

AFI Phoenix USA 2024

Apostolic Fellowship International

MISSION STATEMENT:

- To develop peer level fellowship
- To enrich and inspire each other
- To support and protect one another
- To hear God together and for one another
- To encourage cooperation to accelerate unity in the Body of Christ
- To provoke the Church to accomplish its whole mission in the world

“THE CHURCH AND THE NEW GENERATIONS”

**May 15th and 16th
Apostolic Consultation**

Introduction

GIOVANNI TRAETTINO**Introduction****Dear brothers and sisters,**

I greet with joy the opening of this American session of the AFI, and first of all offer a heartfelt, affectionate welcome to those present, expressing my sincere gratitude to those who, together with the secretariat of the AFI, have worked here for the organization and success of this Consultation, the second in the USA after that of Miami in 2013.

Having to introduce our deliberations on such a “hot” topic as that of the future of the church in relation to the younger generation, my first thought is that the youth issue is at the heart of the church in every generation and that in this generation too the future of the church is at stake as we deal with the youth issue. Yet isn't it true that this is the frontier with which the church is called to cope at each generational transition? Although it must be recognized that the current situation seems to present more problematic and challenging features than previous ones. I think for example of the '68 generation in Europe, or that of the Jesus people in the USA...

Complexity and simplicity

Complexity is the concept and the word that best describes my, and perhaps our state of mind and our reaction to the attempt, first to explain the causes and then to respond to the challenge of the accelerated distancing of the new generations from faith, and certainly from the church. A crisis which, at least here in the West, seems to affect both old and new churches across the board.

The crisis of ideologies and strong convictions, the "liquid society" and relativism, extreme individualism, the fragmentation of relationships and abysses of solitude, new lifestyles, consumerism, the search for pleasure for pleasure's sake, the failure of communication in relationships and the wearing thin of affections, the crisis of language and polarization of positions in politics and religion, fundamentalist extremism, nationalistic and racial pride... with the final outcome of disenchantment and indifference, detachment, cynicism and apathy.

In my opinion, this is a crisis that seems to have acquired substantial strength and structural dimensions in the "heavenly places" of dominant thought due to the influence and action of the "spiritual forces of wickedness" of which the apostle Paul speaks¹. A complex picture indeed. But, according to Paul, it is always present, albeit with different complexities, in all phases of the history of humanity and of the church.

Reducing complexity to the simplicity of an encounter

¹ “...for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” Eph 6:12

Without prejudice to *the value of the study and analysis of complexity*, as pastors we are called to face the challenge of trying to reduce complexity to simplicity. In this direction, I believe that it is the Bible itself, the discovery of the way in which God has always related to man, that reveals the answer to us. In fact, the Bible is the story of how God has never left himself without witnesses and has always found the means and the way, the channel to "pierce" the veil that separated him from man; to meet with man.

In fact, it is comforting to observe how Scripture, all of Scripture, bears witness repeatedly and constantly to the same approach, the same paradigm, the same mode of God's intervention. In essence: God's initiative, his desire, his seeking to self-reveal, to visit man, to meet man.

Abraham at the oaks of Mamre,² Jacob with the angel at Peniel,³ Moses at the burning bush,⁴ and so on in the many other "visitations" of God in the Old Testament. In this regard, I would like to recall at least the vision of Isaiah⁵ and the "Pentecost" of Ezekiel;⁶ to continue in the transition from the Old to the New with the visitation to Zechariah and Mary. In the New Testament it is the Father himself who visits the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: "*You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased*" (Mk 1:11), to be followed, in the ministry of Jesus, by the "calls" to disciples and the "encounters" with people, families and multitudes; and finally, after the resurrection, with the descent of the Holy Spirit directly into the "pierced" hearts of those present. It is the Jerusalem Pentecost! With the personal revelation and direct experience of the disciples, the model and paradigm for all future ones. There will be other "Pentecosts". Paul's conversion will come. The visit of Peter "rapt in ecstasy" to Cornelius and then John. And many more to this day. The Lord will continue to speak personally and reveal himself as the Lord, until the end of the ages.

Interestingly, a Catholic author recently suggested that "*God's initial perceived manifestation*" (theophany) to the Christian, his "initial unveiling", his "initial opening of the veil", seems to

² The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. 2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. 3 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by." Gen 18:1-4

³ Jacob was left alone and a man fought with him until dawn; 25 when this man saw that he could not overcome him, he touched his hip joint, and Jacob's hip joint was dislocated while he was struggling with him. 26 And the man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." And Jacob: «I will not let you go before you have blessed me!» Genesis 32:24-26

⁴ "Moses was pasturing the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, priest of Midian, and, leading the flock beyond the desert, he reached the mountain of God, Horeb. 2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire, in the midst of a bush. Moses looked, and behold, the bush was all on fire, but it was not consumed." Ex 3:1-2

⁵ In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high throne, very exalted, and the edges of his cloak filled the temple. 2 Above him stood seraphim, each of whom had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 One cried to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" 4 The doors were shaken to their foundations by their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" 6 But one of the seraphim flew towards me, holding in his hand a live coal, taken with tongs from the altar. 7 He touched my mouth with it, and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is atoned for." Is 6:1-7

⁶ «You, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say: "O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD! 2 Thus says the Lord GOD..." Ezek 36:1 and foll.

become the way in which he will see reality ever afterwards (R. Rohr). That *"a truly transcendent inner experience"* (Carl Jung) is therefore necessary to anchor people to God. Christianity, however, has not always emphasized sufficiently the importance or power of inner spiritual experience. Thus even "holiness" would largely become a question of intellect and will, rather than the result of a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, of a dialogue of love with him in the inner man. The theologian Karl Rahner has said: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will be nothing."

