

EQUIP South Africa 2012

Session 6

Partnering for Purpose

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God has been speaking clearly and doing things within us. But what happens most is what happens from now onwards. Our churches should be different and our families should be different.

I loved the prophetic words in the last session. It's good to change gears – a car won't perform like it should without shifting. has really transitioned us with a purpose so that we can get into position. God has taken us through a process. We're not there yet but we are in position to go into what He has for us in this next season.

If we can understand the seasons we won't fight them but embrace them for God to do what he wants. We've been called with such an incredible destiny. It's our salvation! I'm delighted that salvation isn't just getting me saved here on earth and telling me to hang in there and hope for the return of Christ, but includes partnering with people to see the Kingdom of God advance.

Success and history

Whatever we believe is success we'll go after. They say the first forty years of your life is all about your success. Then you hit your so-called mid-life crisis and wonder what the significance is of what you've done. Why not, however, give all the attention of our lives to walk in the fullness of God and His salvation?

In Acts 13:36 it says, "After David had served the purposes of God in His generation, he fell asleep." Surely there can be nothing more successful. We have a great purpose that God has called us to in our generation.

2 Corinthians 10:12 (NIV)

12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Our commission comes from God. This isn't some great idea but this is about the heartbeat of the Father. What we read here in 2 Corinthians 10:12 is more than Paul's heart – it's God's heart. Paul was a good man but he was a man. I don't want a man's heart, I want God's heart.

2 Corinthians 10: 14 – 18

14 We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. 15 Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, 16 so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else's territory. 17 But, "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." [b] 18 For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

There is something stirring in our hearts where we're grateful for our history. Without history we have no future. We're standing on what we're standing on because so many have stayed true to the call. But while we celebrate the history, there is a burning in our hearts and the heart of the Father to take new territory and ground. God has put us together, it's our inheritance together. I'm grateful to God that our inheritance is linked together.

Paul understood this. He celebrated as their area of influence grew. It's not about maintaining but taking new ground and territory. We want to take more and our season requires of us to have a heart of expansion. We don't want to build where others are, we want to go where there's nothing and break open and pioneer without losing what we have. This has to be our heartbeat. This is what we're positioned for. We need people to be stirred and challenged to go. We know there's a whole lot more God has for us.

Cities, nations and regions

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

I love the Acts 1:8 commission. We've done well in focusing on cities and our churches have taken ownership of our cities. That's why your church is where it is, to take the city. We've also taken the end of Acts 1:8 – the ends of the earth – and are doing the nations pretty well. But there are another two regions there – Judea and Samaria. There is a call at this time and we're being positioned to take hold of our regions.

Our inheritance is our city, regions and nations. That's our lentil patch. God is saying we mustn't reject what He has given us but there is also more.

Where we live in America, 70 percent of the people are unchurched. These are Americans, not foreigners. 198 million people in the U.S. Are totally unchurched. That makes it the fourth most unreached nation on the planet. There's a stir not to just focus on the city but also the region.

The season we went through

We need to understand the season we went through. In our process of transition people joined and left. Some got hurt. But we're no longer there. We are firing and God has never left us.

What we had to do was go back and establish and build relationship as we believe wholeheartedly in relationship. We still believe that. Jesus came to restore right-relationship with the Father. This Gospel is relational. In 2 Cor 5 it says that we are those who bring reconciliation between God and man. But we had to go back and re-work this thing of relationship because people misunderstood and that's all part of transition. It's no one's fault, it happens.

It was good and was needed but we're not there anymore. We had to go back to our revelation and see who we are and what we are. Many wanted us to be many other things. I don't want people to split and I said we can find a way forward. So what are we all about? Not circles or squares or diamonds or whatever else. I looked at Scripture and said that since I've got to die for this, I better believe this.

So we're understanding partnership and relationship. We're a team. Period. That's it. Nothing else but a five-fold ministry team. Without trans-local ministry your church will never walk in its inheritance, you will always miss fire. Why? Because it's God's way.

We re-looked and came out with the same thing we had before. Why? Because God hasn't changed anything. I'm not saying others are wrong, I'm saying that for us this is what we

believe. We believe in relationship, a revelation that is Bible-based (this is a Bible value, not an NCMI value) and if it's not in there we're not doing it regardless of how impressive it sounds. If it's in there we're going after it regardless of how unimpressive it sounds.

