

Kingdom Vision Report

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The City Church and the House Church: Platform for Exponential Growth

There is something very important to learn from companies that are experiencing exponential growth. Create a platform that brings people and services together. This the new model for the Church of the 21st Century

Let me share with you an interesting fact from the tech revolution we are experiencing now that is rapidly changing the business models of the world. And then I will apply it to what I believe the Lord is going to do for the next great wave of world revival.

In 2010 Amazon had about 30,000 employees. 8 years later in 2018 they have 560,000 employees. That is what exponential growth is. Amazon is a public platform that links people who make things with people who want to buy things.

Facebook is a well known phenomenon. It is a public platform connecting 2,2 billion people in the world in a social network for free. That is exponential growth.

Uber is public platform connecting people who need transport with people who have transport...worldwide. The biggest "taxi" service in the world and the company does not own a taxi.

Airbnb is a public platform that connects people who want a low cost room to rent on their travels with people who have a spare room for rent. They dominate the "hotel" industry worldwide...without owning a hotel.

Microsoft created a public platform (Windows) that allowed tens of thousands of different programmes to run on its operating system.

Google created a platform without any of its own content, Youtube, where anyone can upload what they want. Every minute 600 hours of video gets uploaded and Google is making billions in revenue from that free service (from advertising).

Wikipedia created a public platform for a worldwide free encyclopaedia and invited people to load up research and articles. Nobody got paid but thousands got to work...and Encyclopaedia Britannica is out of business.

I can go on and on listing companies that have grown exponentially in the last 15 years decimating old business models and delivering better products and better services to people....by creating public platforms for people to connect with one another to produce and trade and innovate.

There is something very interesting at work here and sociologists and psychologists are starting to define this phenomenon and describe it. One of the better was Steven Johnson's book "Emergence" which on his back cover describes the concept....

*"Why do people cluster together in neighbourhoods?
How do internet communities spring up from nowhere?
Why is a brain conscious even though no single neuron is?
What causes media frenzy?"*

The answer is emergence: Change that occurs from the bottom up. When enough individual elements interact and organize themselves, the result is collective intelligence - even though no one is in charge. It is a phenomenon that exists at every level of experience, and it will revolutionize the world."

Can you see where I am heading with this? He says ***"When enough individual elements interact and organize themselves the result is collective intelligence....even though no one is in charge"***

What does it look like in our local churches? Nobody interacting and one person in charge!

So here is my point: We need a new model for how we do church if we want to move to exponential growth not just in numbers but in delivering services or ministry to our people to produce the work of the Kingdom of God on earth.

All the above examples tells me in what direction we should be looking: We need to find a better way to bring God's people together so that they can interact and allow their unique creative giftings to start to emerge and minister to one another. When we come together it is not "collective intelligence" that emerges as Johnson describes in his book...our book the Bible says "Christ emerges!" ("Where two or three gather together in my name there I am in their midst.").

But he is very right about the phenomenon of "emergence". Connect people one to another and things happen.

But who is going to be the leader? Do I need to answer that?

I read another fascinating book that gives amazing insight on what I believe is the kind of platform we need to bring people together.

Geoffrey West wrote a bestseller recently called "Scale: The Universal Laws of Life and Death In Organisms, Cities and Companies". Its a heavy 450 pages full of fascinating trends analysis. But the point he is researching is "how do we create sustainability in organisms, society, corporations". And his fascinating results are that there are universal laws that are applicable...such as all animals have about the same number of heartbeats in their lifetimes... about 1,5 billion. But your rate of metabolism, how much your heart works depends on how long you live...a hamster and rat a few years....an elephant, whale or man over 70 years.

The more interesting part of his research to me was on the life and death of companies and cities. He asks the question in one chapter: "Why do companies die but cities don't?" The life of a typical company can be measured in years....a city in centuries and some in millennia.

The short answer is this: Cities have found a way to constantly renew themselves by allowing their citizens to live life. The creativity of city inhabitants allow for constant renewal and growth. All that cities must do is provide a platform for people to interact and that magic of leaderless growth and innovation emerges.

Companies on the other hand a fatally dependent on one man leadership that inevitably cannot over period of time adapt quick enough to new markets, new products and new innovations....and companies die. Kodak used to employ 150,000 people and died very quickly....it actually researched digital photos...but then came Steve Jobs and the iPhone followed up by 9 young people who created Instagram who then sold it to Facebook for \$13 billion.

