

Don't talk – walk!

It took a long time to know what to talk about today, weeks ago I asked the Lord for direction and one idea came into my head. I wasn't completely at piece with this idea but nothing else came so I thought it must be that! It was called "Living with God"!

And as nothing else came to mind, last weekend I sat down and started to write the talk – but it was slow and ponderous and I didn't get very far.

Then yesterday morning something unusual happened – Lloyd and I were up and around at about the same time and we had breakfast together.

We started having a conversation – and this conversation became very interesting – suddenly a light bulb went on in my head – this is what the talk is going to be about

We were talking about Mac computers – Abercrombie & Fitch – and Hillsong.

So Lloyd got out his phone and we recorded our conversation – and it's that conversation that I'm bringing to you this morning!

So what do these 3 companies have in common? On the surface you may think nothing particularly much – but you would be wrong – they do actually have a great deal in common, in fact they are fundamentally the same! The core of their philosophy is the same

Steve Jobs who co founded Apple computers in 1976 has created an atmosphere with in the company for people to reach their full potential – the atmosphere within the Apple corporation encourages creativity

It's the same with A&F – their attention to detail is phenomenal – I work for a clothing company called White Stuff I'm part of a 2 man design team designing their men's range

At A&F the designers work on about 6 garments each per season – they design and develop all the little details that go into the garments – because they only work an 6 garments a season – so they have about 3 months to develop them – they can afford to give a lot of attention to the details.

At White Stuff the men's wear rage consists of about 80 to 100 pieces per season

A&F have the same attitude through out the company they are focused – and they go to great lengths to get things right.

There is a story in the fashion industry that has become legend about how A&F went about designing graphics for their tee shirt for their market the middle class youth of America...

In the UK we tend to say we need some graphics for our Tee shirts can you design some (without leaving your desk) and have them done by 2 .30 to catch DHL so they can go to the factories today!

Who do you think produces the best tee shirts?

Who do you think sells the most tee shirts?

Who do you think will have the most impact on the fashion market?

So where is this all leading us?

Hillsong church has become known for its worship music over the years – and quite rightly so Hillsong music has topped the Australian charts, with albums achieving gold and platinum sales status. This is worship music topping the secular charts

The music isn't just written by one person – they have lots of musicians writing and composing great worship music!

It's not that the Lord has brought all the best composers to Hillsong – it's that they have created the right atmosphere for the musicians to create! An atmosphere where they can perform to their best of their ability

This is a lesson we can learn as a church – but this isn't aimed at the church. This is a lesson we can learn our selves – do we have the right attitude to make the most of our talents?

Are we an Apple Corp or are we just another consumer electronics company churning out another type of simple gizmo?

Are you an A&F or are you another sweatshop employing company churning out bland cheap goods to high street shop.

I'm not condemning any high street shop or the practices of any manufacturer – the point I'm making is the only difference between these high end companies and the low end companies is their attitude!

And the difference between me and say Paul is not any gifting that Paul had or the intellect that Paul had – because he was an intellectual he was a very learned man.

The difference is in Paul's attitude!

I can't and will never be able to write letters as Paul did in the Bible

Or I'll never be able to teach as Paul did –

But I can make the same impact in my surroundings as Paul did if my attitude was the same!

Paul say's in **Philippians 3:7-8**

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ"

Until I can count all in this world as loss – as Paul did I will never attain to the potential that the Lord has put in me – or you – if you don't do the same thing you won't attain to the potential that the Lord has put in you

Until I can count my reputation as loss for the sake of knowing Christ – then I will never fulfill the potential that the Lord has put in me.

Until I can count my ambitions as loss for the sake of knowing Christ

Until I can count my desires as loss for the sake of knowing Christ

Until we can count our cars or our homes or our bank balance as loss for the sake of knowing Christ – we will never attain to the potential the GOD has put in us!

Ambition is good – it's very good – as long as it's an ambition for Jesus.

I have an ambition – it's an ambition to start a fashion company – my ambitions for this company is that it becomes a multi-national corporation – producing clothes all over the world – and selling clothes all over the world.

My ambition is that it will be a highly respected company inside and out side the fashion industry – but why?

So that it will bring me a lot of prestige?

So that it will bring me a lot of money?

What's the point?

Paul said in **Philippians 1:21**

"To live is Christ and to die is gain"

I read in the "Word for today" a few weeks ago that these words don't work in any other way.

To live is money – to die is to leave it all behind

To live is fame – to die is to be forgotten

To live is power and influence – to die is to be replaced by someone else.

What's the point in living lives for ourselves?

What's the point of living our lives for anything that the finality of death makes a nonsense of.

Apple don't do what they do to make money – they do what they do because they love what they do! – and that brings rewards

We are Christians – and we love the LORD – and if we do things for the LORD rather than for some material gain then the rewards will be far better.