We've had a season of reworking all this. God had to remind us how we live and how we must bring freedom to people. This next season is not just about relationship and revelation, though. It's about responsibility. Together we can do this and we're called to do this.

Partnering for Purpose

It's go-time and God has called us to be in this together. There is no insignificant church in God's eyes – it doesn't matter how big or small it is. And if it's significant in His eyes it better be in our eyes. We need you as partners if God's linked us; not just as friends, but partners.

We've got to change some of our language because we're misunderstanding what we're saying. In the early 80's God re-highlighted friendship as there was a lot of emphasis around gifting. We embraced friendship and it was great but now we need to highlight some other things.

We hang out and drink coffee and then go home and do our own thing. There's no partnering in drinking coffee together. Jesus came not so that we can hang out and drink coffee; he came to liberate us and bring change to people.

Fellowship has been said to be “two fellows on a ship”. The emphasis is not the two fellows but the ship. We drink coffee together on the ship but the coffee is not the focus!

If you're new to this you might misunderstand me. We're not looking for friends or relationships. We're looking for partners. There are very few people on this planet who are not friends with NCMI. But we need partners and there is a big difference. If God's called you to work with us we don't just want relationship we want partnership. This isn't us losing our values but us looking at why we have these values. It's about having responsibilities together and these responsibilities include our resources and our going together. Not for NCMI but for the kingdom. We are friends within partnership but we need partnership.

Winning cities; winning disciples of Jesus

Acts 14:21

21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.

There's a focus on a city here, not just a local church. This is in a sense something of our mandate and job description of what it means to partner together. I understand that this is a different context but these are the truths we want to live by.

They won a large number of disciples – followers of Jesus, not of Paul and so forth. Disciples are followers of Jesus, not of us. This is called advancing the Kingdom, taking new ground together.

That's the job – to go and be strengthened together. God wants to strengthen us together and encourage. God always brings truth – even if painful – to liberate and comfort us. The role of this team is to strengthen and encourage others to remain true to the faith. Not true to the Church, pastor or NCMI, but the faith.

This is the encouraging message they preach: “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” When people understand Kingdom and they hear about the King they understand hardship and they're willing to stay in hardship because it's about a kingdom not about a church.

If we only preach Church or our ministry people bail when hardship hits. These people had partnership and relationship.

In verse 23, Paul and Barnabas appoint elders. You can't have your friends appointing elders. It's a people you're partnering with. To do it right we need to do this with who we're partnering with, not just our friends.

You can see that Paul and his team are moving around, not hanging around and sitting still. They're going into new places and new regions. Paul had a strategy but he was also led by the Spirit. Today we're all strategists and talk about our way of doing things. But it's not just your strategy that's going to make it happen. Sometimes Paul had an intention to go to a places and God wouldn't let him, then the Holy Spirit sends him somewhere else.

So we put things into place and we have an intentional strategy but we must allow God to stop or move as He wants to.

One of the things that will help us break into new regions is we have to have the ability to hear God. Leaders (and I say this carefully), one of our biggest hindrances in walking in our inheritance is we struggle to hear God. We hear a lot of voices and opinions and it's as if God's confused.

I've asked God why we struggle to hear Him and I felt Him say that we don't inquire of Him. We might say we spend hours praying and I don't think God is saying spend more time. I'm saying that when we pray, are we asking what He wants or what we want? We get ourselves into trouble when we are about what we want.

I think about Joshua taking Jericho. We miss the point – the point isn't marching around and blowing your trumpet, the point is hearing God. Joshua heard God on how to take the city.

David was anointed as King. God rejected Saul, not man. God also chose Saul. So did God make a mistake? God chose the right man but the right man messed up what God gave him. David had many opportunities from his counsellors who advised him to take out Saul and David kept saying that it wasn't his place, that God was the one who should do it. Good friends were saying to him he should take it, but he says no.

When Saul ends up killing himself and the word gets to David, he doesn't rejoice in Saul's death but mourns and laments. (2 Samuel 1.) His heart was broken for Saul. His heart wasn't all about how he was to be king.

I love that David didn't listen to his friends. Even when he was to be King he still inquires from the Lord. Then the Lord says go up, but don't go to Jerusalem but to Hebron. I believe that if David took his place in Jerusalem without inquiring, the men who sided with David from Saul would have killed David in Jerusalem. God is not in the obvious. Too many of us are getting taken up by the people who God wants with us, but we're not enquiring of Him.

Prayer originates in the heart of God. The prayers you're praying, are they God's prayers or yours?