God is always seeking man, he has a burning desire to reveal himself to man and to dwell in man; to experience man, to be inhabited by man, so that man too can experience him. In short, I want to say that the Lord pursues us and woos us; that the Lord does not leave us alone. If the church is docile in listening and teachable under his leadership, He will lift it up, inspire it and enable it once again. The Most High is near, but he wants to get very close. The church will also be able to face the difficulties and challenges of our time. Let us not forget it! Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades cannot overcome it" (Mt 16:18).

Intellect and revelation

In the life of the church, two ways of approaching God, of relating to God, of "knowing" God have often crossed paths. The way of intellect and reason, the way of faith and revelation. And we observe that in relation to the culture and the season in which we live, the church has favored now one and now the other mode.

Having said that, my impression for this season is that God, in order to "pierce" the fog and the barrier of silence between him and man, in many ways and modes loves to reveal himself directly to man. Because he loves to reveal himself to man and experience man. This has been and continues to be my personal experience, my experience as a pastor. And this is the secret, not only in starting a relationship with God, but also as we walk with him and grow in intimacy with him. I believe that in the hearts and minds of today's young people too, there is a great hunger and thirst for God; because their heart too, like mine, is made in the shape of God. And I believe that without compromising the gospel, we just need to ask the Lord for the light to find, in simplicity and faithfulness to him and his Word, the right way to learn the language and meet the real needs of the new generations.

Giovanni Traettino

Tyler Johnson

The Church and the new generations: the necessity of fresh faith and expressions

First, I would like to thank the coordinating committee of AFI for organizing this consultation and for inviting me to present. As I have already said, those of us from the United States are thrilled to host this gathering. We are gathering under the general theme of “The Church and the New Generations.” Our time is one of unparalleled change, dangerous tensions and disorienting confusion. The emerging generations are having different encounters, experiences and relationships than any of us have ever had. Therefore, they are thinking and behaving quite differently.

How can we know and believe in the next generation? What is a generation? Why does it matter? What is our responsibility as church leaders? How should the church respond? I will attempt to provide content for discussion and a couple frameworks to help move us forward in constructive conversation. That said, I do not consider myself an expert. A mentor of mine taught me, “a point of view is always a view from a point.” Today is a presentation as I see it. Your input during the groups will give a more well rounded view. In all of the discussions the Holy Spirit is our guide into all truth.

The New Generations

What is a generation? -- A generation is a group of people, born around the same time, who often end up liking the same stuff, or wanting the same things, or acting in similar ways. In fact, sociologist Dr. Jean Twenge writes, “when you were born has more influence over your personality than the family you grew up with.” Who knows whether that is exactly true, but what it does display is the power of the time in which you are raised.

The world around us is changing faster than ever. It is common to feel like there’s no way to keep up with the next generation – but we must know them to lead them. We cannot love our “next generation” neighbors unless we know them. That is a good reminder, you cannot love your neighbor if you do not know your neighbor.

We live in a connected world. A teenager’s favorite band in Europe may also be popular in Asia. The same goes for food and fashion. But what about really important issues like truth, identity, values and beliefs? To truly understand today’s global teenagers, we must be open to information that may disturb us. Here are some fast facts from a recent global research study,

- Over half (52%) of teens globally say they never read religious scripture on their own.
- Over half (52%) of teens believe all religions teach equally valid truths. Christians are just as likely as non-believers to say this. DO NOT MISS THIS!
- Only 7% display the beliefs and habits of a committed Christian.
- Teens who don't go to church report they are open to attending if invited and say Christians they know are kind and caring.
- There is a huge shift in mental health. The younger generation often called Generation Z are seeing increased levels of depression, anxiety, physical unhealth and slower life trajectory. At least part of this seems due to technology changes.
- 1 in 4 of teens globally report having had suicidal thoughts within the last three months.
- 1 in 14 have attempted to take their own life.
- Girls are hit harder than boys when it comes to their mental health and are almost twice as likely to say they have made a suicide attempt.
- 3 in 10 teens globally report having been sexually active in the past three months. The rate is even higher among Christians (1 in 3).
- 1 in 5 teens globally report being sexually attracted to someone of the same gender within the past three months.
- Two major changes in the last hundred years:
 1. People are more focused on themselves. This increase in individualism coincides with people asking what they can get more than what they can give.
 2. Growing up takes longer. People live longer, and young people wait longer to drive, date, or work – resulting in a slower life trajectory.

