 51:7)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and
will forgive us our sins and purify us from
all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1: 9)

Step 4. “Create in me a pure heart” (v10)

What areas of our lives will God need to touch with His repenting spirit as He creates a new heart? This is where repentance becomes a reality in our lives. Repentance is not a quick prayer, allowing us to carry on as before. Repentance has to lead to a completely new way of living. This is where repentance begins to move. Missionary Churches must be willing to allow the discipline of repentance. If they do not, then this word, which is so positive for Africa, will not be able to do its work.

3. It encourages leadership.

If the five fold ministry is part of the order of Missionary Churches, then those who hold these offices are in special need of the spirit of discipline “The leaders of the Churches must be cleansed, and given the servant heart, the shepherd heart to feed and lead my people.” Leaders can make mistakes, and need the courage and the honesty to admit it. Leaders can squabble among themselves, try to get power for its own sake, misuse that power. Leaders can be too weak to lead the people in the right direction, preferring to be comfortable rather than unpopular. Leaders can be ungodly, sinful, arrogant, proud and foolish. Leaders can be good, brave, honest and strong, but unsupported and unloved by the people they are to lead. The members of the Church can criticise leaders, ignore their advice, gossip about them, and even make them look foolish. The leadership and the Church can try to live and work but disregard the Bible as their foundation.

If repentance is to touch the life of a Church, it must firstly touch the leaders. This takes time. How can the process begin? The answer is simple - prayer by and for leaders will lead to God's Holy Spirit examining the life of that Church. Leaders have to have servant hearts, and shepherd hearts. All too often leaders have proud hearts, selfish hearts and divided hearts. This has to change, and leaders in Missionary Churches should be seeking the heart of the servant, which is the heart of Jesus.

Are the leaders of Missionary Churches cleansed repentant people, with servant hearts?

4. It encourages hearing and obeying.

God is calling to His people in Africa. He sees the damaged and broken nations and people. He wants to release a river of healing. Do the Missionary Churches of Africa hear the call? Do you hear the call? It's a painful call, because God is hurt at the damage he sees in Africa. To hear his call to healing is to feel this pain. I often find that the African Church cannot or does not want to feel this pain in the heart of God. The people just say "Alleluia. Let's save Africa!" But this cannot be the way. If we are to hear the call and obey, we must be willing to feel the pain in the heart of God. This pain will bring us to our knees in tears- perhaps for years. But this is the path to the healing of Africa. A path which goes through Gethsemane.

Will you obey the call of God - as individuals and as a Church? I do not know what God will ask of you. He will ask different things of different people and Churches, as he weaves his great tapestry of healing. It's not a question of what he will ask of you, just will you obey? (See Isaiah's response to his vision of God in Isaiah 6.)

I do not know how God will call his people, but I know that one of his great burdens are the lost lands of the North. In these lands, other religions have gained much territory, and God's people are struggling. Part of God's healing will be to release power and people into these lands.

5. It encourages sacrifice.

The word for Africa, if it is from God, is one of great hope and encouragement, for Africa and beyond. For I have the conviction that through Africa, God will bless the lands of Europe. But to bring this to pass, the word finishes with "Come now to my cross." God is very wise. He knows that we will want the victory without the sacrifice, so He warns us that this is not possible. It was not possible for Jesus, and it will not be possible for us. The powers of darkness were only crushed by the blood of the cross. The sins of the world were only removed by the blood of the cross. The people were only set free by the blood of the cross.

Only the power of the cross can achieve anything, and if we are going to walk in that power, then we are going to be called on to sacrifice to achieve victory, just as Jesus was. I do not know what sacrifices will be needed, but there will have to be many, and they will be very very costly. If Churches cannot pay the price, they should not long to be Missionary Churches, or to see Africa on fire for Jesus. We were warned by the Lord "No man who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62) Only a sacrificial Church can hope to stand by this verse. This word is a great hope and blessing to Africa. But it is also a very serious and tough challenge to Missionary Churches. It calls for repentance, for cleansing, for obedience, for vision, for

work, for sacrifice. In the light of this word, any Church which seeks to model itself on Antioch, to claim the title “Missionary Church” will be tested, to see whether such a title is justified. Do you have the courage to expose your Church to the testing of this word?