

# THE PASTORS THAT YOUR NATION NEEDS

Carlos Mraida

Leonardo de Pisa, known by the nickname of Fibonacci, wrote a book on mathematics in the year 1202, which promoted in Europe the use of the decimal system and Arabic numerals. Until that time all mathematical operations were done with Roman numerals. Thus he changed the way we all count.

I think we need to change the way we count. I have been a pastor for 26 years in the city of Buenos Aires, and 90 % of the congregations in the city have grown, some of them quite significantly. But the overall condition of my city is significantly worse than it was 26 years ago. Morally, spiritually, economically, socially. Which means: there has been church growth, but the kingdom of God has not been established.

God's reign is much more than the numerical growth of the church. We feel happy when the number of members increases in our congregations, but we need to change the way we count. And we need to understand that what Jesus came to establish is God's reign. For at times, when we watch Christian television —and we thank God that we have that media today— we see that some of the most successful ministries belong to some of the poorest countries, which are also the most corrupt, with the greatest amount of crime. We need to establish God's kingdom through the personal conversion of individuals, but also through the transformation of all the spheres of the life of our nations.

If we want to see a revival that includes the transformation of our cities and nations, we must change the way we count. We all want our congregations to grow, but the fact is that it should be as a consequence of the establishment and growth of God's reign. Also applicable here is the norm that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then the growth of the church will come as a result. That is God's order... and not the reverse.

God does not need to be convinced of the need for revival, as some people seem to suppose. God is not going to change because of our fasting and prayers. God does not change. So let's not expect him to change, nor try to twist his arm. God is already convinced of the need for revival, because revival is nothing else than people coming to know him as Lord, along with the change in their sinful social structures. Both things are God's eternal will. We need to pray and fast to change ourselves. Because revival with transformation, which is always God's will, does not come because we make it happen.



CARLOS MRAIDA  
Married to

Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA [cmraida@gmail.com](mailto:cmraida@gmail.com)

Several weeks ago, in the National Pastors Retreat in Argentina, I was asked to present the subject: The pastors that Argentina needs. The first question that occurred to me that I should propose for reflection and support is: Does Argentina need its pastors? Today I ask you the same question: Does your nation, your city, need its pastors to transform its situation?

If we were to ask the people this question, what answer would we get from the majority? What image do we have among the people who are not Evangelicals? If we asked those who govern, how would they respond? Besides seeking our votes, or to pray in a public gathering, do they seek our counsel concerning the central problems of life in our cities? In the universities, do they invite us to model the thinking of the younger generations?

When people dream of a better nation, do they think of us as those who could at least offer part of the solution in the processes of transformation that our nations need? Does today's culture legitimize us as principal actors in the process of transformation, or only as those who are to be tolerated in the religious sphere and within our temples?

And we, as pastors, what do we think? Does your nation need you; does it need me? Our answer is yes... how could I not be needed if I am a servant of God? But when I look at our ministries, the impression I have is that we show no evidence of believing that the nation needs us for an integral process of transformation.

It seems to me that we have identified with the message of Shemaiah, who told Nehemiah to run into the temple and close the doors behind him. Nehemiah believed that Jerusalem needed him, and he responded: "Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life?"

I say this because when I consider our average ministries, they seem to be more on the model of Shemaiah, than on the model of Nehemiah, when I look at the evidence that we give about believing that the nation and the city need us for their integral transformation. I am thinking: What else is needed besides the vision and inspiration such as that we are receiving in this retreat, in order to lead a process of transformation?

## **PLAN, TEAMWORK AND EXAMPLES**

Just imagine that an individual or a group from the social field comes to me, or from the political field, or economic field, and says to me: we have decided to lead a process of transformation of our city, and we want you to work with us.

I would ask them, essentially, three things: first of all: Do you have a plan?

Do the pastors in your city have a concrete plan for transforming the various spheres of the reality of your city? For if we believe that our nation or our city needs the pastors, we must have a plan. If we do not have one, the evidence that we are giving is that we are not needed.

