

The Ministry of Entrepreneurship

What should be the church's response to this issue of debt?

It was probably the most popular commencement speech delivered at any college graduation this year. To say it went viral would be an understatement. Billionaire Robert Smith in his address to the almost 400 graduates of Morehouse College pledged to pay off all their student loans. It was an estimated amount of \$10 million.^[1]

Many of you reading this probably wished you were in that graduating class (so do I). This act of kindness underscores a major fact in America today – to be young and college educated is to be in a lot of debt. The total national student loan debt is over \$1.5 trillion. Graduates of predominantly black colleges and universities carry 32% more debt than their counterparts at other institutions of higher education.^[2]

We are in a crisis that threatens the economic, emotional and social well-being of a generation. Political candidates are making big promises as to what they plan to do about this issue if they get elected. What should be the church's response to this issue of debt?

What does the prophet say?

In the Bible there is a story of a woman facing a similar debt crisis. It is affecting her peace of mind, her family, and threatening to jeopardize her future. In 2 Kings chapter 4 we find the story of a widow whose deceased husband was a church worker. Not only has she lost her life companion and the father of her two sons, but her only income source as well.

When we are introduced to her, she is in debt and the creditors are coming to take her boys and make them slaves. With nowhere to turn she seeks out Elisha the prophet, the mouth-piece of God in that day.

It may be expected that Elisha, as spiritually connected as he was and with all the miracles he had performed, would have prayed down resources out of heaven for her. But he does not do that. With a network of other believers it is also conceivable that he would have collected an offering from the body for her. But he doesn't do that either.

Instead Elisha helps her to develop a small business to relieve her debt situation, care for her sons present needs, and secure their future.

Could it be that this advice to this mother in debt is still relevant today for those under the weight of debt?

3 Steps to Start a Side Business

This story captures three principles that can help anyone to start a side business. It is estimated that 45% of Americans are earning extra income on top of their salary.^[3] Some of that is through freelance and contract work. Here are three steps for anyone looking to start a business.

STEP #1: Figure out what you have

The big question Elisha asks the woman is “What do you have in your house?” For someone who seemingly has nothing, that is a challenging question. It is difficult for each of us to stop and assess what skills, expertise and resources we have.

Just like the woman back then, it is easy to down play and overlook what we have. We tend to value what others do much more than our own abilities. But good stewardship of what God has given us requires that we stop and take inventory of what we have.

We can figure that out by looking at what we know a lot about, what we are highly skilled in doing, and evaluating the things people come to us for help with. Those three areas can give us a good picture of what we have that we can use for a business.

STEP #2: Connect with others

One of the brilliant lessons that Elisha shares with this widow is the need to connect with others. So he has her go borrow vessels from her neighbors. The fact of the matter is, in order for someone to lend items to you there has to be a level of trust. This widow had to tap into the trust she built up and possibly even develop new relationships of trust.

This is key for anyone seeking to build a business. You have to grow a know, like, and trust factor. People are looking to do business with others they feel confident in and believe in. And there are so many ways to build up trust in who you are and what you have to offer.

One big way to develop confidence in the eyes of potential customers is to show results. You demonstrate that what you have has helped others. More than anything people want to know that what you say you can do you are able to deliver.

STEP #3: Convert into sales

Elisha instructs this mother to go pour her oil into the jars she has borrowed. We cannot overlook the miracle that God works here. From a small amount of oil in her house, multiple vessels are filled. What an encouraging feeling to know that God blesses entrepreneurial efforts that we give to Him. After the vessels are filled, she has to go sell the oil to get the money to pay her debts. This shows us that what we have has to be packaged in a way that our customers can receive it. In our world today there are so many ways to package your knowledge and expertise. And people are willing to pay for it!

What's in your house?

Perhaps you opened this article by chance and initially were not interested in full time entrepreneurship. Truthfully, it is not for everyone. But what if God is nudging you to use what He's given you? What if He's challenging you to pour your oil into empty vessels? Once this woman filled those vessels I believe she went back to the same people she borrowed them from and offered the oil for sale. She took what they gave her and made it better.

I encourage you to use what God has given you to enrich the lives of others through your small business. Remember, Billionaire Robert Smith, through the

success of his entrepreneurship, was able to take care of the debt of the 2019 graduating class of Morehouse College. How can the success of your small business help your community or church? Maybe God is waiting to bless you so that He can use you to bless others. What if God is seeking for a generation of believers, a generation of churches, that are willing to do ministry through entrepreneurship? What's in your house?

