

How to transform our metro

At a gathering of church and other ministry leaders at Fountain Vineyard on 6 June 2019, Shaun Brauteseth, an elder at Oxygen Life church, when asked what his enduring passion was, said "it is all about discipleship. That was the only way you will transform a city. Everything else is peripheral."

So how would one go about discipling with a view to transforming a city?

Ed Silvano, leader of the "Transform our World" network, would argue that it is not about discipling an individual, but about discipling a nation.

You may wonder, "*but where are the personal decisions of faith?*"

We need to remind ourselves that the Great Commission is recorded twice in the New Testament: in the gospel of Mark and in the gospel of Matthew.

In Mark, the focus is on preaching to individuals: "Go into the world and *preach* the gospel to every *creature*" (Mark 16:15).

But in Matthew, the focus is on discipling nations: "Go and *make disciples* of all the *nations*" (Matthew 28:19).

We have done a very good job preaching to individuals, baptizing and teaching them how to access the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome evil.

But we have neglected the other side of the coin: discipling nations. Notice that Jesus did not say, "go and *preach* to nations" but "go and *disciple* nations."

How do we disciple a nation (or a metro)? By doing for that nation, or for a city in this case, what Jesus did for individuals: healing them of incurable ills (humanly speaking) to open their eyes to the fact that God loves them.

A good place to start in the metro is to get involved in the focus areas of the Church Leadership Forum, namely: healing and reconciliation using "What's Your Story" as the catalyst to give people an insight into each other's lives; restoration of the family by encouraging men to accept their responsibilities; addressing inequality in education and health by encouraging churches to introduce foundation phase schooling in their underutilised facilities; tackling unemployment and poverty by emulating Boaz who left the gleanings of his fields for the poor to harvest; and economic transformation and anchoring democracy, combating corruption and maladministration wherever we come across it.

Then we will be obedient to both commissions.

How else can we disciple a city? In the psalms we are encouraged to speak lovingly to a city, inviting it to open its gates for the King of Glory to come in (see Psalm 24:7-10). Proverbs 11:11 states that by the blessing of the righteous the city is edified.

We must bless our city as a manifestation of our love for it and do everything in our power for the Kingdom of God to take up residence.

We need to continue reaching out to the mayor of our city with a view to winning them for Christ, no matter who he or she is, no matter what political party they represent.

Our interaction as the church with the mayors over the past few years has enjoyed a mixed reaction. Just imagine what would happen if the mayor during a weekly prayer meeting officially invites Jesus to come into the city and then proceeds to turn its "keys" over to Him in the presence of pulpit and marketplace ministers.

Jesus stated clearly in Revelations 5:20 that if *anyone* opens the door, He will come in. How much more powerful will the invitation be if it is extended by the metro's first citizen!

Once He is *inside* the city, Christians have the home ground advantage. This becomes evident every time ungodly but still legal enterprises try to set up operations in the city.

It would have been procedurally impossible for the mayor to oppose them on moral grounds at City Hall, but when they or their fellow elders meet with the Lord, they are able to *bind* and *release*, to *lock* and *unlock* and from the heavenly realms to prevent anything untoward from moving forward.

Traditionally we have believed that it is possible to change the spiritual climate in a home or inside the church building. We know how to do it. In fact, it is done every Sunday. The climate changes dramatically as the service progresses.

So, we know how to change the climate. Our problem consists of not yet believing that the same climate we have in the church could and should be all over the city. This is promised in I Timothy 2:1-9 where we are told that if we pray for everybody, everywhere, we will be able to live a quiet and tranquil life of godliness and honesty.

For godliness to increase and honesty to be evident, ungodliness has to decrease. None of this can happen without visible improvements in the spiritual climate.

We may have some way to go before this happens in NMB, but what we do have is a "Nehemiah" vision, which is all about rebuilding the walls of the city, personified by the wards.

In November last year we launched a 200km trail through the city connecting the Wards and promoting prayer, throughout NMB. Is this the end of the beginning of a new season in NMB?

Mike Smith, Marketplace Minister