If I want to build this company so that the gospel is preached wherever the clothes are made – then that's a good ambition.

If I want to build this company so that wherever the clothes are sold the image of Christ can be enhanced in the minds of the secular world – that's a good ambition

If I want to build this company so that the walls of prejudice against the image of Christ that some people have can be broken down – then that is a good ambition.

And that is the same for every one here if you have an ambition that is of Christ then pursue it with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Because that's what the bible tells us to do –

Mark 12-30

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

And that is a good start to changing our attitude – change the reasons why we do things

If we want to stop being a manufacturer of cheap electronic gizmos – and start on the road to being an Apple corporation – then we have to change the reason why we do things.

Paul writes in **Philippians 3-12-14**

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

There is a great insight into Paul's focus in this passage, which the great theologian Lloyd Burrell pointed out to me in our conversation.

Paul's focus is heavenward and the things of heaven – not on the things of earth.

If our thoughts are on earthly things then we will think about them and be distracted by them.

The enemy will only put sinful thoughts into our minds if he knows there is fertile soil there for them – where the seed of the thought can be nurtured and grow

If our focus is truly on things that are above – things of this world like greed, adultery, power, money will have no desire for us – and so won't grow in our minds.

And in **verse 15** Paul adds

"All of us who are mature should take such a view of things".

This is another change we must make in our attitude if we want to reach our full potential.

Going back to the fashion industry for a moment – there are a few companies who stand out from the crowd they go about their own business doing their own thing – producing what they produce – they stand out from the crowd.

Other companies spring up, see what they're doing – I like that – and copy them.

The market is full of copycats – it's as if the owners of those companies don't have faith in their own designers and what they can do.

So instead of developing an atmosphere of creativity with in their companies they create an attitude of dependency – depending on the influence of others – a sort of second class citizen if you like – subservient to the creative direction of other companies.

Why do the directors have this sort of attitude? It can crush a person's spirit when people don't have faith in them – they stop having faith in them selves

Hands up all those people who think there are Christians in this world who can and will do great things for God?

Hands up all those people who think that they are one of those people?

We live in a society that has the attitude that thinks there are great things going on over there.

When the Bible talked about the bride of Christ it was talking about you!

When Jesus said – *you will do greater things then this* – he was talking about you!

When Jesus said to Peter *on this rock I will build my church* – one of the churches he had in mind was CJ's City

The church is the real thing!

We are the real thing!

You are the real deal!

When the LORD said in **Jeremiah 29:11**

"For I know the plans I have for you".

He was talking to us – each one of us

And if you don't think you are able to do great things through the Lord then you have to start looking at yourself in a different way – because the Lord believes you can.

And that's another change of attitude we will have to under go if we want to reach our full potential.

We are all unique – we are all individuals with a huge amount to offer – if we don't fulfill our potential then no one else will fulfill it for us.

But how do we go about cultivating this change of attitude

Well one way is: -

As the writer of **Hebrews** says

"Let us encourage one another".

And as the New Testament stresses over and over again – particularly in Acts where they were building the church – encourage – encourage – offer encouragement – be encouraged.

We should continually encourage each other

If someone comes to you with an idea – no matter how outlandish it is you should encourage them to pursue it – if it is not of the Lord, the Lord is perfectly capable of redirecting them.

We are to build each other up in the Lord

And reading the Bible – reading what the Lord is saying to us and about us - and believing it!

When Jesus said in **John 14:12**

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

He was talking to us!

If we want to reach our full potential in Christ we have to be prepared to change!

Firstly change the reason why we do things
Change our attitude
Change our focus

The question is do we want to change?

Do we want to reach our full potential in the Lord?

Mark 4:20

“Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.”

Are we Christians that want to produce a crop of a hundred times what was sown?

Or are we content just producing a crop 30 times what was sown?

Lets ask our selves that now! And as we think about it let’s remind our selves of

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Because if we want to produce a crop that is 100 times what was sown we are going to live a very challenging life.

And the other thing about the Apple corporation is that they went their own way.

When all the other computer companies were conforming to one another sharing software and operating systems they were non-conformist they swam against the tide.

We all as Christians will have to do the same thing.

And for those who do want to – I came across this prayer, which I’ll finish on.

Lord I pray that I will develop: -

1. Convictions that are stronger then my fears
2. Vision that is clearer then my doubts
3. Spiritual sensitivity that is louder then popular opinion

4. Self-esteem that is deeper than self protection
5. Appreciation for discipline that is greater than my desire for leisure
6. Dissatisfaction that is more forceful than the status quo
7. Poise that is more unshakeable than panic
8. Risk taking that is stronger than safety keeping
9. Actions that are more robust than rationalisation
10. A desire to see potential reached more than people pleased

In Jesus name,

Amen