



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – December, 2009

“WE LOVE YOU...WITH JESUS’ LOVE”

“Love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is done well.” Vincent van Gogh

Mother Teresa’s Home for the Dying, cared for those in the slums of Calcutta who were desperately ill, homeless, and beyond hope with no where to turn. Lodging the sick, Mother Teresa and the Sisters cared for them until the end came. Not only did they care for their physical needs as best they could but made them feel wanted and loved. Mother Teresa said, “They are Jesus for me.”

True love comes from the heart, a heart filled with God’s love. This love drove Mother Teresa and Sisters to love the most truly unlovely people in Calcutta?

Considering others’ well-being as more important than our own, giving up our own rights in order to obey God and serve people, links us with Christ. Like Christ we should have a servant attitude, serving out of love for God and for others, not out of guilt or fear.

To be like Christ, we must think like Christ. To change our desires to be more like His; we require the power of the Holy Spirit, influence of committed Christians, obedience to God’s Word, and a radical, sacrificial heart.

To be ready to serve in our communities during a pandemic, it is essential to be grounded in our faith, know where our eternal destiny lies, and realize that God is in control so we need not fear the unknown.

For the past five days I have witnessed first hand the fear that accompanies the H1N1 virus. My husband is going to share his experience with the probable infection with Influenza A/H1N1, and pneumonia as a complication, but as a front line caregiver we can over-come fear trusting God is with us through all circumstances.

We are so very thankful for the love, concern, and the many prayers which provided good medical care and released God’s strength, protection, and healing power. Thank you!

“We love you... with Jesus’ LOVE.”

“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” Philippians 2:2

THE SIGNS WERE THERE...

After three intensive days at a trade show, I was feeling tired and looking forward to a day at home on Remembrance Day. I felt weak and my dry cough worsening was making it impossible to sleep. The cough was exerting extreme pressure on my head making it feel like it was going to explode.

The Calgary EMS Flu Response Unit made a greatly appreciated home visit and confirmed our fear that my symptoms definitely matched those of others suffering from the H1N1 virus. The paramedic suggested a visit to the doctor if there was no improvement within a few days

After suffering another week with a now constant cough, Marg took me to an emergency clinic where they did blood work, checked my heart and took a chest x-ray. The prognosis was not favourable and the ambulance whisked me off to the hospital where I was put in isolation.

This experience certainly brought life to the expression...“It was like having the plague!” Every precaution was in place to prevent the spread of the virus to others. Everyone who entered my room was outfitted with a N95 mask, goggles, face shield, yellow gown and gloves. It was an intimidating and frightening sight.

After a five day stay in the hospital, I am now home still recovering from bacterial pneumonia, which seems to be a common complication of the Influenza A/H1N1.

May I share what I believe God wanted me to learn from this experience?

1. It wasn’t my time to go.
2. I gained a new sensitivity for those who have gone through a severe illness or trauma.
3. The H1N1 virus and its resulting complications are unpredictable.
4. I gained a new closeness to the Lord, for life is fragile. We need not worry, if we know where our eternal destiny lies.
5. There is power in united prayer.
6. Fear can and does embrace us all, health professionals and the public alike. We can help reduce fear by sharing our destiny in Christ.

By Tom Pollon

~ON THE OTHER SIDE~

A WONDERFUL EXPLANATION

A sick man turned to his doctor as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, ‘Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side.’

Very quietly, the doctor said, ‘I don’t know.’

‘You don’t know?’

You’re, a Christian man, and don’t know what’s on the other side?’

The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient the doctor said, ‘Did you notice my dog? He’s never been in this room before. He didn’t know what was inside.

He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear.

I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing...

I know my Master is there and that is enough.’

Unknown



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – November, 2009

THE PROOF OF LOVE IS OBEDIENCE - John 14:21

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me."

John 14:21

Jesus said that his followers show their love for him by obeying him. Love is more than a nice word; it is commitment and a reflection of our love for the Father. If we love Christ, then we must prove it, by following His principles found in His Word.

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love. We owe God our unqualified obedience, but most of all, Jesus asks us to obey him because we love Him.

I have learned through my own walk with the Lord that there is a definite chain of command for being obedient. We cannot love our neighbour until we love the Lord with our whole heart. We might go through the motions of serving but if love is lacking, it will not be sustainable and will lack passion.

One might ask..."How do we love the Lord?" For me, it was as simple as asking... I did not feel the love I felt for Him was real or reachable so one day I simply asked God to help me love Him. The Bible says in John 14:14 that we can ask for anything in His name and He will do it, but we must remember that our asking must be in His name—that is, according to God's character and will. This request was certainly in line and I found my desire to love God with my whole heart, mind, soul and strength was answered. So the journey began...

In order to be obedient, therefore, we must begin by loving our heavenly Father. As we mature as followers of Christ, God's supernatural love cannot help but spill out to others, until it is as natural as breathing.

OBEDIENCE LOVE OPPORTUNITY

When we see a huge need or a great possibility and begin to step out to meet it, the inevitable problems will quickly sidetrack us. The obstacles will overwhelm and we will say, "It is going to take a lot more people than I know. This will take a ton of money. This is going to take space. How can we ever take care of all those who might call upon our help? The task is just too difficult to accomplish. We will say...forget it! It couldn't possibly happen. God could never do it. What was I thinking? Or, we may decide, stepping out was a big mistake."

As Chip Ingram stated in Holy Ambition, most visions never get off the ground because we believe we need to see the 'ways and means' before we can take action.

If our vision is going to be translated into reality we need to adopt a strategic plan and then actually step out in faith even if we don't know all the details of how things are going to work out. This is how God turns dreams into reality.

A foundation has been laid and a structure developed for mobilizing churches in Calgary to be ready to stand in the gap. The Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative is well underway with 44 churches participating in our city.

