

City Transformation

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, would argue that it is not about discipling an individual, but it’s 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, it's 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? 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.

Get involved in the focus areas of the Church Leadership Forum in NMB, 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; inequality in education and health, by encouraging churches to introduce foundation phase schooling in their underutilised facilities; unemployment and poverty, by emulating Boaz who left the gleanings of his fields for the poor to harvest; and finally, 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 Psalms we are encouraged to speak lovingly to a city, inviting her to open those gates for her 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, no matter who he or she is, no matter what political party they represent, with a view to winning them for Christ.

Our interaction with the mayors over the past few years have enjoyed a mixed reaction. Just imagine that a mayor, who is walking with the Lord, during one of the weekly prayer meetings they hold to intercede for the city with pulpit and marketplace ministers, officially invites Jesus to come into the city and then proceeds to turn its “keys” over to Him.

And Jesus does come in, because he has stated clearly in Revelations 5:20 that if anyone opens the door He will come in, much more so when the city’s first citizen does the inviting.

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 on whatever morning, 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 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. We already know how to change the climate.

Our problem consists of not believing yet 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 in all godliness and honesty.

For Godliness to increase and honesty to be evident, ungodliness has to decrease and 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, 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?

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