[1]

<https://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/education/billionaire-robert-smith-says-hell-pay-off-morehouse-college-class-of-2019s-student-loans-20190519>

[2]

<https://www.businessinsider.com/student-loan-debt-crisis-college-cost-mind-blowing-facts-2019-7>

[3]

<https://www.fool.com/retirement/2019/06/07/45-of-us-workers-have-a-side-hustle-data-shows.aspx>

Social Justice: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Growing up in the 90's as a Seventh-day Adventist, there were few things more impressionable than evangelistic meetings or what many would term "Revelation Seminars." These meetings would last for weeks with the goal to bring individuals to Christ at their culmination. As an 8-12 year old child those seminars were quite daunting and foreboding. The preacher's emphasis was heavily placed on Biblical prophecies, "signs of the times," and ultimately the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

While it was a very captivating experience, I often left more confused about Jesus, and my salvation. I would think to myself, "If I have heard this stuff for years and am still confused, I cannot imagine how a visitor might feel!" Revelation Seminars seemed to be anything but a revelation – at least not a revelation of Christ. Don't get me wrong, I understand their intent and have witnessed God work on the hearts of those who sat through them. But looking back sometimes I wonder what exactly was being revealed.

A World in Need of a Revelation

We live in a time when we have unlimited and unfiltered access to information, but the least sense of direction. We can communicate with one another across the globe, and yet we feel the loneliest. There is a desire for community, belonging, and a hope that the God everyone talks about is actually real and relevant to our lives. In other words, the world (and the church for that matter) is looking for a revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Bible is replete with passages that reveal a God whose ear is tuned to and brokenhearted. Better yet, we serve a God whose heart breaks over the injustices of this world. However, the mantle has been laid on the Christian believer to make sure that the world experiences the love and power of a God that sees their plight. It is clear that the follower of Christ is primarily called to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-19 NIV), but how can we disciple a world that has yet to have a revelation of Jesus?

Christ Revealed to the World

The Apostle Paul provides profound insight as to how Christ is revealed to the world. In the Book of Romans Chapter 1:20 he says "For His (Jesus Christ) invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been *clearly* seen, and *understood* by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead!" In other words, the long-standing question of "is there a God?" "Who is God?" and "does God care about what takes place on earth?" can all be answered by the actions of those who claim to serve this God according to the scripture above. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we have the power to reveal the "invisible attributes, the eternal power and divine nature of God" just by how we relate to one another and the world!

Paul places more emphasis on our role in revealing God to the world when he pens Romans 8:19 (NIV) "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed." If Paul were writing in laymen terms today he would be saying "Would the real Christ followers please stand up?" If God is revealed through His creation, then there is little wonder why at this moment in Earth's history the entire creation from plant to person is under attack. The enemy aims to suppress the revelation of God to the world! On the contrary, mankind has been ordained to facilitate the revelation of God. I submit to you that it is through acts of benevolence and a keen sense of justice that God is revealed to the world.

A Christian Code of Ethics

As a practitioner in the Social Work profession, my practice is bound by a code of ethics. As listed in the National Association of Social Workers Book of Ethics, I am bound to Service, Social Justice, Dignity and worth of the person, Importance of human relationships, Integrity, and Competence. If a secular profession can hold its practitioners to such noble standards of Righteousness and Justice, should those who stand under the banner of Christ live by anything less? Christ has in fact given us a "code of Ethics" that calls for its practitioners to not just agree with the code but to also live by the code! In fact, the primary criterion for entrance into Heaven is not based on our doctrinal subscription but on how we served those who could not help themselves (Matthew 25:35-40).

When we as the body of Christ are ready to give, that is when the Kingdom of God will receive. When we are ready to listen to the plight of the downtrodden, those same individuals will in turn become receptive to the message of a crucified and risen savior. When we are ready to extend a hand in our community, our community will make their presence felt in our midst. I believe we are called to move away from some of our traditional practices that often only yield conversion to a denomination. Now, God is calling us to move toward the practices of the early church: genuine benevolence and a pursuit of justice that yields conversions to Christ.