The dream of delivering 250,000 door-knockers to every household in Calgary was to proceed this weekend. Did we allow the over-whelming task to deter our efforts to bring this initiative to a reality?

Bridges of Love has not given up on "OPERATION CROSSWALK". If you agree, please call or email today. It is NEVER too late to prove God's Love with our obedience.

JOY IN SERVING

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

JESUS BRIDGES THE GAP



Graphic by Steve Young



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – October, 2009

“KNOCK AND THE DOOR WILL BE OPENED TO YOU” Matthew 7:7

*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; **knock and the door will be opened to you.** ⁸For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8*

I have been a follower of Jesus Christ for over 30 years due to the outreach efforts of Parkway Bible Church in Scarborough, ON. They were being obedient to the Great Commandment building bridges of Love to their community by knocking on doors to invite children to Sunday School.

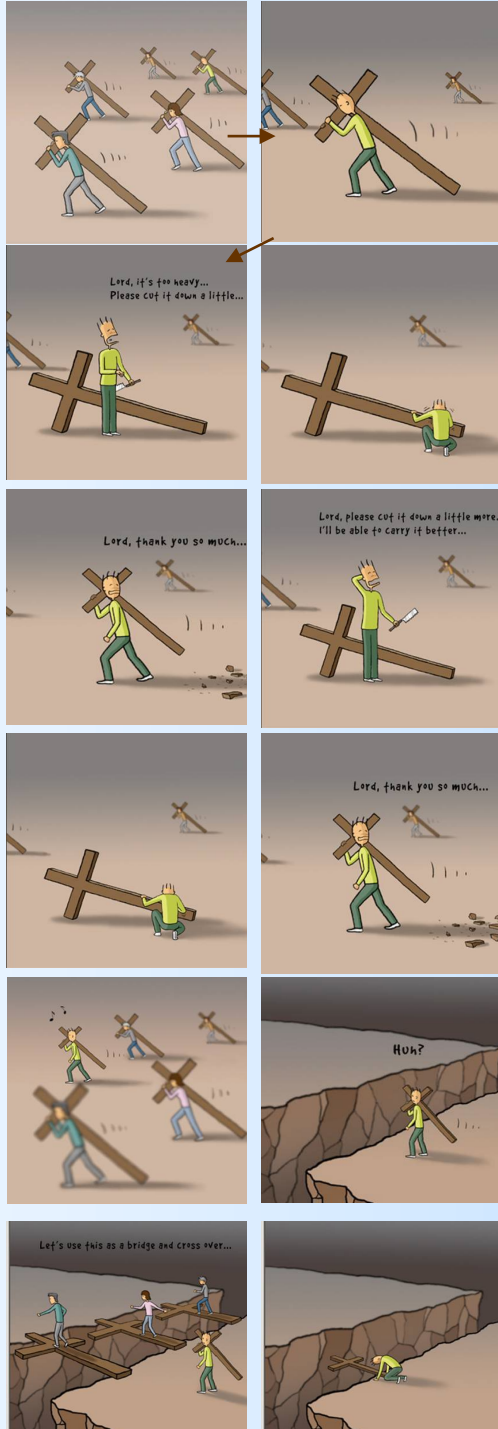
As every great engineer knows, there is no such thing as a 'standard' bridge; each is custom-made to a unique set of conditions in a specific area during a particular time.

The same also applies to the local church. As Dr. Robert Lewis stated in **The Church of Irresistible Influence...** *“the very life of the church is intertwined with recognition of the times. We need bridges that balance public proclamation with congregational incarnation. Bridges suspended by the steel cables of the great Commandment as well as the Great Commission. On both sides of the post-modern chasm, there is a growing emptiness. For the church it is due to a lack of radical, courageous, and sacrificial faith: If our Christianity is real, let's live it. For the world, this emptiness is from a lack of captivating, life-giving proof.”*

A bridge is needed - but not just any bridge. A bridge once again linking God's purposes for the church with the real needs of the world.

Today we have a real opportunity with Influenza A1/H1N1 Pandemic on our door step. Let us reach out in love and offer our service to those who may need a touch of Christ's love.

A BRIDGE OF LOVE



“If anyone would come after me, Jesus said, “let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” Luke 9:23

OPERATION CROSSWALK

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



Being prepared for any emergency is only sound planning. With emergencies happening more often and with greater severity, churches across Calgary are taking **ACTION** to be prepared to offer assistance. The Christian Faith Community is now integrated into Calgary Emergency Management Agency's framework to be ready to stand in the gap in the event of any major disaster which might occur. Please place this magnet on your fridge with Emergency Numbers, the Faith Coordination Centre, NeighbourLink and Quadrant Church Leads. We will do our best to find the assistance you require.

Important Emergency Numbers

Police, Fire, Ambulance.....	911
City of Calgary.....	311
Poison Centre.....	403.544.1414
Calgary Health Unit.....	403.343.5465
Canadian Red Cross.....	403.541.6100
Government of Alberta (Toll Free).....	403.310.0000
Alberta Children's Hospitals.....	403.365.7070
Community Resource Team.....	403.299.9699
Disaster Services.....	403.296.9115
Emergency Management.....	WWW.CALGARY.EMC.CA
NeighbourLink (Marginalized).....	403.264.5976
SW Quadrant Church.....	403.256.3181
SE Quadrant Church.....	403.278.4518
NW Quadrant Church.....	403.288.2674
NE Quadrant Church.....	403.276.1263

FAITH COORDINATION CENTRE
Bridges of Love Ministry
403.263.5683 (LOVE)

WE ARE ONLY A CALL AWAY!

“OPERATION CROSSWALK” is a safe and coordinated approach to love our neighbours. Think what the impact to the watching world would be if every home received a hand delivered door knocker from their Community Church. The door knocker will provide numbers for the Municipal Emergency Agencies plus the Faith Coordination Centre and Quadrant Lead Churches. The Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative will provide assistance during any type of emergency. We know the surge capacity of our municipal service agencies is not able to care for everyone. WE can stand ready with a Christian Response.



