

Reaching Individuals, Impacting Society through the 7 Areas of Influence By Tim Svoboda

I used to think that the church would be the key ingredient for reaching individuals and transforming society! I was right and yet I was wrong because my concept of the church's influence needed a new focus. We all know the church is not a building but the church is made up of people and those people are working people, people in society. And if we are going to reach society with the gospel then the people in the church, not the church as an institution, not the church as a service, not the church as a program or the pastor of the church is going to reach society. Ultimately it is the people attending the church that are going to go out in to the world where they work and reach society with the gospel.

This concept led me to connect a teaching that has been used to structure YWAM's University of the Nations, which gave me tremendous application in the light of City Reaching and transforming society. Back in 1975, Loren Cunningham (Founder of Youth With A Mission) and Bill Bright (Founder of Campus Crusade for Christ) compared notes one day and discovered that the Lord had put on each their hearts the very same thing about how to disciple the nations and turn them back to God! They found that they both had identified seven areas of influence that shape societies. ¹

Those Seven Areas of Influence can be easily remembered by following the first 7 alphabets in the English language. A, B, C, D, E, F, G:

A = Arts. This includes the areas of painting, drama, mime, sculpture, handicrafts, cinema, writing, dance, poetry, sports, music,

B = Business and Commerce.

C = Church. This also includes the areas of social service.

D = Distribution of Media. This includes newspaper, television, journalism, internet, radio, magazines.

E = Education. Seminaries, Colleges, Universities, schools, informal training,

F = Family. Counselling, Health Care, Medicine, Pre Marital and Post Marital Counselling, Child Development

G = Government. Police, IAS, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly, Lawyers, Judicial,

There are also other key areas that are outside these 7 areas that include Science, Technology, Economics, and Medicine.

YWAM further took this concept into their training programs and began to build a University which is now in operation around the world with a regional centre in Pune based on the 7 Areas of Influence.² The University has 7 Colleges

¹ Loren Cunningham, (Winning God's Way) YWAM Publishing 1988. Page 123

² University of the Nations. For more information visit <http://www.ywam.or> or <http://www.uofnpune.net>

preparing each student to serve the Lord in society by impacting these areas. Those colleges are the College of Christian Ministries, College of Performing Arts, College of Education, College of Humanities and International Studies, College of Science and Technology, College of Communications, College of Counselling and Health Care. These Areas of Influence are spheres that shape society.

I was recently doing a prayer walk through Kathmandu City and as I came to one of the main squares of the city I noticed all the art work that was on display. It was shop after shop of religious items and there was nothing “Christian” to compete with it. Christian art does not have to be just religious but it is art that represents the values of the Kingdom of God. It may be something pure, something beautiful or something that represents a biblical value. I began to pray as I walked by the shops of idols that God would raise up Christian artists who would be in the midst of the idols displaying an alternative art form and being an alternative lifestyle and verbal witness in the midst of other artists.

We are not only called to preach the Gospel to every creature but we are also called to Disciple the Nations. As we have seen in the city of Chennai that just having more churches does not necessarily bring forth more transformation. Chennai now with a total of 2500 churches is increasing every year in the rate of suicide, wine shops on every street corner, 2000+ slums and environmental and moral issues that overpower the ever expanding church. Why is this so?

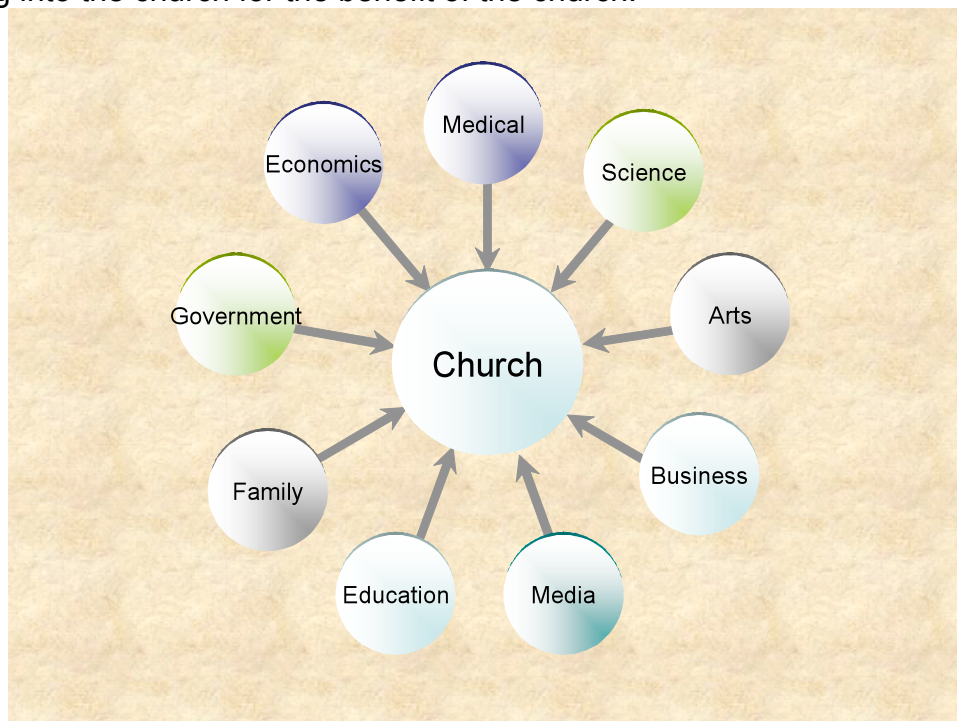
Landa Cope, former Dean of the College of Communications in the University of the Nations tells the story of a British TV journalist who seriously took the challenge that Christians believe their religion makes a better society.³ This journalist went to the most “churched” city in the United States and looked at crime, drugs, race relationships, economic equity, education, violence in schools etc. It was a disaster! Then he interviewed some of the religious leaders in the community. Choosing leading people of the church, he asked their views. He allowed them to address the needs of this city! Without exception they had nothing to say about the gospel being applied to the needs of their home town!