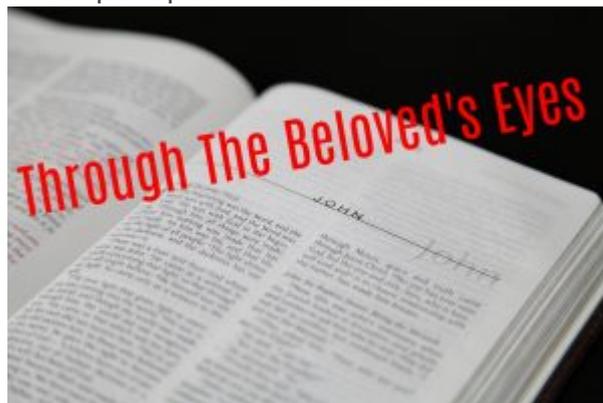
He's Revealed in Me

Recently, I had an encounter with a young man who was homeless. I felt led to give and as I did, he looked me in the eyes and said, "I feel so alone, confused, and misunderstood." I believe his are the sentiments of the world at large. We can no longer afford to be benefactors of a revelation of God in

our own lives, and not share it with those who are seeking for it as well. The question then becomes; "how do I do my part in revealing God to the world?" Author and messenger of God, Ellen White penned a familiar statement that I believe provides a guideline for those seeking one. In her book, *Ministry of Healing* p.143 she states "The savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs and won their confidence. Then he bade them, 'follow me.'" That passage and formula is riddled with genuine, tangible ways in which Christ revealed himself to the world. When we become more intentional about being present in the triumphs and trials of those around us, we won't need them to sit through a Revelation seminar in hopes that they see Jesus. They will have already seen him revealed through our love for them and for one another.

God's Will For Us Traces Christ's Example Of Service

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Monday, September 5, 2016
We are focusing on getting to know God from the perspective of John the beloved.



Today's Scripture Focus: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:38-40). You are extremely important to God! While there are many ways of demonstrating this reality, I would like to focus on the intent of Jesus' first advent. He came from heaven to do His Father's will—save us. All of the ministry, pain, suffering, hardships, and work He encountered was for your benefit. God really did love the world so much that He gave His Son to save us. While we were at our worst, God gave His best.

How Does God Want To Use You In The Lives Of Others?

For too often, we don't consider God's will for our lives, especially as it relates to others. Is there a neighbor you are supposed to help? Are there youth you need to guide because their parents are absent or too busy? Are there co-workers under the boss's scrutiny that you can help do a better job

before they get fired? Does your spouse need a listening ear? It's hard to cram anything more into our schedules. But, if we do not take our cues from God, making time to serve others, the devil has already fit them into his.

God's will is for us to drink deeply of His Spirit to lead others closer to Him, where they can be delivered from the clutches of the enemy. Will you make yourself available?



Can you imagine? Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, agonizing over one critical question: would He put His needs before God's will for Him?

Following The Selfless Example Of Jesus

The Father's will meant that Jesus would have to die for sins He did not commit. He would have to become sin for a human family of rebels and most of

them would neither appreciate nor accept His sacrifice. Would He submit to the bitter end of that process, or allow sinners to die in their sins? Since you are experiencing this devotional thought more than 2,000 years after that fateful day, you realize Jesus chose the former. He decided to accept the charge to complete His assignment regardless of the consequences. If Jesus, the sinless One, could put self aside to save you, can we aim to follow? I have to ask myself that question every day. May the Lord help us not to merely ask that question of ourselves, but answer it to the glory of God.

The Politics of Life-Why You Must Be A Part Of Them

Politics is essential to life, your life. It was a part of your entry into this world and will be a part of your departure if you depart by dying. A birth certificate proves that you were born and a death certificate will prove that you died. Politicians are a part of both processes. And between those two events, birth and death, you will not escape other political processes. These include certification of public and private schools, professional license, housing and building permits and law enforcement as just a few other government and political intrusions into your life. Public and governmental service may be an aspiration of many youth and adults. Early involvement of many in government has been in the armed services which is non-partisan at the primary or basic level but is certainly a part of the political process as it is under the command of the President of the United States. He appoints and directs the leadership of the Department of Defense. This is true of all federal departments. Governors, mayors, county executives, commissioners, and county supervisors are also politicians with the same control over those levels of government. Politicians can be dirty without all politics being dirty.

Even persons of faith will find it necessary to encounter the political system and can remain clean and uncorrupted if they choose to continue to live a life of integrity, obeying the laws of God and the laws of government.

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no institution or large establishment on Planet Earth is totally free of dirt or corruption. It does appear that politics is getting worse. Diane Rehm, National Public Radio talk-show host, stated when she announced her retirement in December of 2015, that U.S. politics has become bizarre and irrational. This was due to several candidates competing for media coverage by making different and unusual promises or proposals. Quality candidates of integrity should not try to out-stoop each other just because the press hungers for such news. The Federal Election Commission should monitor the claims of those who thrive on double-speak, euphemism, mendacity, ambiguity, equivocation, duplicity, lies, and treachery.