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – September, 2009

Participating in God's Work – Luke 9:23

"If anyone would come after me, Jesus said, 'let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' Luke 9:23

"By God's grace, we can make a significant difference within our sphere of influence—but only as we 'crucify' our craving for success, power, and public acclaim."

Nancy Piercy, author of Total Truth states, *"We should expect the process of developing a Christian worldview to be a difficult and painful struggle—first inwardly, as we uproot the idols in our own thought life, and then outwardly, as we face the hostility of a fallen and unbelieving world. Our strength for the task must come from spiritual union with Christ, recognizing that suffering is the route to being conformed to Him and remade into His image."*

Sacrificial service and love were common in Roman times. The growing number of people, who called themselves Christian, believed that each human being was made in the image of a loving God. They believed that God expected His followers would acknowledge His love by sacrificing themselves for others. They were to demonstrate God's love to not only their family and friends but to their enemies as well. "Love one another" became their mission.

We are hearing more reports of the Influenza A/H1N1 returning in the weeks ahead having a greater impact on our society. Are we ready to care for those who might need a touch of God's love? What is our civic as well as our Christian responsibility to our community and how can we serve with greater effectiveness?

We know the church is very well positioned to translate pandemic preparedness plans into a meaningful response at the local level. Churches are located in pretty well every community and most have multiple small groups who could be effectively positioned and equipped to offer a multitude of services as a portal into their community.

As Christians we have the double mandate of not only loving God but also caring for our neighbour. Could you imagine the spiritual harvest that would naturally follow if we truly practiced this biblical principle?

"Wired to Connect"

Cocooning is the name given to a steady trend that sees individuals socializing less and retreating into their home more. This trend was recognized back in the 1990s and has been consistently on the rise in every sector of society.

Do we see this same trend infiltrating our church culture? On-line video casts of church services are becoming more and more common. Are we losing the battle for building those loving, personal relationships Jesus was famous for, not only within our church family, but to the broader community in general?

I can speak only of our own experiences since our family has grown and left the nest. We have not taken the same time to build relationships of love and trust within our own community.

This past week-end my husband and I decided to rectify this situation, by inviting five families who surround our home, for an end of summer barbeque. We had a great time of getting to know one other throughout the dinner, inviting each to share a little about themselves and family. During dessert we heard from our local Block Watch Captain who gave pointers on how to watch out for each other and our community. It was a great evening and reminded us the importance of these relationships and the fun we had been missing by not connecting more with our neighbours.

Now is the time to build relationships with those who are in close proximity. During an emergency/pandemic it will be of great value to have already built a level of trust and shared contact information with one another. Once this relationship is built it will not be difficult to knock on the door or call to ask for assistance in the case of an emergency.



"Jesus replied: And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"—Matthew 22: 39 (NIV)

The Church

The Greatest Force on Earth
by Rick Warren

Why the Church has advantages over the efforts of business and government:

- 1. The Church provides for the largest participation.**
- 2. The Church provides for the widest distribution.**
- 3. The Church provides the fastest expansion.**
- 4. The church provides the strongest authorization.**
- 5. The Churches proves the simplest administration.** The organization of the future is the "network." And there's no better worldwide network than the Church, where every member is a minister and empowered to do what God wants done.
- 6. The church provides the longest continuation.**
- 7. The Churches proves the highest motivation.** Why do any of us do what we do in ministry? It's not to make money, not to make a name for ourselves and not for duty to our nation. We do it out of LOVE. Jesus stated it as the Great Commandment: "Love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself." We wouldn't do the hard work required to tackle these global giants for money, for fame, or for anything else. It just wouldn't be worth it; we'd quit before the end.
- 8. The Church provides for God's conclusion.** But with God, nothing is impossible!

<http://www.rickwarren.com>



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – August, 2009

A COURAGEOUS SOUL – Nehemiah, Chapters 4 - 6

"When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed". Nehemiah 4:1

Commitments are about choices, not feelings and our personal commitment to take a stand for God will be tested by genuine opposition. Are we ready to face struggles which will come our way? The final condition of holy ambition is a **courageous soul**.

Whenever we make the decision to champion God's agenda we can expect to face trials and normally our first response is..."What did I do wrong?"

In chapters 4 through 6, Nehemiah gives us a clear picture of the attacks they endured once the rebuilding of the wall began.

In Chapter 4 the goal is to discourage the people by ridicule and fear to discontinue their work. In Chapter 5 the goal is to conquer and divide by causing selfishness and greed and in Chapter 6 the objective is to destroy Nehemiah by deception and intimidation.

Nehemiah's response to trouble offers us some excellent guidelines to follow when opposition comes our way. Firstly, his first response was to pray, both defensively and offensively.

Secondly, the pattern in Nehemiah 4:10-12 clearly points to four causes of discouragement.

1. Loss of Strength caused by fatigue.
2. Loss of Vision due to a negative perspective.
3. Loss of Confidence due to unbelief.
4. Loss of Security due to fear.

Because a courageous soul is essential to survival as we develop holy ambition, remember the three clues to recognize the presence of opposition:

- Ridicule, Criticism and Discouragement

Four Keys to overcome...

- Be proactive, do something practical.
- Remember the Lord who is on your team.
- Fight, fight, fight!
- Never fight alone!¹

¹*Holy Ambition*, Chip Ingram, Moody Press Chicago, 2002

Living OUT our Faith

God is seeking a vessel set apart for Him, separated totally from the allurements of the world around, fully yielded to His Will. It is a call out of one lifestyle, which looks so logical and right before we take a stand to live with holy ambition, into another lifestyle with the ability to stand where others would fall or turn and run...