Likely, some of these research findings shock you. Some may break your heart. But above all, we must acknowledge reality. Even with the above facts there are also reasons for hope in this research. The research shows there are three commitments the younger generations show that are aligned with God's desires for all of us:

1. They seek to ensure others are included (belonging) and treated right (justice), just as Jesus cares deeply for others.
2. They care about the environment, aligning with God's command to keep and care for his creation.
3. They care about managing stress and mental health, and we know how God is near to the brokenhearted and seeks the renewal of minds and hearts.

The Church and the New Generations

An honest confession, I find myself disoriented at times. To read the information above can be disruptive and living in its reality is disorienting. Many of you in this room may be experiencing this with your own children. Certainly, we are experiencing it with those we love in our churches and cities. These times can feel like the Psalmist's language in Psalm 40...

- Slimy Pit
- Muddy
- Mire

Let us look at the first three verses of Psalm 40 as we begin to reflect upon our role as apostolic leaders among the emerging generations,

1I waited patiently for the Lord; he
turned to me and heard my cry. 2He
lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
3He put a new song in my mouth, a
hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.

I know this is a consultation, but can we take a moment of private meditation upon this prayer of David? Consider the lines of this Psalm considering the statistics above.

- Take a few minutes in reflection.

Reminder :

- We wait for the Lord.
- God hears us.
- He is our rock and solid ground.
- There is a song to sing.
- Many will see and put their trust in God.

A Framework for Fresh Faith and New Expressions?

I now want to propose a framework that can help guide us into our groups. I am trusting that this is a consultation. The genius is in the room, not in my voice alone. That said, I believe the points I will make provide a framework that we can use for constructive conversations.

Begin with the mirror –

Jesus has given us a very helpful starting point in Matthew 7:3-5

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Too often when the church faces challenges we point the finger at culture. This is not unfounded, but it is an unbiblical starting place. Both Old and New Testaments say that judgement begins with the household of God. One of the wisest conclusions of the Protestant Reformation revolved around the recognition of how quickly the church can become compromised.

Considering judgment beginning with the household of God, the reformers codified a statement, “reformed and always reforming according to the word of God.” I submit that our current church needs reformation. What the church needs now is a *relational reformation*. A relational reformation will take seriously the priesthood of all believers. We must reevaluate how we view generations, genders and cultures. This work necessitates that we as apostolic leaders look ourselves in the mirror.

Two areas to consider:

- *Clericalism* – I have heard Pope Francis say multiple times that one of the greatest threats to the church is clericalism. As protestants, we often clap when the head of the Roman Catholic church identifies an ecclesiastical problem we agree with. Yet, our clapping proposes a challenge to ourselves. There was a statement I heard from a coach that said, “every time you point the finger there are three more pointing back at you.” Try it out. Take your finger and point it at me. Do you see the three other fingers pointing back at yourself. The problem of clericalism is not just a Roman Catholic problem, it is a church problem, and it includes us. Too often “apostolic” is understood and activated in ways that stifles fresh expressions of the Holy Spirit. I understand the key role of guarding the “good deposit” in apostolic ministry. I have no intention of minimizing it, but we must realize that we have our own blindness. Religious power is a blinding force.

- *Departures of Faith* – I once read an African Bible Commentary on Titus 2 that made a provocative statement. To generalize for the sake of time the author said, when one generation fails to live out the theology they teach, the next generation will not question their parents’ ethics, but they will walk away from their theology. Do you see the logic here? When we fail to be doers of the word and are just hearers and talkers the next generations do not question our lack of action they walk away from our beliefs. I humbly ask that we look ourselves in the mirror and say with the Psalmist, “search us and know us God. Try us and show us the sinful ways within us.”
- Could it be that much of what disrupts us about the emerging generations is that we have failed to live out the greatest of all the commandments to love as Jesus loved?

Be Imitators of God –

Ephesians 5:1

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This verse is a powerful guide for us as God’s children. It makes us stop and think deeply about God’s ontology as Trinity and Love. Love is lived through sacrifice. Sitting in emerging realities and with emerging generations demands we die to many things.

This verse roots us in God. This verse roots us in love. When we root ourselves in love death will always emerge. Because...

- Death is at the center of love.
- We fear death. (Hebrews 2)
- Therefore, we must depend on God to love.

I find the image of the Trinity mightily helpful as I seek to love in difficulties.

Imitate God through Honor and Hospitality--

As we think about fresh faith and the potential of new expressions, I would like us to consider God as creator. The first biblical example we have of God is as creator.

Consider with me God’s pattern of honor and hospitality in his seven-day creation. Each creature has a distinctive identity, meaning, and purpose—its God-given honor. And each creature provides hospitality for other creatures in the interdependent pattern of honor and hospitality. See how each day of creation honors and shows hospitality for the next. It is beautiful picture.

Interdependence is a creational reality. As one old Presbyterian pastor stated, “When you live

against the grain of reality you get splinters.” Living in line with the way God made the world necessitates showing honor and hospitality across lines of difference.