The second thing, besides a plan, is the awareness that a process of transformation of a city or a nation requires teamwork. I would respond to that person: Do you know how to work in a team?

We are weary with Messianic personalities who see themselves as unique saviors. Do the pastors in your city know how to work as a team? If we are not willing to work as a team, we are showing that we do not believe that the nation needs us for a process of transformation of all the different spheres of society.

The third thing that I would ask of them is the need to be examples.

Do we have that quality? That is, can we show on a small scale what we want to do on a large scale. Can we present the church of our city as a valid alternative for the country? Can we take to the microphones of the national chain of radio and television and say to all: We want the nation to be like the church in our city? We want the nation to see in our love and unity a model to terminate the divisions, the sectorial interests, the social conflicts and violent confrontations. We want the nation to see in the Christian families the model that we present for the families, we want them to see the economy of the believers as the model for our nation.

That is the least we could ask of anyone. That is the least that we could offer. Do we believe that our city and our nation need us? Or do we close ourselves within our temples, worried about our congregations and growth of the church, fleeing from the processes of change that our society needs?

For that reason, to the question Does your nation need its pastors? my response is an emphatic Yes. The nation needs its pastors; it needs you and it needs me.

## WHO ARE WE?

Your city needs you, my city needs me. But beyond believing that and giving evidence of it, if we want the people, those who govern, the media, to give evidence that they need us, we must understand who we are. Thus there is a second pertinent question regarding the integral transformation of our nation and our city: Who are we?

We are the spiritual authority of a city. We must assume that position, that role, of being the spiritual authority of a city. In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, Israel was going through a terrible crisis. And God tells them in chapter 3 that the crisis in the nation is the result of a dual problem of authority. First, they have forgotten me (says God) as their final authority. They have closed me in and circumscribed my activity to the religious sphere, shutting me into the ark of the covenant, and in whoever possesses it. But in everyday life in your cities, you do whatever you please.

The second problem of authority is the leadership over your nation. Starting with spiritual leadership. So God uses the prophet to tell them that they have a dual problem of authority, and if they really want a national transformation, they must return “to me”, and make a triple change of paradigms.

## PARADIGM CHANGES

Allow me to simply mention the first two paradigm changes, because I want to focus especially on the third, in accordance with the subject that has been assigned me. The three paradigm changes are intimately related and are part of the process of restoration of spiritual authority of God’s people over a city.

First, he tells them, change the paradigm of the ark, and use instead the paradigm of unity in the city.

*<sup>16</sup>“In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the LORD, “men will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. <sup>17</sup>At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD... <sup>18</sup>In those days the house of Judah will join the house of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your forefathers as an inheritance.*

The **first paradigm change**: the manifestation of God’s presence and the visible expression of his authority is not enclosed in a chest, nor in the person who has it. From now on the manifestation of my authority and presence changes to the sphere of the city and is evidenced in the unity of my people.

He says this paradigm change has to be made when the people are multiplied. The generation of pioneers of our work was not able to be a factor for national transformation. They had to lay the foundation of the work, and God used each denomination to initiate the work in each city, so as to fill the cities with the testimony. And the believers of that generation had to work within the temples because they were persecuted, discriminated. But now we have grown as God’s people; a new generation faces a paradigm change from the temple/religious enclosure where each was on his own, to the active mission to the city in unity.

The **second paradigm change**: the establishment of a national leadership that emerges in each city: *I will choose you —one from a town and two from a clan— and bring you to Zion (3:14).*

This is not my subject today, but the unity of God’s people in each city depends on the recognition in each city of leaders who unite with those of other cities and provinces to establish a spiritual government over the

nation. If you are uncomfortable with the name “apostolic ministry”, use a name that doesn’t make as much noise, but your nation needs a spiritual government at the national level established by leaders that emerge from each city, from each province (or state) and seek God for a strategy, a plan for the nation’s transformation. These leaders do not promote themselves, for they are the result of the unity experienced in their city, and they are chosen by their own peers.