Life is exciting when we have a cause to believe in. This is a cause of transformation with the power of Christ; opening up the spiritual atmosphere bringing God's kingdom into communities.

Our priorities will have to change and so will our discipline. God seeks people who will disentangle themselves from their present everyday life which prevent us from living up to the requirements of God.

The journey of being set apart is possible only as we make God our total focus; only as we allow God Himself to become, not just in word but also in reality, being the foundation of our lives. In the process of being set apart, the Lord will do exceedingly, abundantly above what we can ask or even imagine.

Are we catching a vision for the church, our community and our world?

No one accomplishes anything significant alone. We need a community of believers to make a difference. We must rally around something in which we believe.

As we consider any intention to sacrificially meet the needs of sick and possibly dying people should the Influenza Pandemic become more severe, it will be actualized by people who are intimately connected to Jesus. It depends, not so much on how merciful we are, but on how deeply we ourselves love the Lord.

As we step out to serve others we have opportunities today as never before to practice what we believe. It is time to be available for God to show the watching world what His people can accomplish when our hearts totally belong unconditionally to Him. You can count on God's support as we seek to live by Holy Ambition.

A Prayer for Our Journey Together

"Holy Ambition" What it takes to make a difference for God.

By Chip Ingram

Holy Father, teach us to burn white hot with ambition and great dreams that are God-given and grace-induced.

Make us ambitious for Your agenda and for Your glory. Use us to bring hope and life and relief from suffering in ways beyond our wildest dreams. And yet, throughout this journey, do an even deeper work within our hearts.

Sanctify us.

Grant us pure motives. And help us, every step of the journey, to long to please You more than impress people.

O Holy Father,
give us holy ambition!

Lord we want to change our world and honour You, but we fear we will do it in our own strength, in our own flesh, and do it to meet our personal needs.

O Holy Father,
give us holy ambition!

Even as we long to make an impact, we also long for comfort and peace. We're tempted to stay where it seems safe even though we know that our only real security comes only from You. We long for significance, but we fear stepping out to make a difference.

Oh Holy Father,
Give us holy ambition!



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – July, 2009

Personal Commitment - Nehemiah 2:17

*"Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace".
Nehemiah 2:17*

How is it that a man like Nehemiah walked into a situation where the walls were down, the gates were burned by fire, the people completely discouraged and yet accomplished one of the most significant feats in history? How did Nehemiah accomplish so much with so little? The turning point was **personal commitment**. Until that point, nothing in the setting had really changed. All the dislocating, brokenness, faith, and strategic planning hadn't actually moved a single stone, built a new gate, or cleared away any rubble. What Nehemiah did after laying all the groundwork depending on God allows us to see how God works in our world.

Nehemiah realized that personal commitment always begins with strong leadership. He modeled it knowing that motivation is caught more than it is taught giving him credibility. When he said, "Let's build," they thought, this guy is going for broke. I think I'll get on his team.

Nehemiah made a specific personal commitment, and he asked for exactly the same thing from the rest of the people. "See those stones? See that gate? We're going to put things back where they belong. Come on, let's do it." When we ask people for specific commitments, do you know what we get? We get **specific commitments!**

Emotional commitments often pass for personal commitments. Emotional commitments start well but prove often to be short-lived. Personal commitments may include emotions, but they involve a deeper level of decision making.

So how do we sustain genuine personal commitments? As we ask for specific commitments we must provide an environment where others are working to keep the same commitment. Personal commitments are sustained by mutual accountability with others. Christians are called into a body, the body of Christ, and any personal commitment we make must be lived out in the context of authentic biblical relationship in order to survive.¹

¹*Holy Ambition*, Chip Ingram, Moody Press

The Combined Effort of the Group is Far Greater than the Sum of Its Parts

Clearly Nehemiah was a master in the art of coordination. He understood that coordinated people can sustain commitments. We call this synergy. Somehow, as people work together and find their niche, the results are exponentially far greater than what we can do working apart." Here's how it happens.

"By recognizing that we need each other"

Principle 1: **COOPERATION**

By recognizing that there is a unique job for each one of us to do"

Principle 2: **COORDINATION**

The Value of the Project to the Worker

If the project means a lot to us, we will mean a lot to the project. People remain motivated when they feel they belong. People remain motivated when they know they are needed. And people remain motivated when the vision of the group becomes THEIR vision.

Nehemiah points out that sustained commitment flows from vested interest. We never serve God authentically and righteously with a "give in order to get" mentality, but God knows that when we have much at stake in a situation, we are then highly motivated to give our all.

We can see the vested interests in Nehemiah's assignments. He had people build the walls in front of their houses. You can imagine how much the motivation increases when the wall that we are building will protect our own family and community.

My prayer is for each church to take ownership for their piece of the wall and start the building process. The completed wall (Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative) represents hope for the people in your community who will have a clear indication of God's Love.

Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative

Putting Feet to Our Faith

GET READY...

1. Prayer
2. Spiritual Readiness

GET SET...

1. Be informed
2. Local Partners
3. Pandemic Planning Committee
4. Proprietary Plans
5. Taking Stock of Resources

GO...

1. Community Involvement
2. Training/Equipping
3. Community Outreach Groups
4. Mutual Assistance Groups
5. Prayer

We began the process with prayer and thus we end with prayer. One of the most significant aspects of our mission in the world is simply being there. There to love one another and pray for our neighbours as God leads us into the world to serve Him. No single person, group, agency or organization will be able to deal with all pandemic issues on its own. It is going to take a willingness to work together, to exchange and dialogue. We have an opportunity like never before in history to practice what we believe. Putting 'feet to our faith' and thus making a difference for God's Kingdom.

