

BOOK-REFLECTION ON  
FRANK R. TILLAPPAUGH "UNLEASHING THE CHURCH"

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## CHAPTER 1

### ABSTRACT

The Book heavily supports the deinstitutionalization and decentralization of Churches. The Author wants the Churches to go back to the New Testament ministering style. Not one heavily centralized Church with the Pastor not being able to carry the burden anymore, but shared responsibility and the building of largely autonomous ministries within one Church.

The Author, himself a pastor, gives a lot of tips for practical ministry. How to avoid bottleneck-situations for the Pastor for example. Very impressive he describes how he decentralized the counseling process through the building of a Counseling-Ministry in his Church. This seems to be one of the major problems in nowadays Churches.

He wants the Church to be "unleashed" meaning coming out of the defense against the invasion of the world. His proposal is to change the "Fortress-mentality" and let the Church go into the offensive. This also requires adaptations to reach nowadays people with their problems and concerns. Ministering to the whole Person not just the soul. Highlighting the change of society from rural to urban-living, he proposes changing the strategy of evangelization through building special ministries for distinctive "Target-Groups" within secular society.

One of the greatest dangers for him is a "committee" that he finds kills motivation and makes action on part of Leaders of ministry almost impossible. Instead he wants the Church to be built on trust and relationships, like also witnessed in the New Testament. One of his central sayings is "Structures must not be in the way of the Holy Spirit."

As he readily admits a lot of his experience is copied from other ministries. Especially the successes of the parachurch organizations cause him to think and adapt many of their methods.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCRETE

Tillapaugh describes many all too familiar problems for me. For example in my home church there is a great lack of counseling. The Pastor is active in many committees so are the rest of the important people. They seldom have time and cannot take care of everybody. There were attempts to found a counseling ministry. The Fellowship-Leaders should be schooled in that and do this ministry too. But the difficult cases were of course the duty of the pastors. The problem was that the pastors did not have time enough to think about the problems and therefore began to put people in boxes. This leads to some rather strange results of counseling. Of course most of the fellowship leaders were also heavily involved in the administration of the Church, therefore they too are in a constant struggle for time with people as with their families.

Another thing what I like in Tillapaugh is the honesty with which he describes the feelings of a pastor and how ministry can become more important than the Lord. Most impressing I found the failure of his plan to found new churches. But instead his church begins to support other churches in the same area. Neighboring-Churches often tend to develop a kind of hostility towards each other.

We have sent many missionaries out from our church and in the past were very successful doing evangelism in our town. But in recent years the converts become more scarce and are largely the elderly, who still respond to the methods of the seventies. I have often felt that there is no creativity in evangelism and no sharing of being a witness. We (young people) are stuffed up with all kinds of knowledge, but we do not **use** our knowledge since no one really is an example for us how to do things. We feel abandoned and somehow not understood by the church-leadership. No one seems to bother about our growth. We are Christians already are we not? Now and then there is an appeal to evangelize people. We feel a little bit of guilt. But can we do anything?

## CHAPTER 3

### REFLECTION

Many things I have thought about for a long time and never really dared to speak about are covered in this book. I felt my growth in my church stopping after the first years and I was looking for the reason why. I was trying to do ministry and even went on missionary trips, but I was largely on my own. No one to show how to do it. So I tried to learn on my own as much as possible. But I never felt I was really in ministry and really making a difference. When I finally went out with a parachurch-organization that was wholly different. There was fellowship and we fought together. This re-motivated me to pursue theological studies. I find this of utmost necessity for a ministry. But I see that I have a lack in this field. I am used to do things on my own not in a team. But there is a longing to serve in a real team like in this parachurch missionary-trip.

This should be implemented in a congregation. I feel this would have a tremendous impact on the motivation and on the personal growth of the individuals. Many things I found out for myself against another propagated thought of my surrounding. I rarely dared to speak out my thoughts since they were so different. Somehow I never felt like one of them.

This honesty in a team and a kind of pluralism within a church-body seems also to be necessary. I wonder if I could do that as a leader. Generally have the feeling I am a failure in this. Is this due to the fact that I doubted the whole thing or am I really not able to do such a thing?

Is it possible to change my church at home and help to make it alive and well again? There are so many people longing to see real spiritual life again.

They seem to be waiting to be "unleashed."

## CHAPTER 4

### ACTION

How does this change my perspective? Such a thing is difficult to answer such a short time after reading that book. I probably will think about it a lot in the future and also integrate a lot of this into my experiences and material from other books. I see that I am not alone with my perspective as with Fowler. I always thought of counseling to be closely connected with pastoring. But Tillapaugh gives a whole different perspective on that. I clearly see the necessity of doing that even in early stages of church development.

What will I do? I should look for a church who implements this team-ministry. Somehow we have recently gotten involved with a small church like that in Arcadia. We have been on a small ministry trip to Mexico last week. This should be pursued further.

I also feel confirmed in my view of need for discipline for new Christians from problematic backgrounds. The book gave a new perspective in its pragmatic approach to discipline. Discipline for the ones who cannot live without, here the street people. This relativity of norms of behavior according to the target group is new to me. But it makes perfect sense. It even "integrates" (to say that lovely word) with some things about Paul's teaching in the New Testament that lead me to that thought, but I often thought this thinking to be quite strange.