What is our job from Acts 14?

Keep the people focused

Even though I lead this team and help people stay focused, God has to bring people into my church to help us stay focused – and to stay focused on the King and His Kingdom, not NCMI or the flag or a pastor. Our future is wrapped up in the King and His Kingdom.

The biggest hindrance to Kingdom culture is Church culture. We're letting it get in the way of what the Church exists for. You can't tag Jesus on. We must be absolutely deliberate about Jesus being the central theme. Even in our praise and worship, half the songs we sing in our churches need to be deleted. They're not about Jesus they're about everything else.

This isn't hard if we get it right. Half the job's done if we just honour and praise the King. The Holy Spirit manifests himself when the King is glorified. You want favour? Rave about Jesus.

You who are writing songs – if they're not about Jesus we don't want them. And the Church around the world needs songs about Jesus.

Preachers, we don't preach enough about Jesus. What we make the main thing the people will also make the main thing. We are giving everyone second best and side dishes and wondering why they're bombing out. We've got to give them the main dish – Jesus. Our preaching is not just a service for the saints but rather equipping the saints for service. Don't make Sundays the main deal but make people ready to go out.

Our prayer should be Kingdom prayers because Jesus taught us to pray “Your Kingdom come” as the first request. We need to not just be praying for jobs but rather that God will provide the right job for the advancing of the Kingdom. When people get the job we don't celebrate for them but for the Kingdom.

Jesus healed out of compassion but also for the advancing of the Kingdom. It always worked to advance it.

Our purpose – a Priesthood

When I read Scripture I don't see God telling the world to go to the church. But I do see God telling the church to go to the world.

We're not a church of priests but a Kingdom of priests. Most believers know how to minister in their church but not in the world. Because that's what it means to be focused

on the King.

We've got to help people be faithful. Jesus spoke most of his messages around the Kingdom and most of what he preached was faithfulness. This isn't a law and no grace thing. The church has not been given the keys *to* the Kingdom but *of* the Kingdom.

We better be faithful in administrating something of His kingdom here on earth. We've got to keep people faithful not to a movement or the Church but to Jesus. And so we have to help people be full of faith. Faithfulness is not enough, God responds to faith.

Wherever we go there's a deposit, I believe, for more. That's the role of this team, to help people believe in the bigger picture.

Our role is to keep people free. It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. God has called the church to be free. It's dangerous to say we have house rules in our church. When I come into the local church it's not my home, it's not my church, it's God's church. If you have house rules you are bringing bondage. This is not your house.

There's so many things I want to bring to my church because it's my passion. How many people are killing the life of God with their own laws? We'll never take regions if we're living in bondage. We've got to liberate God's people to run. Let's liberate the church to bring liberty to this world.

Fruitfulness

After partnership takes place there's fruitfulness. There's a lot of talk around pruning – people come and whip people and say “I'm pruning”. Well, last time I looked He's the gardener. The purpose for pruning is not to prune but to bring fruit. If you're pruning and whipping and beating and there's no fruit, you're not a pruner so stop pruning! You're not pruning, you're killing! You're ripping apart the the thing God has called you to bring to life.

Fellowship

In the scriptures quoted above they went back to their regions and areas. I'm not negating the reality of our partnership – there is fellowship, we must contend for our friendships, but that's not the focus of what we're doing. We're working together for a bigger purpose.

In our togetherness we are in this thing to further the Gospel and the Kingdom. We're in a season of going beyond the places where we've been working, taking ownership of what

we're being called to. You might say this is great but you don't recognise the world is in a recession. I've been asking the Lord, "Why now? Why not 15 years ago when we had bucks and lots of people on board?" It costs billions to go to the regions we need to take.

Let's not be scared of the F-word – FINANCES. We might be saying that when our church is big enough and we have the bucks then count us in. But the reality is you'll never be ready. Your biggest giver is God, not a man or a person. He wants to be the source, not your safety net. God tells Isaac not to make it happen but stay in the place he called him to stay. So he planted in his first year and reaped a hundred fold in a famine.

What do you do in a famine? Sow your way out of it. You want more churches? Sow planters.

We'll always have a financial test. But if it's God's will, it's God's bill. I'm not driving you, I'm liberating you by saying we need your help. Business people – you've got your business because God gave it to you and it's not so that you may leave it one day for your children's inheritance. You've been given skills to advance the Kingdom and we need to do this together.

