

**Title: Prerequisites For a Change**  
**Text: Luke: 10: 30-35**

Introduction

“We must be the change that we wish to see in the world.” These are the words of Mahatma Ghandi that was the theme at a YouthBuild Leadership Conference held July 2002 in Washington DC. These words were used to inspire young high school dropouts and propel them to complete their high school equivalency in an alternative program.

Like most of the country today, I am deeply engaged in the current democratic primary race between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. The fact that 44 years after the historic signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that outlawed discrimination against African Americans and thirty some odd years since the 1970's Women's liberation movement, we now have an AA and a Woman fighting for the Democratic nomination for President of the USA. Certainly our country is changing. I caution that our church must also be careful that we not allow the secular world to blaze a trail that should have been blazed by the church long ago.

As I reflect on Dr. King's words so eloquently stated in his 1963 speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in the march on Washington,

*“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day*

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*even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.”*

It's been almost 40 years since he delivered this historic speech, and we have achieved parts of the dream. But are we really ready to actualize the totality of Dr. King's vision today? I believe this parable is a wonderful foundation of the principles taught and lived by Dr. King. In his "I See the Promised Land" speech (given the evening before his assassination) King referred to this parable and urged the audience "Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness." You see, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho has many twists and turns and is very dangerous. I would invite you all to be a member of the Jerusalem to Jericho Road Improvement Association.

If you are going to join this association there are some prerequisites you must meet.

- You must first acknowledge the need for a change
- You must be the change you wish to see in the world
- Your heart must be touched by the hand of God
- Finally, go and make a difference

- I) You must first acknowledge the need for a change
  - In visiting an AA meeting years ago, I learned that one must first acknowledge his alcoholism before he can get help

## Prerequisites for a change

- The crack head, the gambler, the pimp and the prostitute must acknowledge that there must be a change before they can receive help.
- I've ministered to many men and women over the years that were tired of their lifestyle and condition – but they were not ready to make a change.
- You must get sick and tired of being sick and tired.
- Several years ago in my first pastorate, my eyes were opened to the realities of the problems experienced by my parishioners. The greater percent were illiterate, uneducated, drug addicts and other societal misfits.
- I realized that what I had been taught in Bible College did not jive with the real life problems that I encountered. The suburban Anglo model of ministry did not work with tough Afro-American urban ministry experience.
- **I thought to myself**
  - a. This is not what I signed up to do
  - b. Did God drop me off at the wrong address

*“God never calls a man or woman to do a job that He is not ready and willing to give them the necessary tools and resources in which to do it”*

## I SOON REALIZED THAT I NEEDED TO CHANGE

- My thinking, my attitude and my expectations

## YOU KNOW WHAT I DID?

- I dropped my attitude filled with misperceptions about the disenfranchised
- I realized that as wonderful as my education was at NBC, it had not totally prepared me for the challenges I faced

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- I was determined to continue learning at other colleges
- I resigned to do His will completely

### **II) You must be the change you wish to see in the world**

- About ten years later, God dropped me of in the ghetto of Memphis to minister to a group of hurting people
- My first week in town, a beggar washed my windshield at a stoplight – looking to hustle a dollar
- I soon realized that the problems that were not as visible in my first small town ministry - were glaring in my second ministry (prostitutes and a crack house around the corner & thousands in projects within a 5 mile radius of the church)
  - a. We started the Sunday School Academic Excellence Program
  - b. Partnered with a compassionate ministry to offer tutoring twice a week
  - c. I was intentional about touching children to demonstrate the love of Christ
- I also worked a job with YouthBuild, a program committed to helping young dropouts earn their GED, learn carpentry skills, acquire leadership skills and get a job.

### **III) Your heart must be touched by the hand of God**

- Like the Prophet Isaiah, we must have a clear vision of God He said, “In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.” (Is 6:1)

Isaiah responded

1. Woe is me;
2. I am ruined,
3. I am a man of unclean lips and I live among people of unclean lips

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- In this parable the priest was able to simply walk by because he was preoccupied with his religious work and ceremony more than the welfare of this hurting man.
  - 1. Maybe he had to get to his parish for noon prayer.
  - 2. Maybe he had a feed the hungry program at his church that he had to get back to run.
  
- The Levite looked over and saw the man, but he was more occupied with making it safely to his destination instead of making a difference.
  - 1. Could it be that he was afraid of being robbed himself
  - 2. Certainly he didn't want to waste his precious time caring for this man
  
- Maybe it was the man's fault he was in this condition?
  - a. Let's quit blaming the victim
  - b. Let's not judge the condition, but rather meet the need
  
- The truth of the matter is that we might all pass by unless we experience the real transforming power of the Holy Spirit.
- We must be participators in the deeper crisis of entire sanctification, where the heart is cleansed from all sin and the believer is brought into full devotement to God

### **IV) Go and make a difference**

It is no coincidence that the half-breed, socially ostracized Samaritan stopped by to lend a helping hand.

Although his life had been no picnic itself, he was willing to sacrifice his time, money and energy to help another marginalized individual.

In the next year or so you will graduate from this college. As you draw closer to this moment let me share the words of John Brown Watson with you – as I prepare to close

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*“The end of education is to know God and the laws and purpose of His universe, and to reconcile one’s life to those laws...The first aim of a good college is not to teach books but the meaning and purpose of life. Hard study and the learning of books are only means to these ends... We develop power and courage and determination and we go out to achieve wisdom, truth and justice. If we do not come to this the cost of schooling is wasted.”*