Please see
www.bridgesoflove.net



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – June, 2009

A Strategic Plan – Nehemiah 2:5-8

"If it pleases the king (remember he was risking his life) and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it." Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" I also said to him, (notice how bold he was at this point—he got the go-ahead from the king to reveal the next part of his strategy; and note that he had a strategy) "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah (he had tentative travel plans)? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy? (he needs money and resources) And (he knows who gets the credit for success) because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.
Nehemiah 2: 5-8

So how do we take a dislocated heart, a broken spirit, and a radical faith, and make sure that our good intentions and our God-given dreams actually turn into reality? Our next step in developing Holy Ambition is to create a strategic plan. As we read in Nehemiah 2:5-8, Nehemiah had a 'draft' plan with concrete steps already in place before going to the King. A strategic plan links vision to reality.

Nehemiah developed a tentative strategic plan that included a clear timetable, the resources needed, and the first steps in the project. The plan was formed, however, before he had permission to go or any of the financial resources to accomplish the vision.

Nehemiah stepped out in faith to fulfill a God-given vision, developing a strategic plan which was adjusted along the way; as further experience, research and input by other leaders occurred. The key to success, however, was a clear target and a specific plan to move the core leadership toward that target. God's resources flowed to the places where His agenda was championed and the people accepted the challenge.

A CLEAR STRATEGY

Almost four years ago, a Burnaby doctor Tim Foggin prayed and then invited Bridges of Love to help mobilize Canadian Churches to be ready to stand in the gap in the event of an influenza pandemic. Clearly, this was not something we had on our radar, but after hearing Tim's story of serving in Shanghai during SARS, learning more of this virtually certain threat, and sensing God's Call on this endeavor as an outreach opportunity, we joined the quest.

Even though I have done much study on pandemic preparedness over the years and monitored the progression of the avian influenza, it still came as a surprise when influenza A/H1N1 surfaced just a few weeks ago. We had heard from the experts that flu pandemic was inevitable but did we really believe it would happen?

Well, we have had a little reality check and now know it is possible—and how quickly a virus can spread. Are we ready, both individually and corporately as the body of Christ? I think, we can honestly say "NO!"

For the past 4 years we have been building a foundation for the church to stand in the gap during any emergency by following Nehemiah's plan. Nehemiah prayed, went to the King with a preliminary plan asking to be released to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem, asked for the resources to do the job, and then with God's promise they could do this, proceeded to mobilize the people in his homeland, each one to work on their piece of the wall. With their collective efforts, this seemingly impossible task was completed in just 52 days.

I know if the church accepts the challenge of caring for their communities as a God-ordained vision as well as an opportunity to connect with their communities, we will see transformed people, churches and cities.

Please read Nehemiah's journey in the Bible and then visit www.bridgesoflove.net as together we implement the plan.

A CONCRETE PLAN

"Timothy Foggin, MD, MPH"

Planning is good, and not always for the expected reasons. It has a calming effect on those who are overly anxious, giving them a sense of control, confidence, and a better ability to bear their fear. For those who are "not worried," repeated practical advice slowly but surely leads to action, which in turn reduces skepticism and allows more productive steps¹.

The message we need to speak is both "This could get very bad, and it is time to prepare in case it does" and "This could fizzle out, and we'll probably feel a bit foolish if it does".

Public health experts are appropriately preparing for a more severe second wave of Influenza A/H1N1 in the fall. We must now ask ourselves "What are we, the Church, being called to do?"

Please consider the following:

1. Pray for civic and health leaders
2. Understand the Biblical foundation for emergency preparedness and community service.
3. Develop member skills such as telephone care, mutual aid agreements, emotional and spiritual support, enhanced and prolonged emergency social services, etc. Offer these to the community.
4. Consider sacrificial discipleship choices, avoiding foolishness, which Christians might be faced with².
5. Expect God to work in many lives.

Whether we get "very busy" this fall or not, may God be glorified through our corporate obedience!

¹See Pandemics: good hygiene is not enough by Peter Sandman in *Nature* published online (www.nature.com), 20 May 2009.

²Read The Rise of Christianity by sociologist Rodney Stark. 1996.



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – May, 2009

PRACTICING A RADICAL FAITH – Nehemiah 1:11

“Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.” Nehemiah 1:11

The past few months we have been learning what it takes to make a difference for God through the life of Nehemiah. Learning what it takes and actually making a difference for God, however, each require a different response. Head knowledge comes easily but putting it in practice often takes time and a very intentional effort.

Our model for radical faith is Nehemiah. How did God use one man to change the history of his world? Nehemiah realized the position God had given him came with a certain responsibility. When Nehemiah asked God for favor before the King, he was stepping out in radical faith which gave God room to work through his life. With his desire to serve the Lord came a certain amount of trepidation, however, as it was necessary to step out of his comfort zone which is not always an easy place to be.

Chip Ingram emphasizes that fear often accompanies radical faith which helps us realize and acknowledge who is in charge. When we are afraid, we can come to God and tell Him so. God doesn't panic; so neither should we. What did Nehemiah do about his fear? He **acted**. Radical faith does not mean we are not afraid. Radical faith means we are willing to act, despite our fears.

What is Radical Faith?

Radical faith is choosing to step out to fulfill God's clearly defined will at possible great personal risk and sacrifice.¹

Our situation may not be life or death but it will stretch us out of our comfort zone, allowing God to meet our radical faith, packed full with His **ACTION**.

Chip Ingram, **Holy Ambition**; Moody Press, Chicago, 2002.

STANDING IN THE GAP

A study was undertaken after Hurricane Katrina and Rita by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate. The objective of this report was to learn from their experience, to recognize the roles played by Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), and to provide the DHS with an understanding that will enable government to work more effectively with these organizations in future disasters.

As I read through this extensive report it warmed the heart to hear the radical difference these ministries and NGO's played; not only in their response but in the recovery phase after the disaster. FBO's and NGOs stepped in to fill the gaps when the geographic scales, intensities, and durations of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita overwhelmed the existing disaster response resources.

