

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## You Can Make a Difference!

by Dan Trygg

“Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth, <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” Isaiah 43:6-7

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

“But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they will sanctify My name; indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.” Isaiah 29:23

“Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, <sup>21</sup> to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21

I just returned from a two-day leadership conference put on by the Willow Creek Association. Called the Global Leadership Summit, this gathering of leaders has been meeting annually in August since 1995. Originally started at the Willow Creek Church in South Barrington, Illinois, a community 35 miles west and north of Chicago, the conference is now simulcast to over 185 cities around the country, and will be translated and shared in more than 75 other countries around the world. It was an impressive, inspiring two days, ...filled with practical guidance and training to motivate leaders to pursue ongoing growth and excellence in their areas of influence, whether in business, ministry, or in whatever other venue God may have called us. Much more than a “Yay! Rah, rah!” event, the conference was a mind-blowing exposure to what God is doing in the world through everyday people who have stepped out to address a need, pursue a vision, or capture an opportunity. Two insights that came through quite clearly for me were that **people who make a difference are not necessarily smarter or brighter than other people, they are just willing to act.** They generally experience the same fears, uncertainties and trepidation others experience. They often do not know all the answers, or even exactly how to proceed, BUT they are willing to try. **Because they are willing to act, they find out what works and what does not, ...and they learn from their attempts.** Failure is not a bad thing, if it means you gain insight and understanding from your attempt. **They are willing to pursue personal growth and development to accomplish their goals.** Because they invest in themselves, they do not stagnate and get stuck. They keep on developing a growing capacity and set of abilities. In order to learn from their failed efforts, *they* must learn. *They* must make adjustments. They must have the openness, honesty and integrity to *acknowledge the need* to adjust, and then they have to *develop new skills or a new strategy.*

**This is really no different than the process we all go through in growing up as a child.** We all, at some point, are willing to take risks. We all learn to crawl, or stand or walk, in spite of many failed attempts, bumps and bruises. **We all take risks, and learn from our mistakes.** No one has it all figured out beforehand, and simply “does it” flawlessly on the first attempt. **Taking risks is a natural part of the learning process, for everybody.**

**Somewhere along the way, however, for whatever reason, we learn to *not* take so many risks.** We are teased, or bullied, for not knowing the answer to some question, or for some poor performance somewhere. We come to believe that it is possible to ask a “dumb question”, so *we stop asking questions.* We begin to feel like we “should” know certain things that we don’t, and **we fear the disapproval of others** if we appear ignorant, or if we should “fail” at something. **We do not see failure as a step toward learning; we come to believe it is a sign of incompetence, a sign that we ourselves are somehow inferior or defective.** If we obtain a level of comfort, **the majority of us stop taking risks.** We are satisfied living within the confines of the familiar, the “safe”. **Consequently, we stop growing.**

**God says that we were created for His glory. We have a “God-like-ness” that is to be matured and expressed through us.** We can easily see that this is probably not fully formed or made visible by the time we are one or two years old, right? **When is it fully developed?** When we are ten? Twenty? Is it not when the character of Jesus is fully-formed in us, when we have discovered our giftings and abilities, when we have learned to walk in and be energized by the Holy Spirit, and when we are expressing these things in the world around us? **Do you feel you are there yet? Do you feel you have reached your full potential for Christ?** It is important to say that the “outflashing of God’s glory” (Heb. 1:3) is *not* limited to some future time when we reach “maturity”. **Because we have the Spirit of God living inside of us, anytime we are led by and energized by Him we can be used to reveal a glimpse of the glory of God.** Every act of love, sacrifice or service for another inspired by Him is an opportunity to express the heart of Christ to the world in tangible, visible ways. **Maturity is learning to walk in the Spirit more consistently, so people see “Jesus in me” more regularly. What do you think? Got some room to grow, still?**

As you think about that, consider what God said to Jeremiah, “Call to me, and I will answer you, and I will show you great and mighty things which you do not know.” **There is more to discover about life, about God’s plan and purpose for you here, and about His wonderful grace. You don’t know it all yet, that’s for sure. None of**

