

Ministers' Associations

A key for breaking the strongholds over a city or town undoubtedly comes through the Minister's Association. Ministers' Associations however, are there for a number of reasons. These would include - *fellowship and mutual encouragement*; to advertise *special events* coming up and *prayer*.

Unfortunately, it is also true that in a number of centres, Ministers' Associations have ceased to exist, or at least are very ineffective. Sometimes this is due to a low priority on pastors lists of 'things to do', or critical and competitive attitudes.

Jesus, in His prayer in John 17, emphasises the need for oneness within his Body, the church. The word used for 'one', is a word emphasising the importance of unity. It is that of 'being united in purpose'. The church today can experience divisions over minor differences, while in the wider spectrum of essential beliefs, we have so much in common that we do agree upon. Let us emphasise the latter outlook, rather than the former.

Pastors in a church are like 'Watchmen', mentioned in the Old Testament. They are there to alert the people for battle. I have observed that God's people experience protection when pastors from different traditions come together in unity. I have particularly observed spiritual strongholds broken in some South American cities as pastors lead the people in a united front and where spiritual renewal that results causes many people to come to know the Lord. The power of God is released. There I found men and women from different traditions coming together for

meaningful worship and fervent prayer. The unity was such, that Psalm 133 was fulfilled, for where 'brothers (and sisters) dwell in unity ... there the blessing of the Lord will be' (free translation).

On returning home, I had an inner drive to foster closer fellowship with my colleagues and to support them in any way possible, so that in unity of purpose, we may see an outpouring of God's Spirit where we live. The pastors are to lead the people, but how can they do it, if there are divisions among them? When we as pastors meet, we must not impose our own rigid traditions of worship and styles of prayer upon other pastors. Rather, we must gently explore styles, which embrace all who meet. Let us help to fulfil the Lord's prayer, in becoming 'one' in Spirit.

Different Associations are at differing levels of trust and interaction. Some Associations just prefer to meet for lunch once a month. If that is the case, then why not have one pastor 'tell his/her story'. Have a different pastor for each month. Understanding where each person comes from, helps to build up trust.

Notes