They provided shelter, food, medical services, hygiene services, mental health and spiritual care, physical reconstruction, logistics management and services, transportation, children's services and case management.

FBO's and NGOs were effective for three broad reasons:

1. Their specific mission and strong motivation to be responsive to what people needed.
2. Their closeness to and familiarity with the communities they served,
3. And access, either directly or through networks, to unique resources and capabilities directly applicable to the type of services needed following a disaster.

FBO's and other NGOs were incredibly effective even though they were not included in much of the government pre-disaster planning and did not have experience in such relief efforts. They showed a journey into a world of volunteers with a higher calling, of small local churches and large national denominations, of neighbours helping neighbours and also helping strangers, of downtown soup kitchens and outreach centres, and of those dedicated to serving others: good Samaritan's ALL.

http://www.homelandsecurity.org/hsireports/Herald_Unheard_Voices.pdf

God is looking for a man or woman who will stand in the gap and build up the wall.

GUESS WHOSE COMING FOR DINNER?

Over the past three years there has been a growing desire on the part of Crossroads Community Church to be a servant in our community. Our desire is not just to be a church in the community but a church of the community. We began to develop relationships with our community association and some of the social agencies that work in our community to try and discover what the real needs were and how we could help to meet them. Although there was some initial suspicion, the walls started to come down and we have enjoyed a wonderfully cooperative working relationship with our community association, Aspen Family Services and the city of Calgary Social Services. Through our discussions with them we became aware of both food insecurity and isolation needs in Mayland, Belfast and Vista. Combine that with a passion for service in our church College and Career and a plan developed for us to offer a free community meal once per month open to anyone. Our first meal was held on April 22 and 14 people from the community enjoyed friendship and a meal in the name of Jesus. Although we had hoped for more, we were assured by Aspen that this was a fantastic beginning and that it will only build from here. We do not know where this will take us but we do know that it is the right thing to do both for the community and for the church. Jesus said he did not come to be served but to serve. By offering a meal in the name of Jesus we want to let our light shine so that they may see good works and glorify our Father.





BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – April, 2009

GOD LOVES AND RESPONDS TO A BROKEN SPIRIT

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Psalm 51:17

As we go through the six incremental steps for what it takes to make a difference for God in developing "Holy Ambition", let us take a look at what Chip Ingram's second condition involves for a **"Broken Spirit"**.

We will remember the first component for Holy ambition was developing a 'dislocated heart'. We are told the enemy of the soul uses at least three weapons to prevent or neutralize a dislocated heart: discouragement, disillusionment, and desensitization. **Desensitization of the heart** is the most effectively used in our culture as we don't usually get far enough to worry about the other two.

So, what does it take to prevent a dislocated heart from becoming desensitized? Chip says that our compassion and concern must drive us back to a **fresh view of God**, a **clear view of ourselves**, and a **new view of others**. That, in turn, will bring us to the second condition required to have a life that makes a difference for God: a broken spirit.

We have been told in scripture (Proverbs 8:13) that God hates one human trait more than any other, "PRIDE". God has also revealed what He appreciates, loves and always responds to with favor...those with a broken spirit. When we begin to see who God is, and who we are, we experience God's cleansing and forgiveness through repentance.

We realize that life isn't about us. Humility gives a renewed commitment to fulfill God's agenda instead of our own. A broken spirit is an attitude that will allow us to come to God fully expecting He will say, **"I greet you; I love you; I'll life you up; I'll use you."**

Faith Community/Public Sector Workshop Review

"While very much in its infancy, it is our office's opinion that the potential of the initiative is undeniable and is consistent with our department's emergency management vision as articulated in "An Emergency Management Framework for Canada (2007)" If this initiative can succeed in the Alberta it may serve as a functional template that can be replicated in other regions of the country. Ultimately this initiative speaks to, what is for me, one of the more profound axioms in the EM field ..."

These were the opening comments from Jan Donais, Senior Management Officer with Public Safety Canada at our recent Faith Community/Public Sector Workshop. Jan has been a member of the Regional Faith Community Emergency Preparedness Coalition since its inception along with other members from the Municipal, and Provincial Emergency Management Services with Christian representatives from both the church and various ministries. A few evaluation results.

Evaluation Results (10 – Agree Strongly)

Question 1 – "Dependence on the Governmental and Health Authorities to 'fix' the pandemic problem, or any other major emergency, at the local level will leave many organizations and citizens exposed and at risk." Do you agree with this statement?

1 2 3 (1) 4 (3) 5 (2) 6 7 (5) 8 (7) 9 (5) 10 (5)

Question 2 - Do you feel there is a need for your faith community to be involved in advance planning efforts for emergencies?

1 2 3 4 5 (1) 6 7 8 (5) 9 (10) 10 (12)

Question 5 - Do you see this initiative as a vehicle to increase your congregation's passion for serving others through fulfillment of the Great Commandment?

1 2 3 4 (1) 5 6 (2) 7 (2) 8 (5) 9 (8) 10 (9)

Question 6 – Do you feel you have enough concrete information to take back to your church in order to introduce them to the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative?

1 2 3 4 5 (1) 6 (2) 7 (6) 8 (9) 9 (4) 10 (3)

Question 11 - Would you like to see more events such as the one you have attended?

Yes - 23, No - 0, No response - 5

Terrorist Groups Operating in Churches

Latest news reports are that five terrorist cell groups have been operating in many of our churches. They have been identified as: **Bin Sleepin, Bin Arguin, Bin Fightin, Bin Complainin, and Bin Missin**. Their leader, **Osama Bin Lucifer**, trained these groups to destroy the Body of Christ. The plan is to come into the church disguised as Christians and to work within the church to discourage, disrupt, and destroy.