Office holders should not be able to acquire private or unexplainable wealth during their terms in public office. Required justification with the U.S. Attorneys would help keep them honest and promote early retirement to seek wealth elsewhere.

Even non-partisan politics and non-governmental politics appear to have taken a dip below integrity. This includes faith-based organizations of ministry and clergy. These organizations which enjoy tax deductible benefits should be required to police themselves or lose those tax benefits. Various types of immorality should not be tolerated under the concept of "grace".

Some Christians and others have been questioned as to how they can work in a political system headed by a president who appeared to have positions far different from theirs regarding services for the poor and disadvantaged. The response could be similar to how Joseph of the Bible could have responded working for the Egyptian government, or Daniel for Babylon, or Esther and Mordecai for Persia. God does not require us to work only for those who serve Him or believe as we do. If so, most of His followers would have to remain unemployed, self employed, or employed by religious institutions. Individuals can be agreeable while not agreeing on everything. In modern times today, if we work for government at any level, like all the other employees including the president, we work for the people and are paid with the people's money. As citizens, we should work to make sure that all employees are representative of all the people and that employees serve the people and the interests of the people.

Our leaders fail us when they tell us that we can work for the lower paying jobs but should not be executives. We should not be willing to serve in the army, risking or giving our lives and not have the right or willingness to serve as Secretary of the Army or Secretary of Defense. Sometimes, it is necessary to enter an organization as "an undercover agent" for the good of all the people. Christians who witness on the job may be seen, in part, as "undercover agents" as they represent their "Master."

How does one who has the basic qualifications secure one of those executive, highly compensated jobs? Submit an application or resume to the search committee for whomever is entering office or is already in power. For top federal, state, or city office, one can Google governor or presidential search committees or call the local public library for the contact information. Any knowledgeable elected officials can assist. The president nominates and the Senate confirms presidential appointments. I have been fortunate to have been so appointed and confirmed twice. It is an unusual and honorable achievement. To achieve such, It is helpful to have someone who is widely respected or who has a valuable relationship with the president's team

or the search committee to support your interest with a letter of introduction. It is helpful if you are known by an insider or if you know a person of influence in your community to write such. Some other good tips are (1) Pray, (2) Plan, (3) prepare, (4) Prioritize, and (5) Persevere. Some other successful friend, relative, or teacher can help one expand on those important P's above to maximize the opportunities for advancing each step from interview to hiring.

Patience And Comfort For The Neediest

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Thursday, June 25, 2015

Based Upon Romans 15:4

Zeal for God's temple puts an end to indifference.

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."
(Romans 15:4).

It is not immediately apparent from reading this verse just how it relates to Bible prophecy. Yet, it is referenced often in studies related to prophecy. However, upon closer inspection a wonderful message shines through.

Let's take a quick look at the three preceding verses. The Bible says: "But we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for his good, for the purpose of edification. For even Christ did not please himself, but just as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.""
(Romans 15:1-3, LEB). Indeed, there is a specific context relevant to these verses, which we discussed in the past from Romans 14 and will not address here.

The lesson I would like to glean here is that there is a principle of selflessness and empathetic living in play. We are not here to live unto ourselves. It is our privilege to suffer with those who suffer. It is honorable to soothe the broken hearted. It is a blessing to lift up those who are burdened down by life's circumstances. Racial tensions are on the rise, and all involved, both offender and those who are offended need our prayers and help. Murder is on the rise, and all involved, both the families of those who were killed and the murderers themselves need our help. Many of our personal economies are in extreme difficulty and we need to be of service to others, sharing our resources wherever we see the need. We cannot live in a silo. We must be available to serve all whom the Lord allows to cross our paths.

How does all of this relate to Bible prophecy? Why should we care? In verse three there is an allusion to the following verse: "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; And the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." (Psalm 69:9). The immediate context was related to King David's zeal to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Mount Zion and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, which the Lord passed on to Solomon to accomplish. But, the Holy Spirit correlated this zeal to that which Jesus had for the honor of His Father's house and for those who would go there to worship in spirit and truth. Wicked people trampled God's Sanctuary for their own material gain and impeded the progress of those who came to worship God. With holy indignation, Jesus removed those wicked people and restored order to His

Father's house.

It was Prophecy that forecasted the Lord's zeal. It was prophecy that forecasted the Lord's unwillingness to lay down and sleep while the honor of His Father and the needs of the people were trampled. It is through prophecy, now, that we can experience the righteous example of Jesus and recognize our marching orders. In the last days, we must not lay down while people are being abused and trampled all around us. We find relevance and instruction in the Scriptures for living to serve others and honor our heavenly Father. Remember, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4).