Unfortunately most of us don’t understand that the Message of God’s Kingdom is not just something we hear in church but it is something that is to be unleashed in and through society’s structures to bring about transformed lives and then transformed communities. Secondly most of us have divided our lives and our thinking into secular and sacred compartments. This division has made us to see those who are pastors, missionaries, Bible teachers, and evangelists as full time servants doing the Lord’s work and the rest of us as those that support them and attend their meetings. The reason we are not reaching the cities today is simply because we have not employed the harvest force that is sitting in the churches and have opportunities every day to effect society.

³ Landa Cope, The Mandate, U of N Print Production School Newsletter, July 1993 No.2

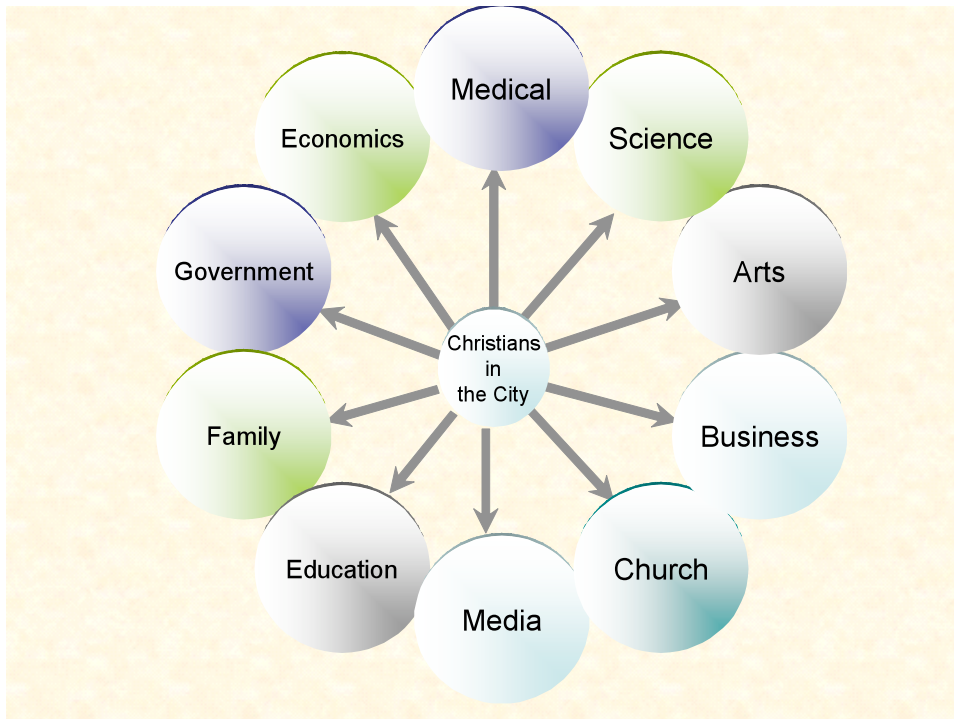
Pastors are called to shepherd their churches but the church is called to shepherd the community. For too long the church has endeavoured to bring as many people to as many services as possible inside the four walls of the church. All we have ended up doing is making people become busy going to church rather than equipping people to reach and transform society.

In the chart below you can see the church as the centre. When the church is the centre it will become bigger but that does not mean it is impacting society. It can sometimes simply mean that the church is getting fatter. The typical attitude of the church when it comes into contact with business people is to see whether that person can come to church so they can give their donation to help the church. Or when the church comes in contact with a musician the church thinks, "how can I rope this person into leading and helping with the worship service?" When the church encounters an educationalist the church thinks how they can get this person to teach Sunday school. In other words the church is the CENTRE of everything and service to the Lord is defined within its four walls. You can see the arrows indicating that talent from the spheres of society are flowing into the church for the benefit of the church.