This is not my subject... it’s not my subject... it’s not my subject. I am not here to talk about this. But just as there are false pastors, even though we all continue to call them pastors, because Ephesians 4 says so, there are also false apostles: those that want to manage the pastors instead of serving them, those that have an inferiority complex and appoint themselves, those that seek prestige instead of being servants, those that want to be at the top of the pyramid, whereas the Bible says that the apostles are at the foundation. Let’s not let the caricatures of apostolic ministry cause us to lose this ministry which is also in Ephesians 4, and is constituted by God for the perfecting, the realization of what God wants to do through his people in this nation.

But that is not my subject! We are marching toward these two paradigm changes: the unity in each city of his church to manifest the authority and presence of God in each city through a united mission, and the raising up of a national spiritual leadership in each city.

## NEW SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

The **third paradigm change** that God indicates for the nation’s transformation is a new spiritual leadership: I will give you different shepherds. The verse on which I want to focus is: *Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding* (3:15).

The Lord tells us: The nation does need pastors. For the awakening with the transformation that I want to accomplish, your nation needs pastors “after my own heart” who will lead you “with knowledge and understanding.” The reference in the context is to new leadership in all spheres, principally spiritual. Yes, your nation needs the pastors. Your nation needs new leadership, and from us, who become the spiritual authority in our cities. Allow me to share with you some implications and characteristics of that authority.

### 1. The exercise of spiritual authority

Our authority comes from the Lord. But that authority is manifested and confirmed in the realization of our vocation. God says: Colombia, Chile, Italy, Ecuador, United States, Argentina, *I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you*. The authority that the Lord has delegated to us is to lead, to shepherd. We have authority to care for the sheep, to shepherd them.

Our authority is validated in practice, when we lead people to eat in green pastures. Our ministries must be schools for life. We must teach the people how to live, to be fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, administrators. People don’t know how to live.

But the sad part is that many believers who are members of our churches suffer the same lack, for we have not taught them how to live. There is little solid teaching, practical and biblical. That is the reason our people don’t look like a viable alternative to the unconverted. Unbelievers do not grab our members by the lapel and say to them: “Please, give me what you have; I want my home to be like yours; I want to prosper like you, I want to lead in society, like you.”

People are not able to clearly understand how the gospel changes a person’s life, how participation in a church enables them to grow and mature. This is one of the reasons why 50% of those who call themselves evangelicals do not attend any church. And in the larger cities of the continent, it is more than 50 %.

But we are the spiritual authority of the city, and we must teach them how to live. When we do so the people will recognize the spiritual authority and will request our guidance for all the spheres of life. And on the larger scale as well, we will guide our cities along paths of righteousness concerning what God says about economics, politics, science, art, sports. All this is in the Word of God.

God says: Your nation needs the pastors to shepherd the people. God says that your nation needs you if you shepherd the people. The authority he gave you over the city is validated when you shepherd the people.

## 2. The jurisdiction of spiritual authority

All authority has a specific jurisdiction. That jurisdiction determines the area where that authority is valid, as well as the limits and competence of that authority. Those limits are determined basically by two elements. The first is the proper sphere. In the sphere of justice, there are federal judges, provincial judges, justices of the peace, judges of the lower courts, etc. A judge in one city cannot exercise his authority in another, nor can a justice of the peace exercise authority in federal matters.

The second limit is the designation. A judge is designated by the maximum authority which is the president, with the Senate's accord. Thus I cannot designate my own authority, for that spiritual authority over the city is established by the highest authority which is God and it is revealed in his Word.

Thus God says: I will give you shepherds. It is God who establishes that spiritual authority. And in order to avoid our trying to manipulate God with our own reasoning, he already made clear the jurisdiction of our spiritual authority. I learned this from Satirio Dos Santos. He said to me: Carlos, it is very important for you to understand the principal of spiritual jurisdiction. Don't try to do anything over an area that God has not given you, and don't cross the limits that he established.