In a world of every increasing hostility, division and tribalization a church that imitates God in showing honor and hospitality will be a provocative witness.

Open Handed Receptivity & Open to Surprise--

One of the great examples of fresh faith in the Scripture is Mary. Put yourself in the shoes of this young girl who is visited by an angel and told the unthinkable. She is told she is pregnant even though she has never engaged in sexual activity.

Luke 1:27-34

And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

Notice how Mary did not say, “this could **never** be.” She did say, “how can this be” A question mark in contrast to a period. People of faith, throughout the Bible and in history always seem surprised by what God does. Mary is a prime example of faith, in that, she opens her hands to receive that which seemed impossible. The angels’ words frightened and confused her. Yet, she remained open. God often shows up in times that we are discombobulated. Our challenge is to stay in a posture of receptivity rather than fear and closure.

Surprise -- Another part of fresh faith is being open to surprise. Robert Altar, a secular Jewish scholar makes an astounding statement about the Old Testament when he says, “the Old Testament makes people the center of surprise.” He uses Jacob as an example. When we are compelled to put Jacob in a box and label him crooked, God breaks him out of our boxes and shows us something different.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. He himself, makes people the center of surprise. Think of his interaction with Zacchaeus... everyone around Zacchaeus called him crooked. Jesus calls him down from a tree and through honor and hospitality (even though he invited himself over) shows Zacchaeus to Zacchaeus and Jesus shows the true Zacchaeus to the world. Jesus makes people the center of surprise.

Faithful engagement with emerging generations necessitates fresh faith, open handed receptivity to the impossible and eyes to be positively surprised by people.

A More Christ-Like God

The last piece of my framework is the most important. We need to reckon with our view and portrayal of God. We need a more Christ-like God. We often say Jesus is God.

Yet, how often do we meditate and communicate that GOD IS LIKE JESUS? This is very important; GOD IS LIKE JESUS. Say that to yourself, GOD IS LIKE JESUS. Turn to someone next to you and say, GOD IS LIKE JESUS. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6 that we know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Why would he say, “in the face of Jesus Christ”? Paul is emphasizing the person of Jesus. The person of Jesus Christ is our key, he is our clue, he is our compass. We need to slow down and ponder the person of Jesus. We need to watch his ways and ponder his cadences. He is our hermeneutic and our path forward.

To end, I would like to ask a question about Jesus’ interaction with Zacchaeus. When Jesus called him down from the tree how do you think he did it? Did he wag his finger and say in a stern voice, “Zacchaeus, you come down!” OR was Jesus warm and inviting? Did he use his finger as an honoring and hospitable invitation? The man of honor Jesus was going to Zacchaeus’ home to reveal Zacchaeus to himself and to the world.

***Because God, who is like Jesus, SO LOVES THE WORLD.

Komanapoli

The role of the apostolic in raising the next generation

I am truly honored and privileged to speak here at this AFI conference and to address this august body of apostolic leaders from around the world.

In our lives and ministries, we all experience transitions. From one generation to the next. Some are successful and some not so much. In the course of history, we see the same with the church. Yes, we must recognize that some individual ministries may be just for their lifetime or for a season but what about churches? Should they not continue till the return of our Lord?

What is the key to a successful transition and to the furtherance of a ministry into the next generation? It is the raising up of and mentoring of the next generation leadership. This does not happen automatically. It requires intentionality. Intentionality of purpose, effort and time. It requires the work of apostolic leadership. Where do we then find our guide and model? As with all things, we find it in Holy Scripture.

In the Old Testament we find the model of “the family business”. The tribe of Levi was the priestly class where tradition, knowledge and skill would be passed down through the generations. (Numbers 8:14 & 16, Number 18:6)

When we come to the New Testament, we see it change from not just family lineage but to calling (Ephesians 4:11) Here we find the models for our present-day task. I would also like to take a moment and acknowledge the influence of Bill Sheidler and his book *Apostles, The Fathering Servant*.

Model of Jesus

Jesus truly is not only the Author and Finisher of our faith but our greatest role model. Our first and true Apostle, he showed us the path on how to raise up Apostles who would carry on the work but also continue to raise up others for generations to come. (Hebrews 3:1 “Apostle and High Priest of our Confession, Christ Jesus”)

Mark 1: 16-18 Called them and gave them purpose

Mark 3:14-19 To be with them and send them out.

Matthew 28:19. Released them

Model of Barnabas

Barnabas a true encourager of the faith. The one who took Paul under his wings and mentored him (Acts 9:27, 11:25-26), then became a team with him (Acts 13:2), then allowed Paul to rise to his own place of leadership and Apostleship (Acts 15:40). He also goes on to mentor John Mark who would go on to write the first Gospel (Acts 15:39).