However, there have also been reports of a sixth group. A tiny cell known by the name **Bin Prayin** is actually the only effective counter terrorism force in the church. This group appears to be very weak. Unlike other terrorist cells, the Bin Prayin team does not blend in with whoever and whatever comes along.

Bin Prayin does whatever is needed to uplift and encourage the Body of Christ. We have noticed that the Bin Prayin cell group has different characteristics than the others. They have **Bin Watchin, Bin Waitin, Bin Fastin, and Bin Longin** for their Master, Jesus Christ to return.

May I add one more important cell group...Bin Servin



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – March, 2009

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

John 13:15-17

In so many activities Bridges of Love participate; I often receive a *special blessing* which helps on this journey. This past month, I was invited to attend an Emergency Preparedness Roundtable, which took place in Toronto. This event was a collaboration between Public Health of Canada and the Canadian Council of Churches. Partnerships are being formed moving integration of the church into the Emergency Management structure.

We broke into groups for discussion and sharing of experiences. Representing the Regional Faith Community Emergency Preparedness Coalition and not a denomination, they placed me with the Baptist Convention of Ontario/Quebec since this group most closely represented the denomination I attend. What wonderful encouragement I received as the two other participants represented a large church in Toronto who were already well on their way to serving in their community. Ron, their emergency coordinator was excited and passionate about being prepared with a Christian response, to care for their neighbours during a disaster.

What touched me the deepest, however, was a story shared by Pamela, a Community Out-reach Pastor in their church. She told of a program similar to our "Inn from the Cold", sleeping 70 homeless individuals, each month. Before the guests retire for the evening, those serving in love wash the feet of the guests, placing a new warm pair of socks on each, in order to better prepare them to face the next day.

"A Bridge of LOVE"

Partners in the Plan Yield Strength for the Solution

Coming together is a beginning.

Keeping together is progress.

Working together is success.

Henry Ford

As Dr. Tim Foggini emphasized in "Of Churches, Pandemics and Emergency Preparedness", Faith Communities are especially well positioned to translate emergency plans into a meaningful response at the most local of levels. Their networks are broad (denominational and interdenominational networks span the country) and deep (many groups have multiple community-based cell-groups); and the Christian churches have a double mandate of both loving God and caring for their neighbour.

During Roman times, Christians practiced inexplicable sacrifice and love during catastrophic events. The ancient city of Antioch, for example, suffered forty-one natural and social catastrophes during Roman rule—an average of one every fifteen years. The growing number of Christians believed they were not only to extend God's love to their families and friends but to their communities as well. "Love one another...became their standard".

We know the Christian community will respond by the nature of our 'call' but we also realize a prior strategy is required before an emergency occurs, in order to have the most **effective** and **coordinated** response.

Much of the emphasis of emergency planning in many communities has commonly been on the mobilization and reinforcement of resources. And indeed, procedures for this purpose are important. Uncontrolled mobilization and over response, however, are common problems in emergencies. When these situations occur, coordination of response is a critical and crucial factor. **"A Unified Approach"**

FAITH COMMUNITY/PUBLIC SECTOR WORKSHOP

DATE: March 18, 10:00 – 3:00

HOSTED: Billy Graham/SP

LUNCH: NeighbourLink Calgary

RSVP: March 13 - 403.263.5683

DAY'S AGENDA

Welcome – Dr. Fred Weiss, Executive Director, BGEAC

Cast the Vision – Jan Donais, Public Safety Canada

Why the Faith Community? – John MacDonald, Catholic Archdiocese

Introduction of the Regional Faith Community Emergency Preparedness Coalition – Deanna Schroeder, Alberta

Funeral Services

Ice-Breaker – Cheryl Bourassa/Eric Bone, Alberta Health

Introduction, Faith Emergency

Preparedness Initiative – Marg Pollon, Coordinator RFC-EPC

Personal Emergency Response, Major Stephen Sears, Salvation Army & Wayne McCune, Red Deer Lake United Church

Organizational Emergency Response, Brent Davis, Samaritan's Purse & Fred Tyrrell, AEMA

Faith Connections DVD – Dr. Wayne Elford, Professor Emeritus

Open-Space Process – Fred Tyrrell, AEMA & Dr. Wayne Elford

Q & A Panel from Open-Space – Randy Tiller, AEMA; Deanna Schroeder, AFSA; Kevin McInnes, Chaplain, Calgary Police; Pastor Fred Friesen, Bonavista EM Church

Resources – Dr. Wayne Whitbourne, Action International Ministries

Summary & Evaluation – Marg Pollon, Bridges of Love Ministry



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – February, 2009

“WHOSE HEART IS COMPLETELY HIS” 2 Chronicles 16:9

“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.” 2 Chronicles 16:9

What is the catalyst which causes people to step out of their comfort zone and make the radical decision to go on an adventure with God? Bill Hubel's says the precursor to **vision** is a desire to fix a problem which is causing one distress. Perhaps it is extreme poverty, injustice, or God's people operating in a way that is contrary to the clear, written will of God. Whatever the issue, God places a burden on ones heart that is so over-whelming, action has to be taken.

This was indeed the case in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah's story begins in a time when God's people and God's agenda in the world seemed hopelessly lost. Jerusalem was in ruins and his response to this news caused his heart to break.

When was the last time we wept after news about the plight of people in need? When was the last time we were moved to action when there was news about injustice, or suffering in the world or even in our own back yard?

These questions are not meant to shame, but are meant to move us to consider how we can make a difference in our world. We often do not want to be disturbed by someone else's problems. Moving outside our comfort zone is usually unsettling and might be risky.

Nehemiah's dislocated heart over the plight in Jerusalem was the first condition that led to the amazing work God did in and through his life.

What will it take to really make a difference for God? Chip Ingram says, “The first condition for Holy Ambition is a dislocated heart which God uses as a foundation for accomplishing His will. The condition affects our life and then the world around us.”