The shepherds that your nation needs are pastors who understand the jurisdiction of spiritual authority. First, our sphere of authority is our city. I can initiate a work in Bogota, in Quito, in New York. For God sends me from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. But that does not imply spiritual authority over those cities. God has given the spiritual government over the city to the church of that city.

And that leads us to the second jurisdictional limitation. God has not given that authority to a pastor, nor to a congregation, but to the entire church in a city, led by the elders or pastors of that church. That is the reason why the New Testament speaks of the church in a city. It is always singular, never plural. And therefore when reference is made to the expression of Christ's authority, the whole church is mentioned. In ancient Israel this was quite clear, when the elders were those who sat in the gates of the city to exercise authority over the city.

For that reason, when Paul sends Titus, he tells him to establish elders, presbyters is the Greek term, pastors, not in a congregation, for he said to him: *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you* (Titus 1.5). And he refers to the honor and payment that should be given those elders, he says: *The elders who govern well...*

The elders govern and they do it in a city. So we need to move from the present pastoral councils, that bring the pastors together for fellowship and to organize special activities, to the presbytery of the city, elders who in unity govern as the spiritual authority of a city.

And just as Jeremiah says, from each city leaders will be raised up that at the national level will exercise that spiritual authority, serving as pastors and spiritual oversight for the nation, making known God's plans and strategies. Your nation needs shepherds who in unity exercise spiritual government over your cities.

## 3. The knowledge of spiritual authority

Our text says: *I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge*. The Hebrew word for knowledge is *deyah*, and means just that. God says: I place you in the city with spiritual authority, to care for my sheep with knowledge. In order to care for the sheep with knowledge, I think we should do three things.

The first is to **raise up a new generation of young pastors**. God wants us to advance his reign in our cities. To advance is to raise, or to walk ahead. When you walk ahead, you leave empty spaces, that were occupied before you moved forward. And here is an obvious truth; you cannot move forward without leaving where you were. And when we are talking about God's kingdom, when we move forward, in order to avoid leaving empty spaces we must position others there.

I believe that we should raise up pastors, not for the church as we know it, but for what is to come. This implies that, in addition to an irreplaceable foundation of a strong call from God, as well as a spiritual and family life, ethics and the necessary gifts of the Spirit to shepherd others, these pastors will need to have some characteristics that God has been showing me.

Most of them will be younger men. I think it is time to raise up a new generation of pastors from 25 to 30 years of age, to begin the process of preparation alongside the present pastors, in order to lead in the management of the Lord's work. We need a torrent of renewal of ideas, of world views, of perception of the reality we are living and of the possibilities of mission, that will necessarily come from the hand of the younger generation.

The measure of maturity and experience we should continue to provide. But we need this generational renewal. They should also have, wherever possible, a university degree and a minimum of work experience that has been like an apprenticeship, as well as the desire to continue their training. The church ahead of us will require shepherds with better preparation, with the ability to think as they learned to do in the university, since a good proportion of the members will be university graduates.

Prophetically, I dream of and visualize pastors with Masters and Doctorates in Management, in Marketing, in Social Development, in Human Resources, in Counseling, in Public Policy, etc., to lead our work, so as to produce an *upgrade*, a raising of the level of wholesome professionalism in the ministry, that can shake us loose from the limitations of our pastoral generation, from the management deficit evident today in all the work, that can lead a process of transformation of our national reality, that so far our generation has only been able to dream of and declare prophetically. What I envision for the future is not shepherding congregations, but the city.

The work suffers from a great crisis in management. God is giving us a vision of transformation of our reality, but we are unprepared to manage that process. Those of us who are leading today have been unable to manage the reality of our times, for we were prepared in a vision and training to lead congregations. But we soon become aware that this is more than a simple ecclesiastical matter; for the mission field is the reality of our cities. And we were not trained for that. In addition, as if that difficulty were not enough, our world has now changed. So that if we were unable to manage the reality of our times, much less can we manage the reality that is ahead.