In light of this I need to add that we need to be celebrating market-place elders in this season. We obviously need full-time pastors, but market-place elders are not second-rate. You're not a part-time elder. It's a call not a job. You can't be part-time call. You are an elder by call and you have market-place responsibility and don't give it up if God requires you to continue in it.

Conversely, we don't put market-place elders on a pedestal. You're not better than me because you earn more; I'm not better than you because I lead this thing. Stop comparing and competing and rather celebrate what God is doing.

The faction test

When Nehemiah asks how his nation is doing (Nehemiah 1,2) God breaks his heart and he weeps. He responds to this and decides to go. When he arrives his purpose is not to build the walls for himself, but to bring hope to that city. He's there for them. And even so, people still hated him and opposed him.

What we're sharing people will hate. Even if God is in this and God has done a deep work. There will always be people who will not welcome us when we get to where we need to get to. If everyone's not on board it doesn't mean God's not in it. But we do get our churches

on board.

In Hebrews 11 it says that faith is certain of what you don't see. We've got to take this thing in faith. We've got to trust God. I'm going to die believing that this is what we're called to. I want to walk in our future, not just rave about our past. God will always put us in a place where we need him.

The future test

Hear my heart. We have to build for the future. You can't just build with friends but with partners. There are many people who like us but that doesn't mean they're committed. They're not bad people they're just not committed. But those you can build a future with are those who are committed. For me, if we're going to have a future, I'm not looking for friends I'm looking for committed people. People who have bought into this partnership (not financially; I mean carrying the responsibility together).

We're grateful if you're here as a friend but I want to partner for the future. Because that's what God has got us in. Partnership.

Focus test

The danger is we have so much potential across the world. God hasn't given us the names but he's given us guys who are unbelievable in their gifting and call. As leaders we have a responsibility to run the future. But if you haven't settled your call, your potential will be your greatest distraction. We've got to settle what we're called to and take people to be released in that, rather than release people in whatever they want. Don't just let potential run with potential, we'll lose our focus and not take ground or our inheritance.

Presumption is a big challenge for us. We've got to hear God. Too many of us are presuming too many things and we'll get killed that way.

Bruce's message on pride was right. We cannot have guys getting taken out, not when we're crossing to new lands. Pride destroys us. I don't want to go through what we went through ever again. God took a lot of pride out of us. Please keep that away from us as God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Don't get caught up in quarrels. The Church has a lot of worldly wisdom. While people are heading for hell we're arm-wrestling around theology. We've got to put our preferences aside – if you're about your preference you won't take new territory. This thing is not centred around you or I as individuals. There's a lot of stuff we do I don't like but I realise

very quickly it's not about me but what He wants to do.

Impatience is a big deal for us. I love that David struggled with patience. In Psalm 13 he cries out, "How long oh Lord?" But he ends it saying, "You have been good to me." We live in-between those two truths. We've got to live there – we can't settle and we can't be impatient.

Lastly, please be free to lead this. We have to understand that pressure is going to destroy us. Pressure to cope with what God's given us. Busyness is going to destroy us if you don't know what you're called to do. Busyness is not godliness. Some things we might need to put aside as you can't do it all. You've got to prioritise, not just do it all.

Leadership is when you have a a team who help you carry the responsibility. As the lead elder you don't have to sort out all the issues. You can't have a team you must be a team. You can't be everywhere. We don't want you burning out for the sake of the Gospel.

But God does want to increase our capacity. We're going to have to be stretched.

Pleasing everyone

The pressure to please everyone is a big deal. But leadership is not about pleasing everyone but about keeping people moving, which often makes people unhappy. We can't serve both man and God, but only God. Elders serve Jesus before they serve the people. It's about the Kingdom and not about the local church. Him first, not your people first.

You are going to come under pressure to make things happen. Under God I'm asking you not to make things happen. I understand this pressure, as a husband and a father, as a pastor, there's pressure to make it happen. As this team leader there's been pressure on me to make it happen. The pressure we went through as husband and wife was to fix it, to get it back on track. But the Lord said to me long before, "I'm giving this to you not to fight for it."

You know when you don't have to fight something you don't have to fight for something. If you make it happen you've got to keep making it happen and then you're going to kill yourself, your people and our future. God hasn't asked you to make it happen. People will try to force you to make it happen but I'm telling you, don't make it happen.

When God is in it, then look. Friends, it's go-time for us, it's partnership time and the time is now.

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