Model of Paul

Apostle Paul is known for his mentoring of many, most known are Timothy, Silas, and Titus. When Paul parted ways with Barnabas he took Silas along with him (a leader assigned at first to Paul (Acts 15:22) travelled and co-ministered with him on his journeys) but then soon took on Timothy into his team. He would go on to call Timothy "A true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2). Titus was also with Paul and Paul refers to him as a "true son in our common faith" (Titus 1:4) He travelled with Paul, was sent out to do various tasks for Paul, then given authority to deal with situations and circumstances.

Pauline steps of mentoring

I would like to use his mentoring of Timothy to show his steps of mentoring.

Recognition

Paul takes on Timothy (Acts 16:2)

Paul recognizes the call on Timothy's life (1 Timothy 1:18, 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6)

Relationship

Paul sees him as a spiritual son (1 Timothy 1:2)

Paul had Timothy travel with him, minister with him and continued to communicate with him

Paul prayed for him (2 Timothy 1:3)

Resourcing

- Instruction
- Faith and Doctrine (2 Timothy 3:10, 14, 16-17)
- Leadership (1 Timothy 3:15, 4:12)
- Lifestyle and Character (1 Timothy 6:11-14)
- Church structure, Leadership and Foundation (1 & 2 Timothy)
- Teach the next generation (2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Timothy 6:20)
- Encouragement (2 Timothy 2:1)

Release

“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:5

How does this work today?

- **Intentional:** Proactive to seek out and find the next generation leaders
- **Relational:** Build a relationship through investment of you time, knowledge, encouragement
- **Functional:** Send them out, set up a platform for them to go forward

My father, Bishop Ernest P. Komanapalli used to say Sheep give birth to Sheep and Shepherds give birth to Shepherds. Who are we giving birth to? Not to clone, duplicate or replicate but to reproduce.

If we are to truly fulfill our Apostolic role in the Church, we must ensure that we are fruitful. Not in the size of our ministry or churches but in the fruit that remains. Leaders we raise to continue and go forward with stewarding the Church and the Mystery of Christ till He returns. May we be found faithful.

Amen.

MRAIDA

New generationsGenesis 17.3-8:

[3] Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, [4] Behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. [5] And thy name shall no more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for I have made thee the father of a multitude of nations. [6] And I will multiply thee exceedingly, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. [7] And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee. [8] And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou dwellest, even all the land of Canaan for an everlasting inheritance; and I will be their God.

A. It is good that we are talking about the new generations. It's not just about you, it's not just about your ministry, or your circumstances, or how you feel, because we are serving a multi-generational God, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

B. And if you think circumstantially, you will not be able to understand what God is wanting to do. Because much of what is going on with you right now has more to do with those who come after you than with you. What you are fighting for, and striving for, those challenges you are facing and going for more, is bigger than you, it is for the next generations.

C. God appears to Abram and says, "Now I will bless you and you will be a blessing to all the families of the earth." "Lord, I've been asking you for that all my life, why didn't you do it before, when I was younger, when I had more vitality, before this stage of life?"

D. God says, "It's just that you weren't ready. I had to take you through the process to get you ready for the fulfillment of the promise."

E. "But God I'm 99 years old if you had done it even at 70 I could believe it. If you had done it at 40 or 20, I could visualize it and believe it."

F. And as if God said: you don't need to visualize it, because I am the one who is going to do it, and my work is not determined by your stage of life, by your age. It is now, that I want to bless you and for you to be of exponential blessing."

G. God is going to bless you and use you after you have made mistakes and gone through trials, and after you have tried many things and you have no ideas left, and it seems that the best you can do is to keep what you have achieved because you don't see that there is any way that what God tells you is going to happen at this time.

H. God says, "Now I am going to bless you and may you be a blessing. I know that you have some wrinkles, that your back is bad, that some of the leaders in whom you had expectations

failed you, but when I am about to bless you, no circumstance or personal situation can go against my word.

I. “And when I am doing it, it will compensate you for all the things that did not go, that you failed. But the time has come. Because you've been trying to respond to the expectations of others, to the paradigms that others designed for ministry, adapting to the labels that others put on you. But I came to tell you: You are not who you were called, you are not Abram, I call you Abraham, father of many nations”.

J. I want you to understand that God is speaking to a man who does not have the profile to be a father of many nations. He is someone who was struggling all his life to be the father of at least one son.

K. But God saying to him and saying to you, “I come to bring you to your destiny, your last day will be greater than the first. For the path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn that increases until the day is perfect. For the last wine is better than the first. For you shall go from strength to strength. For to the wise the way of life is upward. For the latter glory is greater than the former.

L. “I will bring into your life all that I have prepared beforehand for you to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). And I do not care or limit your circumstances, or how old you are, or how dissatisfied you feel.

M. “I will make everything line up because I am God. Abram I know that your wife is no longer of childbearing age. I know your body is as good as dead for reproduction, but I will give you the seed and I will revive Sarah's body.

N. “Because I have plans for this stage of your life, because I want you to play a pivotal role in my plan for the new generation. That is why you are alive.

O. And Abraham felt he was back. There's nothing like feeling alive again.

P. God is about to revive the dead thing in our lives and ministries. We will see the glory of God coming back. And you will say to the devil, “I've got my vision back, I've got my passion back, I've got my power back, I've got my strength back, I'm back, something is about to happen.

