

*FIFTEEN NEW
PARADIGMS
(NO. 7-9)*

ARNO & MARIANNE CLAASSEN

*A FRESH NEW CONCEPT ABOUT
CONGREGATION! (PART 4)*

**ARNO & MARIANNE CLAASSEN
LIFEWISE CONSULTANTS**

UITGEGEE DEUR:

LIFEWISE UITGEWERS

ABSA, Takkode – 334 645
Rekening nommer: 9211 621 868

POSBUS 31288
WONDERBOOMPOORT, 0033

(012) 335 7571
Arno Claassen- 082 460 3024
Marianne Claassen - 082 412 7000

arno@lifewise.co.za

www.lifewise.co.za

DIE REGTE VAN DIE GESKRIF SOOS HY IS, IS IN DIE
HANDE VAN DIE SKRYWER. ENIGE LESER WORD
AANGEMOEDIG OM DIT VIR SOVEEL MENSE AS
MOONTLIK AAN TE STUUR SONDER OM DIE INHOUD
DAARVAN TE VERANDER. DIE INHOUD KAN VRYLIK
VERWERK WORD IN JOU EIE WOORDE EN WEER
GEBRUIK WORD ONDER JOU EIE NAAM!

PROLOGUE

I remember the emotion the first time I attended a cell church conference presented by uncle Ralph Neighbour. Hope rose up in me and I saw specific things that touched my heart. Those things were the humbleness of uncle Ralph's life, the concept of the small group, the mutual body ministry from love and the vision to reach out to the world! I knew these things came to stay. As long as you had these ingredients, cell church has always been significant. The parts I was not so excited about, was the enormous amount of papers and books, the extensive organization and the strong hierarchical leadership model.

In spite of the less acceptable parts, I actively pursued cell church, although I had to close down my own cell group three times to start from scratch. It was not easy to change over from teaching to relationship from the heart and reaching out to people. When the cell finally worked, it multiplied four times during the following year! I saw that cell groups, combined with cell life surrounding it, worked excellently, but also that few people succeeded in being a successful cell leader. The biggest challenge was to live from the heart and to reach out to the unbelievers. During my excursions in South Africa, I saw that most cell leaders were unsuccessful. I salute a successful cell leader. When I hear what is happening amongst the Bhojpuri people I not only experience hope, but an indescribable excitement. Here are many principles and dimensions that are a roaring success, releasing me from the yoke and burden of running a congregation and replacing it on the Father! The mere revelation thereof releases a spirit of victory in me.

THE FIFTEEN PARADIGMS

The previous three paradigms was quite a mouthful and enough to leave you bereft of your foundations. If you liked it, the following would merely stimulate you further. The time for openness, change and opportunity for congregations to have an impact on the world is here. The harvest is white on the fields and all we need is workers! We will never be able to bring in the harvest with the present-day number of fulltime workers. Every single believer is needed to get ready for action and start working! Let us build something on which all the believers can cooperate and where we can eliminate ambition and competition!

7) DISCIPLESHIP UNTO OBEDIENCE!

We have emphasized on numerous occasions that Jesus has given the believers only one command before His ascension, and that is to disciple the nations. Matt.28:19 – 20: “Therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the world. Amen.” We have not yet answered the question about what discipleship is all about, but the end result is *obedience* and nothing else! We must disciple people unto obedience. The word disciple is derived from the word discipline, which is all about obedience. The most outstanding characteristic of a believer’s life should be obedience.

Man’s soul consists of a will, mind and emotion, and of these three the will is in control of the soul. Watchman Nee always said that true spirituality does not lie in the mind or

emotion, but in the will that should lead us to obedience. True spirituality does not lie in nice theology or emotional experiences, but in obedience! In the spiritual world we may not polarize, eliminate or contrast anything, but we should find God's order in the kingdom. The average preaching and church practices focus on healing and correct theology, while the highest priority should be obedience! That does not mean that the rest is not there, but they should be restored in the correct order. Nothing in the life of the believer will ever be fruitful in the long run if it does not come from a deep-rooted desire to be obedient to the Lord!

This matter already comes from way back in the Old Testament. The fall of man did not take place when Adam and Eve thought and experienced wrong things, but when they were disobedient to the commands of God the Creator! Joshua 5:6 – “For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the people, the men of war, who came out of Egypt, were destroyed, *because they did not obey the voice of Jehovah*. To them Jehovah swore that He would not show them the land which Jehovah swore to their fathers that He would give us, a land that flows with milk and honey.” That is also why I Sam.15:22 says the following – “And Samuel said, Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as *in obeying the voice of Jehovah*? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice! To listen *is* better than the fat of rams!”

II Kings 18:12 explains exactly why everything in the Old Testament went wrong: - “because they *did not obey the voice of Jehovah their God*, but transgressed His covenant, *and* all that Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded, and would not listen to them, nor do them.”

