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# WHERE IS MY SHOVEL DIGGING?

## Prophetic Attention to Our Future

*by Daniel A. Brown, PhD*

My job situation is such that I could do virtually nothing and still draw a paycheck. I know that sounds preposterous, and, in a way it is, but I'm only trying to describe my mindset at this point in my ministry. Bear with me.

CTW is funded (for five more years) by a huge gift given to it; under the auspices of our church, a few months after I made the decision to step aside as senior pastor. I've spoken of that gift before, so I won't go into any details except to say it was a restricted gift, meaning it is intended to fund CTW, and not be a deposit into which The Coastlands can tap. Thankfully, we did not invest much of the lump sum in stocks, so most of it remains unaffected by the economic downturn. We lost some assets, but a very small portion of the main corpus.

Hence, my "job" is secure, steady and flexible. So, what do I do? What captures my attention? As funny as it sounds, I'm keenly interested in what interests me. Before you say "Hmm," hear me out. Allowing for the fact that I'm vulnerable as the next guy to mistakes, poor judgments, selfishness, and every other wrongness of the soul, I am also as sensitive as the next guy to promptings, leadings, and whispers of God's Spirit. (If you think I'm boasting or congratulating myself, you've missed my point.)

Dispassionately, I think of myself—precisely as I think of you—as a tool in God's hand. Let's make me a shovel, for instance. Shovels do not plunge themselves into the soil; they don't hop off the hooks in the garage and stiffly bounce their way out to the garden to a spot of their own choosing! Picking when and where to dig is a bit above their pay grade. Shovels have a handle for a reason—so, with me. I have no interest, whatsoever, in a self-determined dig. As a shovel, I enjoy shoveling. In fact, there are few other activities I find more fulfilling than moving dirt around. It's what I was made for!

Eager as I am to dig, I'm very curious where the Gardener is taking me. Into what spots will He press the front edge of my blade? Are we creating post-holes, a drainage ditch, or making a rose garden? What does God want to capture for my interest and my heart? Where and when do I feel His hands directing me?

Aside from personal interest, I'm curious as a "son of Issachar" (1 Chronicles 12:32). They were known as men who knew the times, and knew what Israel should do in the midst of those seasons. Over the last two years, since my schedule has been freed up to go anywhere and do anything, I've arrived at several priorities—issues that strike me as most urgent and important for my life. I do not presume to tell anyone else what they should do, but it helps me to feel useful and focused to have some parameters for my energy. To whatever extent people might view my voice as prophetic, I happily direct others' attention to my list.

## WHERE MY ATTENTION LANDS

I wouldn't necessarily rank them in any order, but here are the pressing concerns I have, and the areas of ministry to which I feel directed:

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: IDENTIFYING, DEVELOPING, AND MOBILIZING NEW LEADERS

We have a chronic lack of rising lay-leaders within Foursquare churches all over the world. And, even before the Boomer cohort departs the scene, we are already short on would-be pastors to lead our churches. Irrespective of all the buzz about local church institutes, online education, and other highly touted training vehicles, very, very few lead pastors are being added to our ranks.

I advocate more *ministry skill-specific education*, more alternative pathways into pastoring and more field-based discipling initiatives. For instance, in my district two senior pastors left their churches (for very good reasons), and I did not have a single prospect to fill those pulpits. Consequently, I asked for those pastors to name the individual whom they felt was the most likely to be a good leader, and I approached those laymen with a simple offer: accept the position as pastor, and all of the other pastors in the district will support you with *on-the-job* training. They accepted, and they are very fine pastors today, two years later.

### **SPIRIT-LED MINISTRY: INSTILLING YOUNG PASTORS WITH A PASSION FOR YRULY SPIRITUAL/REVELATIONAL MINISTRY**

Just as Peter could not have identified Jesus as the Christ without spiritual revelation, neither can church leaders understand God's purposes for their congregations without Spirit-led prompting and revelation. Sadly, many young ministers have been jaded to things spiritual by the nonsensical and ostentatious displays of so-called spiritual movement in churches of recent date. Excesses and fleshly corruptions of spiritual gifts have all but convinced 30-somethings-in-ministry to toss out all things spiritual.

I am passionate about reintroducing ministers to a sane but more-than-they-can-imagine openness to God's Spirit. Being Spirit-led has become synonymous with goofiness and flamboyance. Can't we get back to simplicity and humility in spiritual gifts? Can't we expect God's Spirit to speak to us and lead us in ways we could not know with natural thought alone? Concerning spirituals, I wish the Church was more aware (1 Corinthians 12:1).

### **INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS: HARNESSING THE WORLDWIDE FOURSQUARE CHURCH IN A MORE EFFECTIVE TEAM-EFFORT**

When I was a kid, there was a commercial on TV advertising "20-Mule Team Borax." Ten pair of horses pulled a huge wagon, and the implications for this detergent were obvious: more harnessed and coordinated horses equal more pulling capacity. Every local and national Foursquare Church ought to ask a simple question: *How can we offer to come alongside others, and how can we invite partnership from others?*

Unfortunately, the emphasis has been on static structures and administration—parceling the world geographically into regions/areas, rather than spiritually, into needs/assets. Despite the fact that churches of the same size all over the world have more in common with one another than they do with different size churches within their own country, we still want to lump them together under an administrative region. I advocate approaching the worldwide need for more churches with worldwide answers. For instance, we could set a baseline, global curriculum for all Foursquare Pastors entering ministry. Imagine the *best of Foursquare* Instructors from several nations, teaching those classes in their own language, but translated into languages specific to the students.

### **READILY AVAILABLE TRAINING RESOURCES: DEMOCRATIZING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BELIEVERS EVERYWHERE**

CTW has moved to a new model—offering everything we can for free, or at cost. Since we have done that, the number of downloads of resources and articles have exploded. The more that I travel to “out of the way” places and offer training to lesser known and overlooked people groups, the more convinced I become that such equal-opportunity discipleship will pay huge dividends in the future. Whether it’s a gathering of young senior pastors and their spouses, or an intensive retreat for 20-something-professionals, or a national conference for a small Foursquare Movement, I find myself shouting praises to the sky when the event concludes.

When the pool of readily apparent and already enabled ministers dries up (as it has in our Movement), I do not succumb to discouragement. On the contrary, I feel exhilarated because I know it simply means we must focus our attention elsewhere—to the people our aged-eyes can’t see well.

So, that’s where my shovel seems to be poking around...