

Liquid Assets

Living Water is not meant to be bottled

BY MARTIJN VAN TILBLORGH

What is the shape of water? Well it depends, doesn't it? The shape of water is controlled by the shape and size of the container that it is poured into. For example, when water is poured into a glass, the shape of that water takes on the shape of the glass in which it now resides. In fact, it is scientifically impossible for water to take on any other shape than the shape of its container.

Yet water has the unique property to seep into any crack and any corner of a space, if we were to allow it to do what it does naturally. When we let water do whatever it wants, it has an incredible ability to touch places that can't be touched by anything else.

Water is a metaphor used throughout the Bible, which reflects the reality that it is the greatest asset that God has entrusted us to bring life to the world around us. There are more than 100 scriptures that talk about the "living water" that God gives to us as believers. This living water has the ability to reach every corner of society, if we allow it to do what it naturally

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does. That is, unless we put this water into a shape that limits it from reaching the corners of the earth.

Could it be that we as church leaders have created systems and structures in our ministries that have become a container that limits the shape of water, so it can only exist within the shape of our organizations?

Could it be that we have turned our greatest asset (living water) into a non-liquid asset, keeping it from being exchanged in the open market. In the business world, both liquid as well as

non-liquid assets can have tremendous value. However, the full value of a non-liquid asset is not accessible in the present if we want to use it *now*.

Some of the cities in our country that have the highest number of churches per capita seem to struggle the most with poverty, crime and violence. Somehow, our greatest asset isn't liquid enough to seep into the cracks of society and fix our most basic problems.

As I have considered these issues, I have come to the conclusion that we often limit the shape of the living water we've been entrusted with to the four walls of our ministries simply because of wrong assumptions we've adopted as truth. We've been called to reshape water and "liquidize" this asset so that we can truly touch culture and impact our society. In order to do so, we have to unlearn some basic "truths" that keep us from being effective as the church.

There are three basic concepts that have helped me become a more liquid leader. I want to share these ideas with you in hopes that it will help you reshape water in the same way it helped me.

CORRECT THE TENDENCY TO SEPARATE

In the New Testament, many of the stories Jesus shared were intended to correct our misperceptions and the bad tendencies we might have that need to be corrected. For example, in Matthew 13 we read the well-known story of the wheat and the tares. The danger of passages like this is that, because we know them so well, we assume we've learned all we can learn. One area that this parable addresses is the tendency to separate ourselves from the world around us.

Verse 24-30 says this:

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this," he replied. **"The servants asked him, 'Do**

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you want us to go and pull them up?'" "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. **Let both grow together until the harvest.** At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

The servants of the man in the story (us) had the tendency to separate the tares from the wheat that were both sown in the same field. Jesus later explains that "the field is the world" (v. 38). Guess what? In order to reach the world, we have to be *in* the world. And guess what else? There are going to be "tares" growing among us. Instead of trying to separate and isolate ourselves from the tares, we need to allow ourselves to grow where we are planted. Let both grow together until there is a harvest!

This brings me to the second point.

THE GOSPEL TRAVELS THROUGH TRADE

As a kid I always liked to look at those big maps that tracked the Apostle Paul's travels as he preached the gospel in all corners of the earth. Each journey of Paul was identified by a dotted line that stretched from country to country and city to city.

It wasn't until many years later that I realized that these dotted lines were not the same dotted lines that one would see if they were trying to pick their favorite cruise vacation on a travel website. These dotted lines were in fact trade routes. Paul didn't join a group of tourists on a big recreational boat. He boarded merchant ships that took him from point A to point B.

The truth is that the gospel has always traveled through trade.

Trade happens in every sphere and segment of society. By allow-



ing trade to become the infrastructure and distribution model for the gospel, we will be able to reach every corner of our communities organically. Understanding this causes us to rethink the way we lead our churches.

The truth is that 98 percent of all people in church are not working for the church. Most Christians have jobs in the marketplace. When I say marketplace, I'm not refer only to traditional business. I'm talking about every form of trade that creates culture, including sports, arts, entertainment, politics, education and much more. As church leaders we need to learn to leverage the fact that our people are already living and working "in all the corners of the earth." By allowing them to grow where they are planted, we will reshape water to reach those corners until we see a harvest.

Yet, most of our efforts are geared toward initiatives that strengthen the status quo and that keep our greatest asset non-liquid. We don't need another new program or project to reach the world. All we need to do is to tear down the walls that limit the shape of water and allow it to flow into places where it experiences the least resistance.

BUILD TOWNS WITHOUT WALLS

In Zechariah 2 we read a story about a man with a measuring line in his hand who was on his way to build Jerusalem. This man reminds me of us as leaders as we attempt to build our organizations and ministries. The man was halted by an angel who questioned his efforts, and the man explained his good intentions to build the city of God.

As the angel and the man exchanged words, it was made clear to the man that he had assumptions would have kept God's city from developing the way God had intended it to grow. The angel told him that Jerusalem would be inhabited as towns *without* walls and that the Lord would be a wall of fire around them.

This came as a shock to the man. A town without walls cannot be measured! What God wants to build cannot be measured. The man quickly became aware that the very tool he was using to build the city was in fact completely useless in the context of the picture the angel just painted him.



**TOTATEMO
LUPTUR?
OVITAT QUI
DOLENDIT
ELITATI TEM
EST ASPEL INT
LA ALIA VOLO
DOLENDAE**

A measuring line is a tool that references a standard created by man. How many of the standards that we use to measure our work are merely assumptions that keep us from building the right thing? Let's do away with the measuring lines in our thinking and build towns without walls. Let's allow God to be a wall of fire around them. In other words, wherever the church is planted in society, that's where God's wall will be.

The city of God is fluid. It's liquid. It reaches into every corner of society and it shapes our culture. Let's be liquid leaders and help reshape water in our lifetime! ▣



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