But we can spiritually lead that process. The necessary level of maturity and experience we should continue to give. We should continue to bear the spiritual leadership. There are positions related to the vision, to spiritual leadership, that require maturity and experience. But we need this generational renewal.

We are not talking about the retirement of the present pastors, to leave the conduction to others. It's more like the situation of Acts 6, where the apostles realize that there is murmuring, and that the growth is running the risk of bottoming out, for there is a serious management deficit. And if they want to see the work move ahead, they need to take a step forward, leaving the management of the tables in the hands of others more capable for that, and they should dedicate themselves to the spiritual leadership of the work. The result was: *So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (6:7).*

This is not a question of the current pastors moving aside, but of taking a step forward. The apostles concentrated on efficacy and left in the hands of others the efficiency. Efficacy is the ability to make the right decisions. Efficiency is the ability to carry out the task in the best way. The older shepherds should concentrate on efficacy, that is to say, on the vision, leaving in the hands of the newer shepherds, with professional training, the efficiency of the tasks to be done. That is management.

This is not raising up the youth, while we continue to do the same as always. Rather the younger element should bring in renewal and professionalism of management. It is time to shepherd the city, taking a step forward so that the level of management might be occupied by a younger generation professionally trained and who understand the world in which we are living, and have been trained with a mentality oriented toward objectives and goals, so that the work might move forward, improve, advance.

More than ever we should take seriously Paul's charge to Timothy and to the elders of his day: *Let no one despise your youth*. If we try to raise up pastors when they are 40 years of age, they will minister in a world they do not understand. I am not saying that pastors who are 40 or older cannot serve, nor that those who do not have a university degree cannot serve. To the contrary. We will continue to raise them up as we are now doing, all those whom God calls, no matter their age or the training they have had.

We face a serious management ceiling. We have tried to do well, but our reality is the church of yesteryear. Now we face another reality. The same thing is happening to us as was the case with the first apostles. The passage to which we referred starts by explaining the context of the crisis: *In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...* (6:1).

The work has grown, the demands are not simply to open a meeting place and have weekly meetings, an evangelistic campaign and preaching on Sundays. If we really want to see the church at the head of the life of each city, and lead a process of transformation, we need to raise up a new generation of young shepherds and train them to manage our new reality. It's a different way of thinking, a different way to focus on our reality. It is what we call world view, people of this world (*cosmos*), not of the past. People to lead processes of transformation of the city, with our backing and oversight. I plan to raise up in the next three years, five new pastors with these characteristics, not just for our congregation, but for the city. And I am not planning to retire, nor cease to be a pastor. They will need me, but the city needs them. I encourage you to do the same.

The second thing we need to shepherd, to lead the city with knowledge, is to **have a plan**. We cannot afford to have no plans at the national level and at the city level for the growth of the work. There are no five year plans, and certainly no long-range plans. What kind of work do we expect to have in the year 2016? How many churches will we have? How many missionaries around the world? How many legislators? How many well-known artists? We suffer from spasms of transformation, of conquest, in every crisis. And then, nothing but foam; everything gets diluted.

We believe that God will do something wonderful among us. We believe that an awakening is coming that will transform the whole social structure. But that work requires preparation. In his Word God tells us that the manifestation of his glory requires our preparation. Before Isaiah 40:5 says that God will manifest his glory, we are told: *Prepare the way for the LORD* (40:3).

The third thing we need to lead the city with knowledge is to **establish strategic alliances**. When we assume authority over the city, the frontiers change between what is inside and what is outside. And we begin to understand the mission not simply as a category of the church, but of the kingdom. And when we assume that role of leading a process of transformation, then we take advantage of the resources that are beyond the church. I refer to persons and organizations that, although not evangelical, with their work they are helping in the processes of transformation with values that are those of God's kingdom.

