

# **Bengt's Best Bible Bits**

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The Bible is a wonderful tool when working with OD. All the stories, parables and examples of people dealing with challenges are just wonderful when you have to face challenging issues in an organization. I am working a lot with Churches and denomination all around the world with OD processes. When meeting leaders from these denominations it's almost a must to have a "Biblical" approach when addressing issues that needs to be dealt with in a OD process. Let me try to give some examples of scripture passages that I find very useful.

## **The wineskins**

The story of the new and old wineskins Jesus is talking about is very useful when creating an understanding for the need to continuously working with OD in a church context. The wineskins were made out of goat skin. When pouring new wine (not fermented yet) into the new skins it was important not to fill them completely. When the wine starts to ferment it tends to expand. As the wine expands so does the skins. When pouring out the wine from the skins, the skins remains in the expanded condition since it does not have the capacity to shrink again to its original size. If one should use that "old" wineskin again and pour new wine into it again, then when the wine start to ferment the skin has already reached it limits of expansion. The skin will burst and the wine as well as the skin will be useless.

Taking this story into a organization or church it is useful when trying to create an understanding of being prepared for the new things that the Lord wants to do with his people.

I sometimes ask the people who I facilitate if the are praying for the children in society and that the Lord should bring them to church and full understanding of who the Lord is. Most of the people raise their hands that the do pray. Then I start to develop a story of a pastor who is preparing himself the go to the church on Sunday morning. He feels anointed and he sure has a message for the congregation. When coming to church he finds that the church is just full of children who are everywhere (even sitting on that special chair on the platform which is allocated for the pastor). The situation is chaotic and there is no order. The pastor tries to put things in order but he fails, there are just too many children.

What was the problem? Well he and the church had been praying that the children should come to church, didn't they? Well, now the Lord had answered their prayers. Sometimes we should thank the Lord for NOT answering our prayers since we are not prepared to receive the answers and it consequences. The skins are not prepared. Maybe we don't have the structures that can coop with the new challenges. That does not mean that the old things are useless. They can be used for many other thing and still be a blessing. The problem comes when we try to contain new thing with old structures that are not sufficient to meet the new challenges.

I will not use this story to argue for starting new churches or new organizations and to throw away the old thing. I am using it to talk about the importance of being prepared and to do whatever that is within our own abilities and then leave to the Lord to do his part.

## **Nehemiah**

Another wonderful story is the story of Nehemiah. That story can be used in many different ways to highlight a lot of organizational issues. Let me share some of them.

The first chapter is very useful when talking with leaders in churches about the need of being sensitive to acknowledge the needs and to dare to be troubled in heart by the challenges.

The second chapter is about mobilizing the people and to create a sense of unity for a common vision. It also about having a strategy and to create a sense of ownership amongst the people.

The third chapter is a good example of how everybody was included in the mission. Leaders as well as lay people were working together for the common purpose.

In the book of Nehemiah you also have the story of Sanballat and Tobiah who were in opposition to Nehemiah and the work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah could not neglect that opposition and he had to come up with a new strategy in order to fulfill the mission. That was not part of the original plan but things happened that was out of the control of Nehemiah and he had to face that challenge. It's a good example of the need of being flexible but determined.

In the seventh chapter there is an interesting verse. In the second verse it says that Nehemiah gave a position to his brother Hanani. But it seems that Nehemiah was not very comfortable with that. Together with Hanani he also put Hananiah who "was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do". Why did he need to put Hananiah alongside with Hanani? Maybe he knew the weakness of his brother? Then why put him into that position anyway? Did Nehemiah feel any pressure from his family that he needed to provide them with positions and as a way to solve the problem he put someone else alongside of his brother? What happens with leaders when they are put under pressure in a culture where the family claim "privileges"?

By the end of the story there is a big party when they inaugurate the wall. They celebrated the work that they've done. It is always important to celebrate and acknowledge the people.

### **The prophet and the widow**

In 2 King 4 there is a story about Elisha and a widow with two sons. The widow has nothing left and she comes to the prophet and asks for help. He asks her a question "what do you have in your house?" The only thing she has is a tiny bottle of oil. That oil, the small thing that she had, becomes the solution of her problem. That interesting thing with the story is that Elisha did not make the miracle. As a facilitator in an OD process we cannot perform miracles. But, just by asking questions we can help people to actually see what they have. Of course the Lord did the miracle with the oil but it would not have happened if not the widow had started to pour out from the bottle.

As facilitators we can help organizations/churches to start to use what they already have and believe that the Lord will do his part of the job.

## **Feeding the Five Thousand**

This famous story is also applicable in the same way as the story of the prophet and the widow. It's about what is there already. In John the story tells about a boy who had the bread and the fish. With that as a start Jesus was able to feed the multitude. But before feeding the people the disciples had to prepare the ground first. They had to get the people seated in groups and to prepare for what was about to come. The disciples found the bread and fish. They brought it to Jesus. They got the people into groups. Jesus blessed the food but the disciples distributed it. That also had to gather all the remaining food. 12 baskets of leftovers, 12 disciples, I believe they got one basket each after a good job done.