

Greig Whittaker KW Interview with Rick Prosser on Kingdomworks Radion, Rhema Newcastle 99.7 – 9 February 2024

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Rick - Hey Rick Prosser here from Kingdomworks, hey it's really good to be with you again I hope you've been enjoying the program schedule website www.kingdomworks.org.au that's where you can find us, we've got an Enews that goes out and feel free to subscribe to that. I'll tell you what you're gonna love my special guest today Greig Whittaker. It's a great having you on the program today mate.

Greig - yeah thanks, thanks for having me.

Rick - Fantastic from just down the road out of suburb Sydney, Ryde specifically but these days life is taking you around the world.

Greig - Round Australia particularly

Rick - Round Australia particularly so you wear a number of hats. 'City to City Australia', which and some people may be familiar with 'Movement Australia'. There's a great collaboration happening there with those 2 organizations, they are really about the same thing 'Gospel movements in cities'. But really over the last 5, 6, 7 years you've really started to pioneer something and then well matured something Ryde where the church is working and learning to be what it is to be the church to the city.

Greig - Yeah it's been a really exciting journey that you know kind of started with a pizza dinner that I wasn't even sure why I was there and God brought an awakening in me of what we could look like when his church is in unity but not just in unity but are focused on the city and not building the church per se. Yeah I was awakened to something and I've been on that journey now for 7 - 8 years.

Rick - It's interesting because you know, I mean you've done some great things with the Lord and the Salvation Army and pioneered over decades now. What was what was the epiphany, what was the challenge? What was the word, over I think you mentioned one night over pizza?

Greig - I think at that night I met Roger Sutton and Dave from Salford.

Rick - Okay, Dave King?

Greig – Yeah, I heard a story about a city transformed and God then something sparked in my Spirit there was an awakening to a way of being the church that I never thought of in my paradigm. I was a tribal man, I'm a Salvo tribal man, we got on and we did our salvo tribal stuff in the city, but I heard something that was having an impact that I never imagined was possible, but I believe Jesus wanted. Um and so then He journeyed me through a series of questions really that He took me through that brought me to an awakened revelation of what I think it was that He wanted to do in His cities, and that was to unify the church, not as the end but. As the vehicle to then enable that church to serve a city and see it transform spiritually socially and culturally, now I never had that vision as a Salvo.

Rick - Was there any particular prompt that you felt from the Lord, the challenge that pushed you down that track?

Greig - I mean, you know he stopped me at, the prayer of Jesus in John 17, and I thought how have I read past that my entire life, you know? God awakened me to, you know, I guess the cause and effect of the proposition of



Greig Whittaker with Rick Prosser.

This week Rick catches up with Greig Whittaker, Director of Network and Movement, City to City Australia. This interview will encourage and stir you to see and believe for more for our city!

“Disunity became a sin for me...My flavour is Salvo but I see myself operating everything through a lens of one city in the church no longer the tribal lens. I'm still learning how to do that.”

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John 17, "Father will you cause them to be one so that, I'll be known to all mankind and Your love will be known" and I'm like, isn't that exactly what I want and I'm like? Yes, that's exactly what I wanna see my entire City of Ryde awaken to who Jesus is, the love of God for them and it's like, well, when God causes unity that will be the effect of that unity! I couldn't get past that, I'm pretty logical and straightforward guy so you know just the fact that we're better together. I could not see how my 70 or 80 Salvos in Ryde could change a city but I could see how maybe 3,500 Jesus lovers could start to impact the city.

So logic was part of my journey and to be honest, repentance was part of my journey because I arrived at a place where I felt Him say, 'stop pointing the fingers at everybody else's sin and realized that disunity was sin and so disunity became a sin for me, I couldn't live there anymore.

Rick - Yes, just repeat that about disunity.

Greig - Disunity became a sin for me that I've never seen before. I don't wanna live in sin, I know I have sin in my life and some of it I know about and some sin I don't know about but particularly the sin I do know about I wanna deal with. So when it was brought to me as revelation that the way you're operating is sinful in my (God's) eyes well, I had to do something about that. I had common sense I had scripture revelation and then I had conviction of sin.