Certain aspects of that transformation are the exclusive mission of the church, such as the conversion of the unsaved through the preaching of the gospel and discipleship. In this matter there is nothing to share with those who do not believe as we do. But there are other areas in which other organizations already have the knowledge and the experience and are fulfilling an important role in society, in the transformation of their spheres, and installing, even without realizing it, realities that belong to God's reign. We should take advantage of those resources, associate with them, support them, promote them, and we should also develop strategic alliances. Not with just anyone, but rather with those who over the years have demonstrated integrity, a disposition to serve others, the ability to transform, and have a good reputation among the people. The kingdom of God is broader than the church. And there are people and organizations such as Cyrus who, although he did not know the Lord, was anointed by God. Such persons are establishing aspects of the kingdom that the church has not established.

We should not be afraid nor should we use the worn-out argument to be careful because the people might become confused. People are already confused through listening to the message of a church that talks about transformation but doesn't transform anything. Yet we need not worry when dealing with prestigious organizations. On the contrary, people will associate us with their good actions. Of course we need to be careful, with all the pertinent precautions, for our nations need pastors who care for the sheep with knowledge and understanding.

#### 4. Understanding spiritual authority

Our text says: *I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.* The Hebrew word for understanding is *sakal*, and it means intelligence, such as being wise and expert. We are told: I place you in your city with spiritual authority, in order to lead with wisdom and expertise. That wisdom begins by **knowing ourselves**. What has God given you that is unique, which he did not give to any other pastor in your city?

When we begin to understand the mystery of the church, the concepts of the church and the presbytery of the city, then we no longer need to be doing all the same thing; we can release our ministerial DNA that is unique and singular. We are no longer subject to the limitation of imitating others. We don't need to seek the formula that is established and stereotyped for ministerial success by imitating one or another, for we can be legitimate, not imitated copies, legitimate persons, for this releases the wonderful and unique values that God placed in each one.

Ministerial success is not comparing yourself with me so that you are able to do better than I and become the most important pastor in the city, nor in copying stereotypes of successful pastors. We don't all need to do TV programs, or the same activities as others. Your ministerial success is to do that for which you were made. So that the day that you die you leave your unique and different digital fingerprint on the reality of God's kingdom. What is the unique and significant participation that you will leave as a mark on the reality of God's reign in your city?

Paul speaks of that mystery hidden for centuries that is the church, and he tells us that the church reveals the manifold wisdom of God. God wants to care for your city with his wisdom that is expressed in manifold ways through the unique church and through its leadership represented by the different pastors of the city.

The city of Buenos Aires does not need 300 men like pastor Carníval; one is more than enough. It does not need 300 like pastor Saracco. Each one of us were made in a unique way, for a singular and unique purpose. And what my city needs is that each one of us release the multiple grace that God placed in the leadership of his church, so that we do what each is supposed to do with the manifold grace that God placed in all the church. That we care for the sheep, not just those who on Sunday sit in the congregation, but the whole city; that is where we need to manifest God's riches. And for that purpose we need to be wise in at least two matters: I need to **know myself** in order to release my unique potential, and I need to **know others** in order to recognize the unique potential that God has placed in them.

Know ourselves and recognize others. In our pastoral councils, besides sharing the platform in the next campaign, do we know the manifold grace that God has given to the leadership of the church in the city? That is to say, do we recognize each other? Your nation needs wise pastors who know themselves and recognize others.

#### 5. The heart of spiritual authority

God says to the nation: *I will give you shepherds after my own heart.* The heart of spiritual authority is that we be shepherds after God's heart. And the key to being shepherds after God's own heart is in your heart. What God most needs is people that know their heart, whose heart beats like God's heart, people of his presence.

How is your heart? Perhaps your heart feels pain and discouragement, because things have not turned out well for you. “I don’t even know how to manage my own congregation, and you are talking to me about caring for a city.”