Q. God calls this old man: father of many nations. God calls this childless man: father of many nations. And I know that someone will be listening to this word and say, “are just words of encouragement. Of course, I understand you, because when God speaks to you it sounds like madness. When he calls you to do something that is beyond your human capacity, beyond your calculations of times and seasons of life, beyond your reasoning, he asks you to do something that you cannot do without him, it means that he may be asking you for your body, but he is going to put his seed. It may be your mouth but He will be the voice. It may be your hand but it will be His intelligence, because the battle is not yours, it is the Lord's.

R. And Abraham finds at 99 the purpose of his existence, and the fulfillment of the promise, in the new generations.

S. I am struck by how God says to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Your parents made you but I formed you: I deposited in you gifts, talents, abilities that you would need for the very purpose for which you were created.

T. “Jeremiah, you were built by design, you have been designed for your vocation you have been wired for your work. But, Jeremiah, I didn't just form you I knew you. I knew your virtues and I knew your weaknesses. I knew you'd be cranky on Monday, I knew you wouldn't work in the morning if you didn't drink coffee. I knew where you would feel insecure. I knew you would be sure of yourself. And yet, Jeremiah, I chose you because I love you and the world needs you.

U. It's interesting because it seems to be a consistent pattern with God that becomes personal when it comes to training. Even if we examine the creation narrative, you'll see that God uses words to create, words to create the environment, that he uses words to create the animal and plant kingdom, but when it comes to the human species God doesn't use words, he uses hands.

V. And that activity of God getting his hands dirty with his creation is an example worth emulating for all of us who partner with God in ministry. For it is not only you and I who have purpose, but also the next generation. And those of us who are here, and have said yes to the call, have the challenge, the responsibility to allow God's hands to be laid upon our hands, for the Potter to lay his hands upon our hands and shape, mold the next generation that God has called and will use mightily.

W. And Abraham did not see a nation come forth from his womb as was promised to him, nor his son, but his grandson. But the one who is to this day the father of that nation is Abraham. And I came to tell you that your purpose, dear fellow servant, at least a part of your purpose, is to help the next generation discover theirs. You are a partner in the purpose of the new generation. It is time to make the decision to put your hands on those God has his hands on, on the children, teenagers and young adults, to shape them and mold them into what God has called them to be.

X. This is a room full of world-shakers. Of men who made a decision: “we are going to fight for the new generation”. I feel grateful to God to be alive and to be a purposeful partner of the new generation.

Y. And if I'm here today, it's because there were people who took seriously that part of their purpose was to help me discover mine. So don't ever look at that teenager, that young man, that child, who looks at you, who wants to talk to you, as an interruption in your agenda. It is not an interruption but a divine appointment that God has prepared for you to unleash that young person's purpose.

Z. But our heart alone is not enough. We have to be strategic in reaching new generations. We have to be intentional in partnering with God to reach the new generations. I give you 4 ideas:

1. **Lift:** I finished teaching what for me was a great teaching, and a 14-year-old boy comes up to me and says, “Carlos, I listened to you the whole time, but I didn't understand anything.” So I was acutely aware of the generation gap between me and that boy. That's why we need to raise up a multigenerational pastoral leadership. That kid needs a pastor no more than 20 years old. And the 20-year-old needs a pastor no more than 30 years old. And the 30-year-old needs a pastor no more than 40 years old. That is why we need a multigenerational pastoral leadership.
 - a. Let us definitely eradicate the paradigms of passing the torch, of successors, and let us raise up pastors in all generations, not to replace us, but to co-lead, to shepherd multigenerationally.
2. **Analyze:** Examine whether your proclaimed pastoral values are real priorities. Because do you know that it is possible that there is dissonance between the proclaimed values and the real priorities? That it is possible to say I value my health and it is not a real priority. That pastorally I care about the next one, but in the program of the church, in the priorities of the church, in the ways in which we do pastoral care, mission, worship, and in the leadership of the church, is not a real priority.
3. **Learn:** and learn from the new generations. Hold meetings, listen, ask for opinions, brainstorm on how to carry out the mission to reach the new generations.
4. **Invest:** we had to be willing to invest energy, the best human resources, the best leaders, and the necessary money, to contribute to advance what God wants to do in these new generations. Because that investment has generational and eternal implications.

Mraida

Himitian

The hope of God HE

In this passage, almost at the end of his Epistle, Paul masterfully exposes his burden and passion for the nations.

The word *gentiles*, that it is repeated 10 times in these 21 verses is a key word. In the Greek it says *ethnos*, from which the word comes “ethnicity”. The text is best understood by putting *united nations* instead of *gentiles*. This is how several new versions have been translated into Spanish, such as the NIV, RVA, and others.

THE TWOFOLD PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S COMING

Romans 15.8-9a

*For I say to you, that Christ Jesus came to be a servant of the circumcision
to show the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,
and that the nations may glorify God for His mercy.*

- First purpose:

Prove that God is faithful to His promises. To confirm the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers for so many centuries.

