

The Lack of the Anointing of Togetherness

José & Rosana Liste¹

Email: liste34@hotmail.com

Abstract

This article is the second in a four-part series, written in response to the article by Steve Cochrane in this issue of *Glocal Conversations*. Cochrane addresses the question of the impact of Covid-19 on the advance of the Great Commission. In this response by Argentinians ministering in the UK, the authors point out the way the pandemic has exposed the cultural vulnerabilities of the individualistic West, and call for an intentional pursuit of togetherness to better address global concerns.

As Steve Cochrane's article explains, we were not really prepared to face the challenges of the Covid 19 Global Pandemic. In spite of the fact that we as the Church, especially in the West, had worked hard for many things and had many ministries functioning, when the storm came, we found ourselves afraid, shaken, confused, paralyzed, and feeling like we were drowning: so overwhelmed with it all ourselves, in some cases, that we haven't responded well to the needs of people around us.

For sure, there have been sparks of God's glory, and God is moving beyond our own limitations and maybe even in a more supernatural way than before. As a team, we have met people that very readily opened up, and others that have testified about how they encountered God's presence in their own houses and in the hospital when they cried out for help. However, this time also exposed the fact that our strategies and programs are insufficient to respond to such a surge of fear, isolation, grief, and all the social and mental health issues plaguing our countries in Europe.

Trying to prevent more pain and prepare for the next challenges, one might diagnose the problem as a shortage of proper policies. Personally, we believe that God, in His mercy and grace, is using this terrible sickness to awaken us to the reality that the root problem is that we are deficient in resilience, faith and love. We need to realise that we lack the anointing that impacted the world in other times in the past², and cry out to God to give us again the compassion and sacrificial love that turned the hearts of nations.

Unfortunately, in the West, we may be relying too much on welfare structures. Public institutions of assistance are a great legacy and blessing left to us by heroes of the faith like the ones that built the Salvation Army.³ Nonetheless, if we continue to forget the spiritual weight that built the welfare structures, the institutions' impact will not be the same and we can be moved by another spirit, one of religiosity, self-reliance, and paternalism.

As we lead a Youth With A Mission ministry base in London, we sometimes witness a rigidity and a lack of sensitivity to the needs of others. Many may have good intentions and even

¹ Missionaries with Youth With A Mission in Argentina and in England for the last 40 years.

² For more on how Christians and biblical values transformed Europe see Vishal Mangalwadi's *The Book that Made your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization*.

³ More information on the history, values and ministry of Salvation Army see <https://victorianweb.org/religion/sa1.html>

nice ministries, but they lack the awareness to see for others. A Finnish staff member once shared about how it is difficult for her to ask for financial support among her people. She said that, in their mindset, all Finns can work, and all have access to social welfare, so there would never be a need to help each other.

Recently, we hosted an Indian couple at our base and people had been very nice to them and our hospitality team offered them all we usually do. However, after weeks of them staying with us, a Brazilian staff member noticed that the wife seemed cold, and she had the sensitivity to ask them about it. Indeed, they were feeling cold because their Indian clothes couldn't keep them warm in the English winter. In shock, the Brazilian staff felt terrible about it and immediately got them clothes and shoes.

Maybe it was because in Brazil she had witnessed needs, this Brazilian staff member was sensitive to perceive what the Indian couple did not feel the freedom to say. In this, we realize that something meant for blessing, like good social welfare, has been used to rob us from awareness and heart-to-heart empathy. In the mentality here in The United Kingdom, if anyone would happen to be cold, they would simply buy clothes or shoes. It didn't cross their minds that someone would be in need right next to them; this is a sad type of blindness.

As a society, we have focused on improving the system, which is amazing because God created us with this capacity to steward well. However, we have lost the lessons and the resilience that can be born of the need to cope with poverty, trials, suffering and even injustices.⁴

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".⁵ For 'rich people', it is hard to understand this wisdom, but one must look at the world and see how it is true. Why are poor children in the Global South happier than the ones that have all the material comforts here? In an apparent paradox, poverty can, when shaped by God, lead people to walk in vulnerability and be more sensitive to other's needs. It mobilizes them, it extends their perseverance, patience, and capacity to improvise. Lastly, it teaches gratitude for needs met.

With our eyes, we tend to see poverty creating passivity, resignation and even criminality, but when God is in the centre, the common need can create a greater sense of community and of unity. There is power in the love to care for one another's needs and that is what changes hearts and cultures. It is what changed Europe! We shouldn't be like entitled children that don't understand the value of what their forefathers gave them. We must be men and women of God that steward the treasure given to us and share the blessings with others.

As we consider the implications of this subject for our Global organization, we see that the solutions for a post-Covid world will need to be contextualized to the different realities around the world. Above all, we believe we need a greater baptism of love and humility to be able to be led by the Holy Spirit as we work in synergy among our brothers and sisters.

Visibly, the Global South is much more in need of material resources, and we as followers of Christ should continue sharing the finances and the wisdom that we have gained from creating good and sustainable structures for all. For example, we were part of such a process of change when we were missionaries in northern Argentina. Shocked by the fact that 25 percent of children

⁴ James 1:2-4 "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

⁵ Matthew 5:3.

were dying of malnourishment, we started a feeding program and, as we were faithful, a transformation in the whole mindset of people happened, and our ministry was multiplied by locals.⁶

However, as clear as day, the Global South also has a lot to impart to us in spirituality, emotional and mental health, and sense of community. *Ubuntu*⁷ (I am because we are) is such a key aspect in today's world, people are in desperate need for love, community, and sense of belonging in the wealthier areas of the world.

We need to humble ourselves and see we are not always the ones in a position to teach. Truly, if we want to be real missionaries, we must let go of any paternalistic tendency and be the ones that are learners. We need to walk in synergy, both giving and receiving, to be able to live in God's equality and gain from the wealth of places where the gospel is growing today. "At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need".⁸

We have the conviction that this will not be the last crisis to be experienced on a global scale. Terrorism, climate change, moral corruption, broken down families, racism and others will continue to challenge us all. However, we do believe God has given us the spiritual blessings and the tools to face them together. We need to rely on our local communities and, on a broader scale, the whole body of Christ around the world.

To conclude, we have the conviction that community should not be an afterthought. We believe a communal spirit could even be added as a core value of Youth With A Mission.⁹ There is such an anointing in community living, we become family and we even gain power and efficacy! In the togetherness, we have been able to strengthen people's identity and lead people into fulfilling God's dreams for their lives. Let revisit the biblical principle behind the repeated commands to "one another".

⁶ Our story is recorded in Loren Cunningham's book *Daring to Live on the Edge: The Adventure of Faith and Finances*.

⁷ <https://www.iamweareyouth.org/news/2021/10/7/ubuntu-i-am-because-we-are>

⁸ 2 Cor 8:13-14 "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality."

⁹ Purpose, Core Beliefs and Foundational Values of YWAM at <https://ywam.org/about-us/values/>