Jesus gave to a disillusioned Peter the order to care for his sheep. Peter experienced a call to the ministry on two occasions. Both were preceded by a miraculous catch of fish. The first is found in Luke 5, and the second is in John 21. In the first he is called to follow Jesus by becoming a “fisher of men”. In the second he is called to care for sheep.

In the second miraculous catch of fish, Peter is disillusioned, because Jesus’ project to establish his kingdom had apparently failed. And he is personally embittered because he denied him three times. At the time Peter is with six other disciples. In his frustration he says to them: I’m going fishing. The others respond: we’ll go with you. But they catch nothing. Jesus appears and tells them to cast their net. And the result was another miraculous catch of fish.

But there is a difference; in the first miraculous catch of fish we are told that the quantity of fish broke the net, but with the second, we are told they caught 153 fish and, in spite of that quantity, the net didn’t break.

How many of you are tired of seeing your nets broken? Just when you feel that this time you are going to gather in what God promised you, just at the point when you are about to see that promise fulfilled, your net breaks.

Jesus called you to be a fisher of men and the net has already broken many times. But I am here to tell you that your net will not break this time. This is not a dream that cannot be fulfilled. This is not an illusion, this time the vision will be fulfilled. Your net will not break.

Your nets have broken so many times that you are afraid to believe that God will do something different this time. But the devil is a liar; I assure you that your net will not break this time. I am speaking to you about the real vision, a dream that will be realized. The blessing will not disappear at the last moment. God is not playing with you. God swore that he would bless you and that is correct. Your net will not break.

## **CALLED TO BE A SHEPHERD**

Because this time Jesus is not calling you to fish, but to shepherd. He repeats the question and the commission to shepherd three times, since Peter is disillusioned for having denied him three times. The first question that Jesus asks Peter before assigning him three times the commission to care for the sheep, is: “Peter, do you love me more than these?” It is a question with an intention. He wants to determine something in Peter’s heart. It is a question for Peter’s heart; that’s why he speaks of love. But it is a question with a specific intention, so he uses a comparison: “more than these”.

Before his triple denial, Peter had assured him that even if the rest abandoned him, he would never do that. He compared himself with others and felt that he was the only faithful one, the best. But now he is quite aware of his failure. And Jesus tries his heart: Peter, do you love me more than these? Now Peter does not compare himself with others; rather he says: Lord, you know that I love you.

This time your net will not break. It’s not a question of how many members you have in the congregation. It doesn’t matter whether your ministry has grown or not. God makes no promises about that. You were hoping for something that God does not promise. God doesn’t ask how many fish you have caught, in the loneliness of ministry, trying to be more than others.

God is speaking to you about shepherding your city along with the rest. Concerning this there are promises of God that the nations will walk in your light. If you are affirmed in that which he promised, you can be sure that your net will not break this time.

But what happens if I accept the vision of shepherding my city in unity, what about the other pastors? Peter says this to Jesus: What about this one? What about John? And Jesus answers him: What does that matter to

you? You have your own pathway, you will extend your hands and another will gird you, and take you where you do not want to go. What I want is for you to shepherd the sheep. Therefore, let me today remove from your heart all bitterness, discouragement. What is ahead for you and your ministry is wonderful. You are going to leave your digital fingerprint on the reality of God's kingdom in your city. You will not be just one more in the bunch. God says to your nation that he has shepherds after his own heart, and you are one of them.

Peter went fishing because he was frustrated. He returned to what he knew, where he felt sure of himself, to that which he believed he could control: fishing. But he didn't catch anything. Returning to the boat was his way of sticking with what he could control. But Jesus tells him: this is your last day on the boat. From now on I call you to shepherd.

Don't be afraid, fellow servant, today is your last day on the boat. Don't try to stick with it, don't try to control it, get out of your comfort zone, and be part of what God wants to do. This time your net will not break. For your nation needs pastors after God's own heart. And you are one of them.