A LINK TO THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH YOU RESIDE

The Strategic Directions of the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative.

1. **Public Engagement** – Generate awareness and offer education through resources related to Emergency/Pandemic Preparedness.
2. **Policy and Guidelines** – Provide a forum for policy and influence in order to articulate the viewpoints of the various faiths.
3. **Capacity Building** – Identify and recognize the diverse abilities and resources available from the various faith groups and private sector partners. To utilize these resources to facilitate training opportunities, exchange of ideas, resources, and expertise.
4. **Organizational Development** – Strengthen the institutional capacity of the Coalition to effectively meet the requirements of those faith groups who wish to participate in the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative.

Developing a coordinated regional faith community preparedness and response capacity has been identified by the **Regional Faith Community Emergency Preparedness Coalition** as potentially beneficial to stakeholders, partners and resource organizations alike. The Coalition recognizes a requirement for a coordinated approach to emergencies and disasters that could occur which could have a significant impact personally and corporately as the body of Christ.

Public Safety Canada has prepared “**Your Emergency Preparedness Guide**”

- Know the risks
- Make a plan
- Prepare a 72 hour kit

IS YOUR FAMILY PREPARED?

FAITH COMMUNITY/PUBLIC SECTOR WORKSHOP

The Regional Faith Community Emergency Preparedness Coalition invites you to participate in an initiative to **develop unity among key leaders within the Christian Faith Community concerning the role the faith community can play in the emergency preparedness planning cycle.**

The purpose of this workshop will be: **networking of key players, jumping the trust hurdles, and composing a coordinated approach amongst the leadership of the public sector and the faith community**, so that synergistic planning for emergency preparedness in the Alberta region can occur.

The following public-sector partners will be participants in the workshop.

- Municipal Emergency Management/Preparedness Organizations
- Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)
- Public Safety Canada – Alberta (PS ABRO)
- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta Health & Wellness

The Coalition is counting on faith community leaders to “step-up to the plate” and show our public sector colleagues the Christian Community can collaborate to enhance the well-being of our neighborhoods during times of need (*pandemics, natural disasters, terrorist threats...*).

DATE: March 18, 10:00 – 3:00
HOSTED: Billy Graham/SP
LUNCH: NeighbourLink Calgary
RSVP: Mar. 10 - 403.263.5683



BRIDGES OF LOVE

LOVE IS ACTION – January, 2009

REBUILDING THE WALL – Nehemiah 2:17

"Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." Nehemiah 2:17b

With a New Year upon us and a dismal economy on the horizons, it is easy to become a complainer, griper, and self-proclaimed prophet. It is easy to analyze, scrutinize and debate about all the problems in the world. What we really need, however, are people who will not only discuss a situation but will do something about it.

Nehemiah saw a problem and was distressed. Instead of complaining or wallowing in self-pity and grief, he took ACTION. From the moment he arrived in Jerusalem, he organized, managed, supervised, encouraged, met opposition, confronted injustice, and kept focused until the wall was rebuilt in an amazing 52 days. **Nehemiah was a man of action.**

The construction project, however, was not without opposition. As in our own time, the more people comprise a unit or community, the greater the potential for problems. This often occurs due to our carnality, which drives us to compete, rather than to cooperate.

When difficulties come there is a tendency for conflict and thus discouragement sets in. We must recognize there are no triumphs without troubles.

Even though individuals expend effort to achieve the cause, frictions often arise resulting in disharmony, unfilled dreams and fractured relationships.

Love for God and each other, is the supreme quality that enables workers to maintain unity, maintaining God's perspective to complete His chosen task.

GOD GAVE ME A DREAM

Spiritual renewal often begins with one person's vision. Nehemiah had a vision, and he shared it with enthusiasm, inspiring Jerusalem's leaders to rebuild the wall.

I became a Christian over 30 years ago due to the outreach efforts of a Toronto Church. Did God set the stage for my husband and me to become followers of Christ in this unique manner and then year's later birth Bridges of Love connecting the church with the community? According to statistics, few individuals come to Christ as adults and fewer yet, through a local churches outreach efforts.

Did I become a Medical Laboratory Technologist to have a Burnaby doctor invite this ministry to help mobilize Canadian Churches to be prepared to assist in the event of a Pandemic Influenza? Only God has the answers but I know He has placed this '**Grander Vision**' clearly on my heart to unite the body of Christ through a common purpose.

The book of Nehemiah carries many principles which are applicable to the task before us. Our 'crumbling wall' is the disconnect between church and community. Building bridges of love gives life through two-way movement. Many believe, however, the size of the chasm is simply too vast and over-whelming making the task impossible.

God has given a formula for success engaging our communities through the vehicle of Emergency Preparedness. Christian churches have the double mandate of both loving God and caring for our neighbour.

Let us bridge the great chasm, connecting with those in our community through the Faith Emergency Preparedness Initiative.

www.bridgesoflove.net

GIVING OUR BEST...

One afternoon a lawyer was riding in his limousine when he saw two men along the roadside eating grass. Disturbed, he ordered his driver to stop as he got out to investigate.

He asked one man, "Why are you eating grass?"
"We don't have any money for food," the poor man replied.
"We have to eat grass."

"Well, then, you can come with me to my house and I'll feed you," the Lawyer said.
"But sir, I have a wife and two children with me. They are over there, under that tree."

"Bring them along," the lawyer replied.
Turning to the other poor man he stated, "You also come with us."

The second man, in a pitiful voice, said, "But sir, I also have a wife and six children with me!"

"Bring them all, as well," the lawyer answered.

They all entered the car, which was no easy task, even for a car as large as the limousine. Once underway, one of the poor fellows turned to the lawyer and said, "Sir, you are too kind. Thank you for taking us all with you."

The lawyer replied, "Glad to do it. You'll really love my place. The grass is almost a foot high!"