The City Church

His other interesting phenomenon is that size does matter. The larger a city grows the easier and more effective it is to do provide services at lower cost per person served. That is why the whole world movement is towards urbanization.

The rural masses of the earth are moving to the cities. And the Church needs to find a way to capitalize on this dynamic. And the answer is not to run away from the problems of urban life....make use of its platform for exponential growth!

Here is what I see ahead. We need to bring the people of God together to create the innovative and service environment that will allow the Holy Spirit to bring out all His gifts in the lives of our family of God.

I see the following:

First we need to get back to the early New Testament house church model. That is the basic building blocks for a much larger platform of interaction. We need to get back to the primacy of relationships. That is the bedrock of the Kingdom of God and the primary means of discipleship...relationships.

There are practical limits to how many people we can have personal relationships with. But houseful of believers coming together for worship, teaching, sharing, counselling (and eating by the way!)...that will do it. That is how the church grew for the first 300 years. Every meeting was held in someone's house.

All house groups in Ephesus or Corinth or Rome were addressed as the church of Ephesus or the church of Corinth or the church of Rome.

But the people of God in a city also need to be able to connect with one another. Why? Because there is work that needs to be done that requires the gifts and skills of many people working together.

That is why companies were created by law in the 1800's. As industrialization started to accelerate it became evident that individual people or a family can no longer do the work of making clothes, making furniture, iron work, cloth making...all these things use to be "home made". Now people had to be brought together, financial capital had

to be brought together, specialized skills had to be brought together for the scale of work that needed to be done.

And here is where the vision and mission of what we think of as "church" got misunderstood. We were so used to the ministry of the five-fold gifts of pastors, teachers, prophets, evangelists, apostles that we thought that when they gather us for meetings, then that is church. And frankly they have laboured hard over the centuries to go into all the world to preach the gospel. Praise God for their lives and sacrifice.

But now it is time for us having been saved and disciplined by our five-fold ministry leaders to get on with our ministries...and all of us have a ministry. But while we have been "going to church"...the world system gathered people for work on their agenda, they gathered the finances of the world for their agenda.....and what is their agenda of the corporate world? TO MAKE MONEY!

And now we have come to a fork in the road. The entire corporate world agenda of "making money" is now destroying families, the environment, the sustainability of life on earth.

We have to reorganize the church for work! We will have to redeem the earth, heal the nations and get on with the great work that Jesus asked us to do. For that we need to organize ourselves in way that we can bring the people of God together for work that needs to be done.

That is the concept of the City Church. Home churches all across a city connected with one another. We have the social media to do this. We need to use this city wide platform to create creative clusters of God's people who rally to causes. work together, who come up with innovative ideas and solutions, who trade with one another, who create products and services across a city.

And you know what would also be nice....at least once a month we all get together in a stadium or a large gathering and we come for worship or evangelism or intercession. And we create special groups who want to get together for teaching seminars or planning sessions. We sort out our own legal and personal problems. For instance China just started a nationwide "Social Credit" score. People who misbehave have their social credit score lowered. Go below a certain level and people will not work with you or hire you. Think about Proverbs that says a good name is worth more than silver or gold.

And those City Churches need to link up with other City Churches when really big projects need to be tackled like building our own universities or schools or industries or banking services.

Now let me be honest with you about our current state of the church...our church leaders will just not do this. I know how my own church pastor has tried to do city wide outreaches or meetings with other churches...nobody is interested. Everyone sticks to their own church denomination.

But we cannot be like that anymore. One man in the pulpit ministering just does not have the gifts and teachings necessary for all that is needed in that group of people.

That is why I believe the future is back to house churches....but a small group meeting in a home is not enough...they must connect city wide to other house churches...for all the work that needs to be done in a city.

Anyway, that is my basic idea for a new platform for the church for exponential growth...all of the business platforms that I mentioned above had this one thing in common...create a platform that brings people together and then let the magic of "emergence" take place, the creative energy that emerges spontaneously when groups of people come together.

Lets get our home churches working and then link them with others in a City Church and watch the creative power of the Holy Spirit bring forth wonders we have not dreamed of yet!

I've got lots more ideas on this theme but that is for future blogs....