

CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME



by Rick Wood
Editor of MF

With this issue of *MF* we are issuing a clarion call for “all hands on deck.” Put on the full armor of God and prepare yourselves for spiritual battle! Every follower of Jesus who claims him as their savior has been called to live on mission with God—to proclaim the kingdom, make disciples and destroy the works of the devil. Everyone is needed—no exceptions. The time for just passively sitting and listening to sermons each week has come to an end. This is a luxury we can no longer afford. All of us have a role to play in this God-ordained struggle to establish his kingdom. It is the responsibility of each of us to find out what part Jesus wants us to play and get involved. Non-involvement is nothing less than disobedience to the clear commands of Jesus.

The Church must recommit itself to the task of “equipping all the saints for the work of ministry.” Jesus’ followers must demand that their churches equip them for the work of ministry or find those who will. All of us as followers of Jesus must make our highest priority obedience to the commands of Jesus, not our own comfort or pleasure.

One “ship” that can carry us forward on our mission with God is Transform World, which we feature in this issue. It is a unique global structure designed to foster unprecedented collaboration among like-minded people. You do not have to be a professional pastor or missionary to participate. The structure of Transform World is designed so that any Jesus follower can plug themselves into a collaborative network of people with similar interests or start their own network. Luis Bush and the hundreds of other leaders who are launching this “ship” have designed a decentralized “starfish” type movement that can birth other movements. (See the article on the starfish model of organization on page 16.) The “starfish” structure boasts a decentralized organizational model where participation is voluntary and there is no top down controlling hierarchy ordering people around. Whether your interests are in Business, Arts, Media, Education, Government, Church or Family, there is a place for you to serve alongside others. Transform World is designed to generate movements to overcome seven of the major challenges we face in the world today. The “Seven Challenges” of the Transform World movement are highlighted starting on page 19.

The Consequences of Not Living on Mission With God

The price we have paid in recent decades for too many Jesus followers not living on mission with God has been extremely high. If you have not noticed, the church of Jesus is in decline in the West. The West has entered a “post-Christian era” where biblical truth is being attacked and marginalized in society. Our impact on the culture is in decline. Many don’t even disciple their own children well. Over 50% of our Evangelical offspring are currently converted to unbelief by the time they graduate from college. From government, to the media, military and academia, open hostility and even persecution of Jesus followers is on the rise.

Here is just one example of the consequences of rejecting biblical values and not making disciples of Jesus—the family in the West is falling apart. Around 48% of first births in the U.S. are happening outside of wedlock. By age 30, two-thirds of women will have had a child out of wedlock.¹ This is an enormous tragedy with huge social and financial repercussions for the church and the world.

“Marriage Project director Bradford Wilcox, an associate professor of sociology in University of Virginia’s College of Arts & Sciences, said in a press release. ‘What they often don’t

realize is that children born outside of marriage are significantly more likely to be exposed to a revolving cast of caretakers and the social, emotional and financial fallout associated with family instability and single parenthood.”²

The challenges of both poverty and orphan care are directly related to family formation and stability. Another article states, “If you graduate from high school, work full time, and postpone marriage and childbearing until after the age of 21, your chances of being in poverty are only 2 percent. If you don’t do all of those three things, your chances of poverty rise to 77 percent.”³

The breakdown of the family as well as all the other challenges we face in the world today are directly related to our effectiveness or lack thereof at making true disciples of Jesus. As the kingdom of God expands, lives are transformed and many of the challenges we face in society are overcome. The expansion of the kingdom of God is where Christ’s Missional Challenge comes in. It is one of the Seven Challenges of the Transform World initiative and it is being facilitated by Frontier Ventures.

The vision of Christ’s Missional Challenge is to foster the kind of kingdom breakthroughs in every people that can transform individuals, communities and entire people groups and thereby overcome the kind of societal disintegration that we currently see taking place in the West.

The situation in the West is not hopeless. We can rebuild the broken foundations of faith in our society and launch new efforts to reach the unreached, but it will require “all hands on deck” and working together

in new collaborative efforts like Transform World.

Can We Answer Jesus’ Prayer?

Before going to the cross, Jesus prayed in John 17:23, “that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me.”⁴ Is this kind of unity in the Body of Christ possible? Is the kind of collaboration that we see in the Transform World

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initiative the beginning of a new era in the way we work together to build the kingdom of God in every people? Will the majority of leaders lay aside their dreams of building their own ministries apart from collaboration with others and make the building of God’s kingdom the highest priority? I pray so.

We are all used to visionary leaders launching out to start their own organizations and then compete with each other for talented people to staff their ministries. But what if God’s desire is for us to succeed in our callings through connection with others that God is also similarly leading rather than simply trying to build our own organizations? Luis Bush who is the Servant Catalyst

for Transform World was also the director of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement of the 1990s. That effort led to unprecedented levels of collaboration through the various “tracks” that were established. Some of those tracks developed into ongoing networks for collaboration to the benefit of all involved. Now we have another opportunity with Transform World to form new networks of collaboration. No matter how much we believe in our own ministries I encourage all of us to take a look at how we might increase our effectiveness by reaching out to collaborate with other like-minded Jesus followers. 

¹ Castillo, Michelle, “Almost half of first babies in U.S. born to unwed mothers.” Reporting on the study, “Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America.” Sponsored by the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and the RELATE Institute. CBS News.com. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/almost-half-of-first-babies-in-us-born-to-unwed-mothers/>

² *ibid.*

³ Weber, Sheila, “Here’s a Secret— Marriage is America’s Most Effective Anti-Poverty Program,” February 13, 2013, Fox News. <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/02/13/why-marriage-is-best-anti-poverty-program/>

⁴ New American Standard Bible, The Lockman Foundation, 1995

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