In the New Testament, Matt 7:21 says – “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.” Jesus said in Luke 6:46: “And why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?” Jesus is the Lord of the Word that was derived from authority. How can you call Him Lord, without obeying His commands?! Acts 5:29 – “And Peter and the apostles answered and said, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’”

The purpose of the gospel is not only that people should hear and admire it, but that they should adjust their lives accordingly and live in obedience to the voice of the Father! People in the Western world want to be free and independent, and that is why we find it more difficult than others to disciple people. God is a good Father, but He asks your absolute obedience! “If He is not Lord of all, He does not want to be Lord at all.” If obedience is our focus in congregation life, where is our infrastructure that teaches people to keep His commandments and bring them to accountability concerning their conduct? I think we all have something to think about and make adaptations.

8) THE CONGREGATION IS THE MISSION!

It sounds arrogant to imply that there are fifteen areas in present-day congregation life where we would have to make radical changes, but our practice proves it. The following paradigm is just as far-reaching by nature for our congregation practices and for the language we use as believers. In short it means that the congregation should in principle not have a mission department, for the entire congregation is the mission and continually on a mission! Not just a few people are sent out and therefore called missionaries. All believers are sent and therefore fulltime

missionaries. You are not a missionary because you leave a congregation to spread the gospel in a heathen country. You are a missionary when you come out of the dark heathen world, has converted yourself to God and He has sent you back as a believer to fetch others as well.

The place, land or nature of your work does not make you a missionary or sent person, but rather the fact that you are a believer or disciple! All believers were sent and are supposed to constantly be on the go in order to seek out other unbelievers! To be a missionary has nothing to do with your career or whether you think you are fulltime or part-time. In the kingdom all believers are fulltime, because fulltime is not defined by time or type of work, but by fellowship. According to I Kor.1:9, I have been called to fulltime fellowship with Jesus Christ as my bridegroom. My *calling* is to fellowship fulltime, but my *command* is to go and fetch the others.

Not only is it important to realize that as believers we all have a mission, but also that we do not each have our own mission! We are all part of God's mission and not our own mission or ministry! We are not here to initiate our own unique ministries, for we have a command to join the mission of the Father and go into all the world. In our world, the words "come here" is far better known than "go". The Father is on a mission to the world and He invites us to join Him. When you accept the Father in your life, you also accept His mission, for His life consists in reaching out to those who still does not know His love. The body does not have a mission to fulfill, but is an outflow of the Father's mission in His Son and therefore becomes the mission on earth! The mission goes before congregation, for the congregation originated from God's mission! The congregation does not receive a mission somewhere along the way. The congregation initiated from the mission and

can only continue to exist as long as her heart is with the mission!

Your responsibility as believer is not in the first place to join a congregation, but a mission. If you join the mission, you have joined the congregation. There are congregations without a mission, but a mission always leads to congregation! If the Father went and gave His life, why do we continually sit in congregations and listen to one man that has been sent? There is almost no form of congregation where we do not sit and listen to one man on his mission share with us about his ministry. We are constantly joining the ministries of other believers, instead of discovering the mission into which we have been born from the first day. The advertising and competition of every minister to find a place for HIS ministry have only led to strife and contention in the body.

When you are busy with the Father's mission, it is easy for anyone to accompany you and no one can steal anything from you, for nothing concerning your mission or ministry belongs to you! All ambition originates from the believers' consciousness of their own missions and because they have not yet exclusively joined the Father's mission. The heart of the mission is also the only thing that will keep every believer motivated! No sermon or preacher can keep any believer motivated. If that is true, it is time to stop preaching to believers and instead send them out to fulfill the mission they carry around in their being! You cannot motivate believers for congregation, for it is only the means to an end! The discovery of our purpose motivates the heart. Jesus sent all who came to Him on a mission. Why don't we do the same? The mission brings believers to maturity and not the programs and preaching of congregation life!

9) PRACTICE AND WORD TRAINING!

Well, these things tend to challenge one's foundations, but at least it comes at the right time! The harvest is ready on the fields. We have no share in its growth. At least half of the following paradigm should not be too foreign for most of us. In our congregation world, training is extremely important and you will find training tracks, shepherding processes and serial courses, everything necessary for believers, everywhere. I am in contact with different congregations and most of what I have seen ranges from good to excellent. The leaders of the body have produced excellent material of the highest quality. There is so much that you often find it difficult to know where to begin and what to leave!