Finally, the Messiah so often promised arrived. Hallelujah!

- Second purpose:

Verse 9 begins with a blessed “**and**”.

And that the nations may glorify God for his mercy...

The purpose of the coming of the Son of God is not limited to the first objective. Paul had understood very well that God is the God of all nations, of all peoples, of all ethnicities.

This is something that Israel has always had a hard time understanding. Even though God revealed it from the beginning. When God called Abraham from that very first moment he told him: “...and all the families of the earth will be blessed in you” (Genesis 12.3). Then, when God asked him for his son in sacrifice, before his unconditional obedience, by oath the Lord ratified his promise: *In your seed they will be blessed all the nations of the earth, because you obeyed my voice”* (Genesis 22.18).

That was Pablo's passion. Not only the salvation of Israel but also the salvation of "all the nations of the earth." And as he expresses it in the first sentence of Romans 15:9: "so that the nations (by knowing God's wonderful plan for them) glorify God for His mercy."

Paul says of himself: "i am an apostle to the Gentiles, I honor my ministry."
(Romans 11:13).

Since when did Paul know that he would be an apostle to the nations?

- Since his conversion. On the way to Damascus Jesus said to him: *...for this purpose I have appeared to you, to make you a minister and a witness of the things that you have seen, and of those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people, and of the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you now, that you may open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.* (Acts 26:15-18).

Paul bases his vision on the Holy Scriptures. And transcribes four passages from the Old Testament:

15.9 *b: As it is written: Therefore, I will confess you among the nations, and I will sing to your name"" (taken from 2 Samuel 22:50; and from Psalm 18:49).*

15.10: *And again he says: Rejoice, nations, with his people."
(Deuteronomy 32:43).*

15.11 *And again: Praise the Lord all the united nations and magnify all peoples to him" (Psalm 117:1).*

15.12: *And again Isaiah says: There will be the root of Jesse, and he who will rise to rule the nations and the nations will hope in him" (Isaiah 11:10).*

Paul relies on the prophecies of the Old Testament to declare that salvation is not only for Israel but for all the nations of the world. And to show that this is not merely an occurrence of his or an original revelation that God has given only to him.

In addition to these four passages, there are many others in the Old Testament that speak of the salvation of all nations.

DAVID'S VISION OF THE NATIONS

A thousand years before the Apostle Paul there was also another lit was King David! He declared that all nations will worship God.

Psalm 86.9:

They will come all nations which you have made and they will worship, oh Lord, before you. They will glorify your name. (RVA)

Psalms 96.1-3:

Sing a new song to the LORD!

*Sing to the LORD, the whole earth! Sing to the LORD;
bless His name. Proclaim your salvation from day to
day.*

Count among the nations his glory,

Go on in all the peoples his wonders (RVA).

Psalms 100.1:

Sing joyfully to God, inhabitants of the whole earth" (RVA).

Psalms 117.1:

Praise the LORD, all nations!

iAll peoples, praise him! (RVA).

Without radio or television, without the Internet or satellites, David invited all the nations to praise God. Did he intend for the nations to listen to him? It is that the word of God proclaimed with faith transcends the limitations of human logic, transcends time and space, and reaches where God has destined it.

He went to places that David had never imagined.

THE HOPE OF GOD

Romans 15.13

And the God of [the] hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in [the] hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this verse the word *hope*, in the Greek version, it is preceded both times by the definite article the". The Contemporary Reina Valera version did very well to include the article. And it reads *the God of Hope*". The Jerusalem Bible also has the article. I think it is important to make this observation, because God has a single and definite hope for the nations.

Hope is what we expect.

What is God's hope for the nations?

If I were God, I would have been discouraged a long time ago with respect to humanity; and even with respect to the church. But God is not like us. He is great and almighty. And, above all, he is patient. Nothing is impossible for him.

There are many prophecies that reveal God's hope for the nations in the end times. I mention some:

- The outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-32).
- The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God (Habakkuk 2.14).
- The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all nations before the end (Matthew 24.14).

- The nations will come to the house of God, which is the church, asking to be taught the ways of God. (Isaiah 2.1-3).
- In the epistle to the Romans, in chapters 9, 10 and 11, Paul shares a mystery that was revealed to him by the Lord.

Romans 11.25-27:

For I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant this mystery, so that you may not be arrogant about yourselves: that a hardening has befallen Israel in part, until the fullness of the Gentiles; and then all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come from Zion, who will turn ungodliness away from Jacob. And this will be my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.

The mystery is this: at the end of time, when the evangelization of the Gentiles (all non-Jewish nations) has been completed, ALL OF ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED!

Israel will believe that Jesus, the son of Mary, the one who was born in Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago, is the Messiah. He will believe that Jesus is the one about whom Moses and the prophets spoke. Israel will weep for their centuries-old unbelief, and they will repent. Then the prophecy of Zechariah will be fulfilled: *They will look at me, whom they have pierced, and they will weep as one weeps for an only-begotten son...* (Zechariah 12:10). *At that time there will be a spring opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the purification from sin and uncleanness.* (Zechariah 13.1).

