

AFI – Rome 2015 CONFERENCE FOR PASTORS

EUROPE ALIVE! ***AFI ALIVE!***

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We have called this consultation ***Europe Alive!*** because we wish we could see an awakening in the work in the continent and a renewal of the pastors.

I believe we also need to think of ***AFI Alive!*** It means, we need an awakening and a renewal of us who participate in this apostolic koinonia.

Let me take a biblical passage that will serve for inspiration and then, set some questions for discussion and planning.

2 Kings 6:1-7 New International Version (NIV)

An Axe head Floats

The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet."

And he said, "Go." Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?" "I will," Elisha replied. And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water. "Oh no, my lord!" he cried out. "It was borrowed!" The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.

I. The axe has a purpose:

The axe was a tool to widen the place and to improve the life of the prophets' sons.

AFI is a tool of the Kingdom to extend the work and to support pastors. More than an organization, it is a vision which can become a movement.

Like every tool, it is a means to meet ends. Like every vision, it is a glimpse of something God wants to do in his Kingdom.

The sons of the prophets were clear about what they wanted and what they would use the axe for. As they were clear about their objectives, they could determine what to do: ***Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet.***

I believe it proves to be essential to refresh and/or revise the objectives of the vision of AFI. What are we for? Which are the goals we pursue?

Only then, according to those objectives, we should ask ourselves: what should we do to fulfill them?

II. The axe can be lost:

The axe was lost. The tools in the Kingdom can "lose". That happens when the objectives of that vision are not fulfilled to the expected extent, when the vision is not progressing as we dream.

Because of that, we should not despair or be discouraged. We should recognize our reality. As it is the first step to rediscover the purpose. Elisha did not deny the reality, not despair or become discouraged. Instead, he asked a question: Where did it fall?

I think before projecting the future, we must have a correct diagnosis of our present and ask ourselves if we are fulfilling the purpose for which AFI was formed. Does AFI extend the work and help pastors today?

If the answers to these questions revealed that we have lost the axe, the questions that follow are: where did it fall from us? What are the causes why we are not meeting the objectives?

III. The axe can be recovered:

If the evaluation is not as positive as we would like, do not lose heart. Elisha was not discouraged. Instead, he was determined to do something.

We need the determination of Elisha. He did not hesitate. He sought the means, the way to recover the axe. He gave specific directives and the axe was recovered.

I think this space for reflection and projection urgently needs to take action so the axe doesn't sink definitely. Without giving up reflection, urgently moving into action.

Steve Jobs had an axiom: "When you fall behind leap forward." It is time for action. What would be the actions we should take to get the axe back?

IV. *The axe is borrowed:*

The son of the prophet or junior prophet cried: "***Oh no, my lord! It was borrowed!***"

If AFI is an initiative of God, it is because there is a need. And if it is so, either we fill it with AFI or God will choose another tool.

Our vision and apostolic anointing are "borrowed". We are administrators of what God has placed in our hands, managers of a vision. And if we as administrators of his vision are not good managers of it, God will choose others.

Recovering the lost implies a renewed commitment from us, who are already part, and also from the ones that join us. This commitment requires willingness and availability. Not only willingness. We have all showed willingness; this is why we are here. But availability is the separation of time for the vision, of effort, of resources.

Here the answers to the questions are personal. Am I willing and available for the task of recovering the axe?

V. *The axe is one but the tasks are several:*

There are several plurals and a singular in the story. We are not told how many prophets were part of the prophetic school but they were evidently several, not only for the use of the plural (the sons of the prophets) but because the space in which they lived was small.

The second plural is connected to the beams to cut. Each had to cut one to expand the place. But when speaking of the tool to be used by junior prophets to cut the beams, the reference is in the singular: the axe.

AFI is the tool- singular vision, and we have all been involved in the same. But I understand that it is time to move to the plural, to structure AFI in areas and tasks, and to integrate ourselves in each of these areas and take each task. To fulfill the vision, we must move from reflection to action, and taking action means each of us has to cut a beam.

I think the tasks are determined by the characteristics of the apostolic ministry. I suggest three broad areas: 1) prophetic-theological area, 2) pastoral area, 3) area of missiological extension.

The prophetic-theological area has to do with continuing reflection, with imparting a prophetic vision of the work God wants to do and what needs to be corrected. In the case of Elisha and the junior prophets there is a theological prophetic work of knowing the what, the what for, the whom for, the who and the how. This we have been doing, but has not been properly and expansively communicated to others. I think that besides the reflection there is a task that should be done by this area which is the publication (by whatever means) of the already reflected on, which I think is very rich, and see how that reaches most pastors.

The pastoral area has to do not only with the treatment for pastors of the theme reflected by the apostles, but also, as I see it, of at least three things more. First, ministering to pastors who are extremely needy. Second, unity of the pastors in a city. Third, the rising among the pastors of new apostles to continue the task of AFI in each city.

The missiological area has to do with the mission itself. And the apostolic task here would be at least to detect how we could extend the work, how we could extend the Kingdom. Not to do what each ministry in each country is doing, but to enhance it. To provide tools for the opening of new works, for lifting new pastors and missionaries. The lifting of men and women who serve God to be of influence and extension of the Kingdom in every area of society.

And here there are two questions: What area do I feel better to serve in? What specific goal/s should we set for each area within a year?

VI. *The axe must be taken by the Juniors:*

Both before its fall and after its recovery the axe was taken by candidates to prophets.

I believe we need to turn AFI also into an apostolic school. The work needs to raise apostolic ministries to pastor pastors, which boost the mission and extend the work in each city. If we do so we will fulfill our current task and we will leave our legacy.

We neither have nor recognize pastors in a city, but we can unleash that vision, train and provide tools for those who pastors are recognizing in every city.

How can we practically contribute to this?

Conclusion:

The story does not indicate it, but the implication seems natural: the place was extended to bless the sons of the prophets.

I believe that if we recover the axe, the vision, and we use it taking action we can make an important contribution to extend the work and bless the pastors.

The vision could stagnate but we are still on time. Let's declare prophetically together: AFI, Alive
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