However, the result when you present people with a lot of material and courses is that their knowledge levels rise, but not necessarily their experience of the same knowledge. They are incapable of internalizing the information as fast as they receive it. Furthermore most congregations and believers are not focused much on the practice and the next course will be presented without having ascertained that the previous has been internalized. According to I Kor.8:1, knowledge puffs up, but love edifies! Knowledge that is not applied changes into pride! An excess of courses and conferences make believers proud and demobilizes them from any outreach to anyone with less knowledge. For them growth exists in finding the next big preacher and revelation and not in serving someone with less knowledge with what they have. The two greatest problems I have seen in the renewal world are pride and disappointment. First we become proud of all we know and after years without any change in practice we become disappointed in the Father! In this entire process we only

reach out to others to inform them of our great revelation knowledge and preachers, but not really to disciple. There is a saying: "It is not about the impartation of information, but the transformation of life!" People accumulate much knowledge, but their lifestyles do not transform accordingly.

It is important to realize that people in general only learn through experience and participation. People should be *exposed* to a matter and then they should take up *responsibility* in that area. Success is reproduction! Success is when you can live something and help others to do the same! Success is not the mere impartation of knowledge and the reproduction of that information. Success is living the life Jesus lived on earth! Success is not to gather people, present courses or change the dogmatic opinions of others! A person can only live the Christian life if he discovers Christ in himself, sees this life lived in his presence by others and takes up the responsibility to live and reproduce that life. The practice, namely to do something yourself, or training people through practical experience, is actually the only effective training, especially in spiritual matters.

A further very important facet is with what we do the training. It is a fact that there are an enormous amount of resources available on the market. It is also true that most of them are good. Unfortunately, it has made congregation life far more complicated and expensive, so that it is no longer accessible for everyone. A definite principle in the Word is that if something is a solution, it is accessible and affordable to everyone. Very little of our Western congregation life is truly reproducible in third world countries where relatively little organization and finances exist. The Word is not against organization and finances, but should still be reproducible, even with very little thereof. The gospel is a thing of the heart and spreads via

relationship, even if the circumstances are not so favorable. The gospel brings prosperity and development, but is also capable of penetrating any area without it. The gospel is lived and preserved in the heart, and no congregation model should restrict hearts or deprive them of initiative.

In our training we make use of material that often contains much Word, but we do not really train people exclusively with the Word. David Watson used no classroom training in India and no other book was ever used except the Bible! Still it was found that the quality of their leaders in Word and ministry skill was better than 75% of the theological students of the Southern Baptists in America! The Word is indeed sufficient for any training and can be used as such. None of our definitions in books and courses exceeds that of the Father in the Word! Let us encourage people to get revelation directly from the Father in His Word and not continually in our books and sermons.

It is definitely not wrong to use paper or notes. However, our notes tend to dwarf the Word, since we merely use the Word to confirm our point of view. The Word was not given to confirm any preacher's theology. The Word was given as the Father's love letter through which He wants to communicate with His children and train them. The Word is indeed the beginning and end of everything and not one jot or tittle can be added by any preacher. We so easily confess that the Word is sufficient and complete, but in practice we all add our part.

I Sam.3:1 says: "And the child Samuel served Jehovah before Eli. And the Word of Jehovah was rare in those days. *There was* no open vision." We have so many Bibles on our shelves, yet the Word of the Lord has become scarce in our days. Kol.3:16 says: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and

admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Let us once more get a generation disciples on the market-square that are Word people in word and in deed!

SUMMARY

- 1) The congregation is the means to an end. The end is to reach the world! The means must be structured to help us to reach the end!
- 2) A cell meeting without cell life is worthless and just one more program!
- 3) We are not here to do God's work, but to be obedient to what He asks of us!
- 4) The purpose of discipleship is to obtain discipline in every area of people's lives through obedience to God's Word!
- 5) Jesus is our Lord, and we have to obey Him even though He is also our brother!
- 6) The Holy Spirit enables us to obey God the Father 100%, for the life of Jesus in us has obeyed the Father 100%!
- 7) The congregation is not supposed to merely incorporate missions in her full program, for the whole church do not only have a mission, but we all are the mission. Anything else on the program interferes with our mission!
- 8) The congregation does not have missionaries in other countries, for we are all missionaries sent to the heathen land!
- 9) All believers have a fulltime calling and should live it out fulltime in their commission in the heathen world!

10) You are not on a mission to perform your own unique ministry, but have joined the Father and His mission!

11) The congregation has no mission of it's own to fulfill. The congregation is an outflow of the Father's mission in His Son and therefore becomes the mission on earth!

12) Your responsibility as believer is not in the first place to join a congregation, but a mission. If you have joined the mission, you have also joined the congregation.

13) Christians spend more time and energy to establish their own missions or ministries than simply joining the Father's mission. We find our own identity in our own ministries and not in the Father's heart and in His mission!

14) If you are altogether busy with the Father's mission, nobody can be a threat or in competition with you or steal something from you, for you have nothing of your own!

15) Believers are unmotivated because they do not know they are the mission. No sermon or preacher can keep a believer motivated; only the heart of the mission can accomplish that!

16) People only learn through experience and exposure. They must get exposure and take up the responsibilities for their own lives.

17) People should be taught as much as possible from the Word and not from courses that only contain Word selectively!