

Curitiba, September 5, 2011

When Cleiton and I were in the city of Rondon do Pará, apostle Rafael Ortiz, national leader of the MAR Ministry (Agape and Restoration Ministry), expressed his interest to establish a partnership with us. He liked Harvest materials very much, and he also liked the way we work. After we finished the Vision Conference, he invited me to speak at their annual conference, which they call “Passion and Boldness”.

The goal for “Passion and Boldness” is to gather all the churches under the MAR Ministry, which are scattered throughout the northern states of Brazil. This gathering is a large celebration of thanksgiving. In that occasion youth groups made presentations with typical dances from their regions, drama, singing and offerings.



The venue was one of the largest schools in the city of Belém (previously they did the event in a large theatre, with good infrastructure, but now with a new mayor and new administration in the city, the doors were closed for churches,

which no longer can use public places). In the evenings there were presentations by the youth, and during the day, there were seminars. Here are the themes that they covered:

- MAR's Philosophy of Ministry
- What should people expect from the church? Are we like a society that is set apart from others? - Rafael
- LifeWork, A Biblical Rationale for Work - Christian
- Prestige and Influence: Conquering or Serving the City? - Cícero
- Politics and Transformation (citizenship, social participation) – Christian
- Media's influence in human behavior (technology, social network) Fidelis
- Modern Family: Is it time to rethink family? – Christian



The apostle told me that he would like me to teach the church how to play its role in society without using church jargon. It is his concern that we, as church, should use more Kingdom principles to influence our society. Round tables were done between seminars and the participants had opportunity to raise questions. The participants were lawyers, educators, curious youth, a total of about 300 people.



What called my attention was that their ministry is totally based on Kingdom values. This means that their national leader wasn't just interested in Harvest materials as any other material, but as the material that would be the foundation for their ministry, to be used to prepare their pastors, to disciple the youth, to preach before the congregations, and to develop strategies to integrate members. The leaders of this ministry understood that clichés such as: “let's conquer the city for Jesus”, will be meaningless without foundations in biblical wholism.

Cícero, one of the pastors, told me that for some time he has befriended the mayor of his city, who is unfortunately going through a divorce, a process that has lasted for about two years. Cícero was invited to be a personal assistant to the mayor. In this position he has access to the finances of the city and he is personally in charge of helping the needy in the city, assisting and ministering to them with God's Word. When asked the mayor why he received so much trust,

the answer was: “You are the only pastor who didn’t approach me to ask for something!” I think that this answer tells volumes, doesn’t it?

Since we work with this material for years, it is not a novelty that people want to use it, but, at least for me, this was the first time that I saw a church willing to base its entire ministry on biblical wholism. During the event, the national leader and Pastor Fidelis, who invited Cleiton to teach the Vision Conference in Rondon do Pará, confirmed their interest to make a partnership with Harvest. They are thinking about the possibility of establishing a project of continuing education to train their pastors. On top of that, they are thinking about using the internet, Blogs, Moodle, and social network for follow up. It’s wonderful!

All these experiences had a special meaning to me, because they happened right after I returned from a conference in Amsterdam, where international leaders met to discuss about worldview teaching. While in Brazil we struggle to help people understand the depth and importance of wholism, I met people who are far ahead, applying it on a daily basis. Very important people were present in the conference in Amsterdam, state senators and deputies, professors, philosophers, pastors, everyone participating in discussions and showing applications from a Christian philosophical point of view and its influence in public life. There were politicians who belong to the Dutch Parliament and from Christian Political Parties. Wholism is part of their daily lives.

In Amsterdam I was hosted by a professor of politics. One day we were talking about my field of study, sociology, and he said something that touched me. He commented about the story of the Good Samaritan, telling how the Samaritan met the man who was robbed and offered help, became personally involved in the situation, entrusted the man to an institution, with which he also committed himself, paying the bill and providing continuity of care. “Now let us think,” he said, “that every day the Samaritan walks on the same road and finds similar situations. Then, it is clear that there is a *structural problem*. In this case, it’s not enough to always offer the same kind of personal help, it’s important to think about why the situation is repeated many times.” At that moment, it became clear to me that it is very important that we offer help to our neighbor, that we

teach the church to do small acts of service (like seed projects), so they can learn to serve the needy on the road. However, it is equally important that the church gets involved with the *structural issues*, that the church learns how to think about the society that she is part of and know, using wisdom and technology, how to get involved. In Brazil we face endemic problems regarding corruption, with its evil perspective of prosperity, which is the same for believers and non-believers, with people who don't care for politics, people who don't manifest themselves and don't get involved with structural issues (except of course for the remnant and the *rocks* that cry out).



Regarding our work at Harvest, I was challenged to think about long-term strategies. We need to add to the small steps, the long-term initiatives, which can encompass the small actions. We need to learn how to dialogue with public spheres, the government, and departments of education. For us, Harvest family, it's important to think on how we will influence the seven spheres of society with short and long term strategies. It's time for reflection. I believe that the example of the Agape Restoration Ministry is meaningful. They're asking help of people who are well prepared to prepare the way for the One who will certainly come!



One dream became true. Countless times I mentioned the example of Abraham Kuyper as a man who lived out and disseminated teachings of biblical wholism. Thank you, Lord, for everything!

Kind regards,
SHALOM
Christian