Romans 11:12 and 15

And if their transgression is the wealth of the world, and their defection the wealth of the Gentiles (the nations), how much more their full restoration?

...

For if their exclusion is the reconciliation of the world, what will be their admission, but life from the dead?

There will be an unprecedented world revival! Hallelujah!

Let's go back Romans 15.13:

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

How can we fill ourselves with *all joy and peace*?

The text says: *in believing.* That is, believing that what God says will happen.

Hope is the faith that looks to the future. Faith, according to Hebrews 11.1, is *"the certainty of what is expected, the conviction of what is not seen."* Faith is not an illusion of ours. Faith is believing God. It is to believe what God says.

When we believe what God says will happen, we are filled with joy and peace, and then, **God's hope becomes our hope!** *That you may abound IN HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

PAUL'S VISION FOR THE NATION IS 15.15-16

But I have written to you, brothers, partly with boldness, as to remind you, by the grace that is given to me from God to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the nations, ministering the gospel of God, so that the nations may be a pleasing offering to him, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

How tremendous! Paul burns with this vision:

May the nations, filled with so much sin and iniquity, become holy nations, and become acceptable offerings, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

What a vision! What faith! Hence his passion for the evangelization of nations! Paul believed in his heart that the gospel *it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*" (Romans 1:16).

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF PAUL TO THE NATIONSRomans 15.17-19

So I have something to boast about in Christ Jesus as far as God is concerned. For I would not dare to speak except of what Christ has done through me for the obedience of the nations, by word and by works, by the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and around to Illyricum, I have filled everything with the gospel of Christ.

1. TOTAL EVANGELIZATION

"...I have filled everything with the gospel of Christ"

Let me start with the last sentence of this verse: *From Jerusalem ...*

even Illyricum! Where was Illyricum? To the north of Greece was Achaëa; to the north of Achaëa, Macedonia; and to the north of Macedonia, Illyricum. That is, from Jerusalem to the center of Europe, he had filled everything with the gospel.

It is estimated that about 22 years had passed since he was converted until he wrote this epistle. How did Paul achieve such an extension of the gospel? Especially, taking into account the scarce resources in terms of transport and means of communication that were available at that time.

2. THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE EVANGELIZATION

"i would not dare to speak except of what Christ has done through me."

Paul was well aware that it was not he who was doing all this work but Christ in him.

In writing to the Colossians, referring to his apostolate, he says: *for which I also work, striving according to his power, which works mightily in me.*" (Colossians 1:29). This is humility and, at the same time, faith.

3. WORD AND POWER

"...by word and by works, by the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit of God;"

The supernatural element was always present. This is one of the keys to the success of Paul's ministry. Evangelization does not consist in the simple propagation of an idea or a new doctrine among the nations. Evangelization is a spiritual war. We must fight against principalities and powers, liberate the demon-possessed, unleash the captives of the devil, break bonds, heal the sick and oppressed, perform miracles. Supernatural signs impact, attract crowds, open doors, confirm the word and enhance evangelization. This explains why the Pentecostal and charismatic movement has been, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the movement with the highest numerical growth in the world.

There must be a good balance between WORD AND POWER. They should always go together.

4. THE GOAL OF EVANGELIZATION

"...for the obedience of the nations,"

The ultimate goal of evangelization is for nations to obey the word of God. Paul had already mentioned this at the beginning of his epistle. Romans 1.5: *"... by whom [Jesus Christ] we receive the grace and the apostolate to the obedience to the faith in all the nations..."* Let's note this phrase: *obedience to the faith*" Salvation, as we saw in Romans chapter 10, is obtained by believing and confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord. This confession of faith is not a simple declaration of a religious truth, but a radical commitment of obedience to Jesus Christ. If I believe that Jesus is Lord, I commit myself to obey him. By confessing him as Kyrios, I am recognizing him as the absolute authority over my life, I am committing myself to obey all his commandments in the power of the Holy Spirit. Obedience to God's Word is what ultimately transforms nations.

AN UNSTOPPABLE APOSTLE

Romans 15.23-24 and 28

But now, having no more field in these regions, and wishing for many years to come to you when I go to Spain, I will come to you; for I hope to see you as I pass, and to be guided there by you, once I have enjoyed with you.

...

So, when I have concluded this (to go to Jerusalem and deliver the offering of Macedonia and Achaia)... I will pass among you on my way to Spain.

How admirable! He had not yet arrived in Rome and was already planning to go from Rome to the westernmost country on the European continent: Spain.

The phrase *to be guided there by you.*” it means that he was proposing to the brothers of Rome to cover the expenses of his trip from Rome to Spain. Put in Moderna terms, it was like telling them: “I hope you will pay me the fare from Rome to Madrid.” In this way he would complete his apostolate in all the nations of the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

What a wonderful man Pablo! Unstoppable!

May God give us the same passion and the same dedication to the mission!

Himitian