**us does.** In fact, the wisdom of the mature is that he or she has come to expect that God has something new and exciting to reveal or do, which we have not yet experienced (I Cor. 2:6-9). The mature person is *looking for* something new. **If we want to discover the will of God, and learn how to walk effectively in the Spirit, we have to take some risks.** Romans 12:2 says that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (learning new information to get a new insight, a new perspective), so that we might test-out-by-trial-to-discover the will of God for your life. That means **we need to invest in ourselves. We have to learn new things, so that we can discover some new things to try.** As we try things, we find out what doesn't work (failure and disappointment) so that we can discover what *does* work. We will not discover our spiritual gifts, or how to live in the power of the Spirit, if we do not take risks and try things that we perceive may be God's will. **As we experiment, we will come across what we are good at, and learn more of how God works in our lives.**

**The end product of what God wants to work in our lives is incredibly wonderful.** The Isaiah passage above indicates that when people see what God is going to do with His followers, they will be amazed and honor Him. That is what God wants to do with you and me. He wants to change us, develop us, and utilize us in such amazing and beneficial ways that people will set His name apart from every other name, every other so-called God or religious system. **What God wants to do with us is intended to "Wow!" people. This is the kind of advertisement God wants: changed lives and loving, serving people** (Tit. 2:11-14). There it is again, that "ch" word, "change". **In order for us to change, we must try new things, right? (Risk.) If they are new to us, do you think they will feel natural or comfortable?** Do you think our first attempts will be smooth, ...or might we stumble around and struggle with the changes we are attempting to implement? **Will they feel comfortable? Not on your life!** Paul speaks of how we carry about in our bodies the "dying of Jesus" so that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh (II Cor. 4:10). What is he talking about? He is describing the denial of self, the crucifixion of self, which we must undergo on a moment-by-moment basis, if we are to experience the release and manifestation of the Spirit in our lives. **If we listen to self-comfort, self-importance and immediate self-interest, we will not reach out to grow or to serve others.** Our level of comfort will keep us from taking risks to serve or stretch in obedience to the promptings of God. In effect, we keep the life of the Spirit locked away. We keep our light under a bushel, or under the bed, instead of placing it "out there" where it can be seen. **Changed lives means that we put off old, familiar patterns and allow the Spirit to break out in new expressions of love, graciousness and service. The difference is dramatic.** People will see and feel the difference between a life shut down by selfish fear or laziness, versus an adventurous, risk-taking life that is the outflow of the giving heart of Jesus. **Will it be comfortable? NO! Will it be glorious? YES!**

**I don't care how young or old you may be, EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD!!** The One who created the world, ...who made everything out of NOTHING, ...who infused lifeless dirt with the breath of His mouth and made it come to life..., is LIVING INSIDE OF YOU! **What He can do with you is incomprehensible!** Isn't that exactly what Paul says in Ephesians, "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly *beyond* all that we ask or imagine, according to the power that works within us..." **The power is already here! It is inside of us! It is inside of you!** The Greek is even more vivid. Paul says this is the power "inworking in us". **It is already churning, operating, pulsating with vitality and ability, grace and love. The only thing holding it back is you,** your mind, your willingness, ...your willingness to seek God, ...your willingness to obey Him, ...your willness to risk.

**William Carey** was an impoverished shoemaker in the late 1700's. As he studied the Bible and sought God, he came to be burdened with the fact that millions of people did not know Jesus. They had no one to tell them the gospel story, and there were no translations in their native tongues. People at that time were not much interested in sharing the gospel. Missionaries and missionary societies were all but unheard of. As Carey pondered the plight of the lost, he began calling out to others to find a way to reach out to them. He went throughout the land, preaching in dissenting chapels, churches and small groups that it was the obligation of every Christian to do what they could to get the gospel out to those who had never heard it. He continued his studies, teaching himself not only the Bible, but he also learned Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Dutch, and French. William Carey had *an unusual ability* to learn languages. As he preached, others began to be convinced of his message. They became persuaded by his maxim, **"Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God"** In 1792, they formed a missionary society, and in 1793 Carey was sent out as their first missionary to Calcutta. In 1800, the mission moved to India proper. During the next 34 years, not only did he convert numerous Indians to Christ, but he translated and published the Bible into Bengali, Sanskrit, and portions in 44 other dialects, and other linguistic books. He founded a college, another missionary society, an agricultural and horticultural society, and, after a 25-year campaign, helped secure the outlawing of the Hindu practice of Sati, the burning of a man's widow on his funeral pyre. Moreover, his example spurred on a global missionary outreach. **One article described Carey as "undereducated, underfunded, and underestimated", but no one could have imagined what God could do with someone willing to continually invest in personal growth and willing to take risks to follow the leadings of God. What could the Lord do with you?**