Now look at the chart below and notice the difference. The church is no longer the centre of our thinking but the Christians in the city are our centre of thinking and the church is one of the outer circles. That doesn't mean I don't believe in the church! Remember the church is about people and the work of the ministry is equipping the saints. The arrows are indicating that the influence is going from the Christians in the city into the spheres of society. When Christians become our focus of thinking for change in the city then we can become strategic in

employment of them in all the fields of service including the church. The fields of service are unlimited. In the diagram above where the church is the centre the fields of service are very limited. Basically if you are not an usher, deacon, elder, board member, Sunday school teacher, or some kind of volunteer then you do not have a gift to perform in the church. Whereas in the diagram below, all kinds of gifts are employed to serve the Lord.



So how does an Artist, Educationalist, Media Person, businessman, government servant serve the Lord?

There are two questions that every Christian who is working in the secular field must answer. The first is, “How do I be an effective witness in the sphere of society to my other non Christian friends?” This is a matter of personally sharing our faith. It may be done by friendship evangelism, literature distribution, inviting our colleagues to church, to a Christian Concert, to a crusade, or to one of many different types of events that presents Christ to them. This is dealing with personal transformation.

Secondly a question that is often not tackled but must be if we want to see City Transformation is, “How do I impact society with the values of the Kingdom through the sphere that I am serving in?”

In other words what is Christian Government or Christian management or Christian art or Christian television? It cannot be just a Christian sitting in the place of authority with a Bible on his desk or a picture of Jesus behind him. Christian government is about values. Values of justice and equality and will

tackle issues of corruption, bonded labour, community harmony, and environmental issues to name a few. In the United Kingdom, Wilberforce had a Christian Worldview which made him prevail until an act was passed in Parliament that put an end to slave trade.⁴

| How does an artist paint, sing, dance, or carve something that reflects Christian values? It was recently reported by Charles Colson that more people than ever before are coming to Christ in Japan because of Johan Sebastian Bach- a composer who died 250 years ago!⁵ “Now there are reports of thousands of Japanese, inspired by his cantatas, converting to Christianity. It’s a testament to the power of art steeped in a biblical worldview. Bach’s popularity is so great that the classes at the Felix Mendelssohn Academy in Bach’s hometown of Leipzig, Germany, are filled with Japanese students. These students are learning about more than the music of the great composer -- they learn about the spirit that moved him to write: that is, Bach’s love of God.”

In Chennai Pastor Emmanuel Jeykaran and his wife Kavitha of Powerhouse Church have formed a movement called CAN (Christian Arts Network). It is an endeavor to bring together all Christian artists to network together to impact and influence the city. It is a beginning effort to unite the Christian artists and think through how their profession can be used as a mission in the city.

Today’s media is overruled by sensuality, violence, and a hedonistic value system. Christians in the media do not have to produce more television shows with preaching and church services. What is needed today is comedies, serials, dramas, and movies with a Christian value system. David Cunningham, son of Loren Cunningham the founder of YWAM and a graduate of the YWAM University of the Nations has just produced a movie that is being released on the secular cinema circuit February 2003 called “To End All Wars,”⁶ It is not a Christian movie but has the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation that are concepts that have made Christianity highly respected around the world. Larry King one of the world’s big talk show hosts on CNN said about the movie, “a noble story of courage and fortitude that needed to be told. There isn’t a boring moment in this flick.”⁷

One of my friends is a Professional Italian Master Chef who used to own and operate 14 restaurants, 3 cruise ships and made tons of money before he came to Christ. After coming to Christ he joined YWAM to become a missionary, went to Albania, and learned the language. After several years of service he found the best way to reach people was to use the gift of cooking and he opened a restaurant in the city of Tirana and used it as a place to build relationships with

⁴ Chuck Colson, Kingdoms in Conflict, Zondervan Publication, Page 365

⁵ Chuck Colson, Breakpoint Commentary, Bach’s Fifth Gospel: The Enduring Power of Artistic Excellence. #000309, March 9, 2000

⁶ <http://www.toendallwars.com>

⁷ <http://www.toendallwars.com>

local people which led to friendship evangelism. What he had left to become a missionary he went back to in order to become a better missionary!

Perhaps we are missing the gift that we already have in our fields of service and just simply need to see these fields as our mission ground. I am convinced that if Christians are equipped by the church to answer the two basic questions of “How do I witness to my colleagues at work? and How do I impact society with the values of the Kingdom through the job I am working at so that we will see both individuals and society transformed?”

Tim Svoboda is the leader of YWAM's Urban Ministries.