

TRANSFORMATIONS



Connections were formed and renewed at the 2010 International Business Conference on October 7th and 8th in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A Different Kind of Revolution: Reflections on the 2010 International Business Conference

by Jacqueline Klamer

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – As Doug Seebeck, president of Partners Worldwide, launched the opening session of the “Marketplace Revolution,” my jaw nearly dropped. I scanned the room at the 400-some conference participants, and noticed nearly everyone was on the edge of their seats. “I’m not the only one intrigued by this business as ministry thing,” I thought.

He certainly set the pace. Expanding on the story of Peter and John—unschooled ordinary men who spent three years with Jesus—Doug described that these guys were suddenly performing their first miracle following Christ’s ascension. But he didn’t leave it at that. He looked to the crowd straight in the eye. “How long have you been with Jesus?” he asked, waiting a moment to give the second punch. “These men were newly empowered with the Spirit. How long ago were you empowered with the same Spirit?”

In an Acts 3 first-ever-miracle of the disciples, the mind-boggling result wasn’t solely spiritual transformation, but was also economic transformation—an empowering and life-changing moment for one man. As seen in the redemptive work of Christ that day, the miracle was so humbly and naturally executed. And, it was utterly revolutionary. *Please continue reading on next page*

Sound Bites

“Social enterprise is the idea of creating the antibiotic, not just the band-aid solution.”

- Joseph DeLoss, founder FreshBox Catering

“Find your calling and listen to where God would have you go. Honor him with your products and services, the way you treat your employees, suppliers, and even your competitors.”

- Dr. Neal Johnson, author *Business as Mission*

“God is a God who’s productive, has plans, and accomplishes them.”

- Andrew Cunningham, founder New Horizons Mozambique

“The younger population has the niche to transform communities as the next generation. They may have the energy to perform this marketplace revolution we’re looking for.”

- Ralph Edmond, co-founder Farmatrix

“The most important thing is empowerment. We need to empower people to lift themselves out of poverty.”

- Dr. George Ayittey, author *Africa Unchained*

“Leaders are not born, leaders are not made, leaders are discovered.”

- Richard DeVos, co-founder Amway

“The best way to make something better is to create value—not handing something out or shipping something over to ‘help’.”

- Magatte Wade, founder TioSSano

Continued from page 1

Too often, our society still struggles to recognize miracles like this in all professions, especially in the marketplace. People naturally serving others through their business. People living out a passion to follow Christ as an entrepreneur. People utilizing unique skills and talents to transform their community—and communities across the globe. For far too long, so many in business have felt the need to cover it up.

“It’s revolutionary when business people see business as ministry,” said Doug, an exclamation that lit up the audience. “It’s a ministry in the marketplace, day in and day out—serving your employees, families, customers, vendors, and suppliers, serving your neighbors, community, and the world.”

Throughout those two days, what intrigued me most were the interactions, connections, and confirmations I witnessed as I walked throughout the conference hall, lobby and workshops. Together, two, three, or ten people would harbor in the corner or stand at tables sharing experiences and advice. A certain vibe was rising—new connections being made, mentors and mentees meeting the second or third time, old friends embracing with a pat on the back. I said to myself, there’s potential for this strong network in which people can grow together, cheer each other on, and strengthen one another to pursue their callings in business. And, perhaps we should term this network the “Body of Christ.”

Ever since the sinful fall of humanity, all people in this body have been commanded to play a role in the redemptive transformation Christ has already begun. Whether painting, teaching, constructing, gardening, engineering, healing, cooking, counseling, managing, marketing, or manufacturing (as well as many more professions), each person has an open-door opportunity to daily live out her calling.

The speakers at the conference affirmed the vision of Partners Worldwide—this calling to live out business as ministry for a world without poverty. And, for so many people attending, they’d never experienced such affirmation to continue doing what they do best. Whether providing a stable market for village women growing hibiscus in Senegal; or employing the homeless of Columbus, Ohio; or offering faith-based family counseling and leadership training within an agricultural production company in Mozambique; story after story was an affirmation that business people have the potential to change lives. Even more stories were shared over lunch or in the lobby, among so many who had discovered peers with a similar calling.

Yet, it is a daunting calling. There I sat on the edge of my seat when Doug asked the crowd, “How long have you been with Jesus?” The question felt so personally relevant, I wondered if the whole crowd would turn my way to glance me in the eye. “Come on girlfriend,” one might think, “You’ve known this Jesus guy for more than ten years! What have you done so far with your life?”

Instead, I could sense every person there asking themselves a similar question. “What on earth am I doing?” and, a bit more startling than the first, “Why on earth was I ever trying to do this alone?”

“It’s a ministry in the marketplace, day in and day out—serving your employees, families, customers, vendors, and suppliers, serving your neighbors, community, and the world.”

What stood out most was the encouragement to look outward—and to look upward—because we’re not alone. “We as Christians can’t just do things because it sounds cool, but need to be strategic in what we do,” one speaker said, humbly adding, “What really excites me is seeing the change in people when they’re in a productive environment. God is a God who’s productive, has plans, and accomplishes them.”

God is a God who’s productive. Whoa. Although the daunting tasks of empowerment, job creation, and business impact are powerful tools needed to eliminate poverty, to meet social need, to make sustainable change and the list goes on and on, the final answer is—it’s Christ who’s already accomplishing it! We cannot, and will not, transform anything alone. We are Christ’s followers. We’ve been called to participate confidently. With this wider and deeper strategy Jesus has prepared for the body of Christ, we have the opportunity to work with this omniscient strategist who wants to transform the world today through each one of us! I have to remember that. And, I get to live it out.

“[Christ’s mission] was about redeeming and restoring every square inch of God’s earth,” said Doug. And, just like his disciples, Christ too was an unschooled and ordinary man—a carpenter long before he was a rabbi. I’m ordinary as well, I thought to myself. Yet, Christ has also given me something revolutionary. He gave me the power of himself. And he offers the same for anyone who’s willing to ask. ■



6139 Tahoe Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
www.partnersworldwide.org

NON-PROFIT
U.S POSTAGE
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
PERMIT No. 552

2010 Partners Worldwide International Business Conference

