

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE GENERATION OF EXCELLENCE

One of the big challenges to the congregations of our day, is to make believers understand that the very right of existence of the Church, is defined by the great commission Christ gave to her: *Go and disciple all the nations and teach them everything I taught you!* This is always an awesome task, but a responsibility a Church can never run away from, for it is for this very reason that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church of Christ. Acts.1: 8 is quite clear: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses to the end of the earth.*

A congregation that claims to be part of the baptism of the Church by the Spirit on that very first Pentecost Sunday and thus claims to be part of the Body – and not disciple the unchurched nor witness to the unbeliever, has a lot of explaining to do why it should be considered the instrument of the Lord and therefore claim His graceful blessings. If we then measure our “performance” also in terms of the Great Commandment, to love God more than anything else and other people as much as ourselves – how many Churches can still claim to be part of God’s most critical strategy in a lost world!

This is all challenging, but not really what I want to clarify by writing this article. I find the most challenging and probably the most critically important of all, to not only involve the young generation – that I call the generation of excellence – with the Church, but to specifically get them to be excited about God’s strategic role for His Church in saving the lost, involving the unchurched and inspiring the often bored listeners through the teaching and the preaching of the Word in our congregations.

Let us first of all make some general remarks about the generation of excellence, as well as some specific remarks around young Christian career people.

### YOUNG PROFESSIONALS STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

The young professional’s approach to life is very much a result of the culture of excellence. Striving for excellence and professionalism and needing an external confirmation of them achieving this, is generally true. Busy working on their careers, they often only want to get involved in projects and responsibilities that confirm their own excellence and success. One of their concerns about getting involved in anything is the guarantee of success and a **visible reward** for their contribution.

For the Christian Bible student this does create a problem. Shouldn’t we be servants according to the example of Jesus Christ? If we look for external confirmation of our value and worth, shouldn’t we be looking at God whose chosen children we are and find our assertiveness in our salvation and justification in Jesus Christ, outside of ourselves? Shouldn’t we like St. Paul in Romans Chapter 7 hate our own disabilities and only live through the confidence of Romans Chapter 8? And so we can carry on....

### YOUNG CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONALS ALSO STRIVE FOR AND APPRECIATE EXCELLENCE

The challenge to the Christian church in reaching these yuppies with God’s Good News and involve them in His commission, is to, without compromising the Biblical values of humbleness, total dependence on God and His grace and the servant’s attitude of the Savior, communicate to them, in terms that make sense to them and address their needs as people and as sinners, the truth of the gospel and get these valuable recourses for the Lord’s calling involved in our ministries and outreaches.

We probably should once again learn from St. Paul's wisdom as he directs us to become a Jew for the Jews and a Gentile for the Gentiles. The core of the question is how to become a yuppie for the yuppies?

### **THE SOLUTION:**

#### **ONLY GOD CAN REALLY DO IT.**

We as the people of the Church, can never impress the yuppies! Only God can! A most important teaching to these talented and well educated young people, is to understand that God's saving grace and His plan for His kingdom is neither dependent on the format or the content of the ministry, nor on the efficiency of the minister, but only and solely on **God himself who saves through grace**. Although God chose to use people, earthly instruments and even today provide exiting opportunities through the technology that this generation often find so fascinating, to fulfill His promise to save His beloved bride from all peoples and cultures, God only is the excellent, perfect, reliable, omnipotent, infinite, perfect in wisdom, truth, love and mercy, almighty and sovereign Savior, King, Minister and Pastor of His people. The person who really strives to be instrumental in achieving infinitely excellent results with eternal consequences, cannot do it by trusting in their own ability, strategy or knowledge and expertise, but through faith, expects God to do it through our Churches and us. **God only**, through Christ, in the power of His Spirit, can to a human being, even an imperfect one, gives the outcome of the Commission He so solemnly gave to His Church.

Once they understand this, they can, in faith, risk to associate them with the Church of the Lord on earth and give their support, energy, time and means to a task so wonderful and glorious that we cannot expect mere human beings to be successful in accomplishing it. This, I find, the young, ambitious career orientated believer can and want to understand. Expectations become more reasonable, tolerance develops for the shortcomings of Gods children, but excitement is created to participate in the challenging expectation of the Great Commission of Jesus.

#### **BEING GOD'S CHILDREN SHOULD MOTIVATE US TO BE EXCELLENT**

BUT, this does not mean that they will ever excuse mediocrity, slackness or unprofessionalism. They would expect the Church and the organisations of Christians to be at least **as efficient and excellent** as that of the financial, technological, business and commercial world in which they are striving for excellence on a daily basis in their professions and careers. If the God we serve is so most holy, blessed, trustworthy and perfect, how can His children strive for anything less than those who are serving a mere idol such as Mammon? They would ask...

#### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

After understanding this about the most challenging generation that ever was confronted with the gospel, we as involved members of the Body of Christ should be able to give answers to the following checklist of questions that I found during years of ministry, that this generation wants to be answered well and honestly, before they will become involved with any particular congregation. (Please also note that the answers must be given in such a way that it will inspire participation and create a desire to share in God's excellence displayed through His Church.)

1. Does this congregation meet a recognised (or proven or measurable) need and address a universally acknowledged problem? (Our young people are also children of the global village!)
2. What evidence do you have that this particular need that this congregation tries to address, exists, and has this, independently from the congregation inviting their involvement, been confirmed?
3. Does this particular Church have clear and concise objectives, relating to alleviating this need or to providing solutions to this problem?
4. Are the objectives stated in a way that prospective members will be able to see whether you can meet your objectives? Are there evaluations of your work available?

5. Can the Church meet its objectives, at a reasonable cost over a given period of time?
6. Does the Church have the staff, or access to people with required skills, to accomplish these objectives satisfactorily?
7. Does the Church have a budget, which is sufficiently detailed to reflect responsible utilisation of financial resources?
8. Does the Church have a method of measuring the effectiveness of its work during the course of its projects and outreaches and how will the members know that the objectives (humanly speaking, such as erecting a structure or implementing technology or broadcasting a program) have been achieved?

Now you can see why I am so excited about the generation of excellence! They could be the most responsible and gifted members Christ ever sent into the world for His sake! Never before were the questions that the Church had to answer so critical, but also so wise, as that of the young professionals of our day! Hopefully these exciting expectations will push us towards boundaries of professionalism and efficiency the Church never dreamt of achieving before. The goals, objectives and strategies of our congregations should lead them to choose our outreaches and projects as the opportunity through which their obedience to Christ's commission can be channeled. In this way our interactions with the generation of excellence will be to the glory and honour of the most excellent God, wanting us to be His creative and victorious Church – through the unimaginable inspirational work of the Spirit and the all conquering power of the risen Lord!

#### **WHY DO BELIEVERS BECOME INVOLVED IN CHRISTIAN EVANGELISATION?**

One more important thing we should always remember to ask is: Why do believers give of themselves and their means to a Christian cause? Why are Christians obedient to Christ's commission! All real Christians know that God wants to use their potential and call them to serve in His Kingdom.

Sacrificial giving of my time, expertise, skills, energy, excitement and money bring out the very best of the intentions in us. Church leadership **have the satisfaction of helping people to accomplish for themselves the knowledge that they are obedient and useful to their Savior.**

At the heart of effectively mobilising the generation of excellence is capturing this generation's attention and persuading them on the level of their experience of being faithful to their Lord, to give and give of themselves— over and over again. Because I believe they do have the need to give, not to man - but to God, not to organisations - but to the Kingdom, not to earthly leadership - but to Jesus. This is what we must be able to do with the clearest conscience and as far as we know to the best of our ability, telling them that – *Giving to the Church, is giving to the Lord!!!* Expressing your enthusiasm for the outreaches and the projects of the congregation, is loving the Lord, the excellent One! Our own obedience and commitment to the Lord's commission must persuade us that we have the right to ask this trust from our members and must give us the confidence to state with a clear conscience that placing your offering to the disposal of our budget, and making yourself available for this work – is an offering in the hand and on the altar of the Lord.

Our Biblical teachings, excellence in service and excellence in applying of ourselves and the **true knowledge of our own calling before God, only**, can give us the right and the confidence to offer this opportunity to people hungry for results: If you make yourself available to our congregation's projects and outreaches, you make yourself available to the Most Powerful One of all, the One and only God, the Almighty Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who through His Holy Spirit will accomplish what no man can, namely saving a lost world for Himself, gathering His harvest to the last individual that He in His sovereign grace and ultimate wisdom has chosen to redeem through the work of His Son, the Savior of the whole world.

## **THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHALLENGE**

The South African challenge is no easy one and the complexity of our diversity and development as a nation at this point in time, gives us a challenge and it creates an opportunity for God's work, equal to few others. Let us apply ourselves, pray urgently and faithfully, act wisely and expect everything from the Lord, while we creatively and resourcefully develop our sensitive strategies and the excellence of our performance.

**The Rev Andries Combrink.**

**June 1999.**