Rick - What did that lead to, I mean now the 'Together for Ryde'. A good core group of churches are moving journeying together, what's starting to look like and then we'll talk about some of the other things that you're seeing around the nation.

Greig - Yeah well, what, that looked like to begin with, was going to meet some parties in the city who I didn't know, so it just started with coffee. But it actually started with a priority. Jesus said to me prioritize this. So it wasn't here's another thing you can do in your already over busy life with no time anyway.

Rick - I mean, yeah, it's not as if you're lazy, you are juggling many balls, wearing many hats and highly productive work and probably working 70-80 hour weeks, I imagine something like that.

Greig - It was stop doing some things so I can start doing something that God put on my heart that's important. So, I had to reorganize my diary do that through the leadership team of our church and then go and start to have coffees. Now coffees don't seem like hard work but the thing that Jesus showed me was the greatest way I could love my city was having coffees with the other pastors. Those coffees grew to lunches and those lunches have been happening now for several years and now I have some of rich relationships great friends, I see myself as part of the city and part of the church of the City of Ryde. My flavour is Salvo but I see myself operating everything through a lens of one city in the church no longer the tribal lens. I'm still learning how to do that. One of the things that God said to me right at the beginning of the journey was, "you don't even love your city" and that was just so convicting. I mean, obviously I argued with him cause he's wrong, but you lose those arguments so quickly. He said to me you love anybody from the city who will come to your church, and you'll go and love the city so they'll come to your church but you don't love the city. Well, that was very confronting.

Rick - So you've virtually flipped from trying to get people from the city to the church, to getting the church to the city.

Greig - yeah yeah I've tried to and I still don't know how to do it, we're still learning how to do it. I've been, you know if somebody asked me where you on the journey, I kind of say well, we're driving from Sydney to Queensland, we haven't made the freeway yet. So you know we have not gone very far but have we left home. I could go to the shoulder and I can talk to you about some things we know but what's in front of us is so much more than what we've already done.

Rick - And you're doing it with a whole bunch of others.

Greig - yeah, and it's just beautiful. I mean in the early days I saw straight away that God was doing 3 things when pastors come together. There was a boldness that just doesn't exist when you're in your office on your own. Together we believe we can see spiritual social and cultural transformation in the city. I never believed that

before, there was a boldness that came upon us, we saw the provision of God. We've done some stuff that's just insane like the pastors just sit back and go, "where did that money come from?" "Where did that relationship come from?" "How did we do that?" And you can't say any other reason than God did that really? Well, I love living in that space.

Rick – Very energising.

Greig – I can't say that God did that where before you're just working in your own strength. You go, we worked hard today and we got some outcomes but now we're actually working in a place of joy with a provisionate smile of God upon us. I tell you what I'm more hopeful, I'm not sure I would be in ministry if I didn't find this revelation of unity cause quite frankly 70 hours a week, working hard and losing the game every day is pretty hard, you can't keep that up forever. I feel like when you have hope there's a possibility and I feel healed in that space. So boldness, provision, healing and hope is what it gives us, I didn't expect to find it at the unity table but I've found it at the unity table.

Rick – Hey if you've just joined us it's Rick Prosser here from Kingdomworks with my special guest today Greig Whittaker, who is based in Ryde and who wears a few hats, working with City to City Australia' in great collaboration with Movement Australia about gospel movements in towns and cities around Australia. You are getting around Australia and you're seeing this everywhere, say what you're seeing and the green shoots emerging and then others that have been there for a while but what you're seeing with fresh eyes.

Greig - It's absolutely stunning that God is doing something across our country and quite frankly across the world from what I can tell there's no super star Christians behind this there's no big author that wrote the bookers to how we should do this and we're all following him or her in that path.

Rick - Although you have just authored a book, but anyway we won't touch on that yet.

Greig - The beauty is that God's gone before, so we're just catching up to what he's doing and we're trying to now create a conduit of communication between movements across the country so we can learn, encourage, resource share story together. City to City Australia has given me the joy of being able to be on a wage. My job is to support movements across the country as they try navigate this new space, create resources for movements, create the conduit of connection and communication between movements, help new movements get birthed in cities where nothing's yet happening and quite frankly, Rick, I think Australia has about 200 of movements that God wants to birth and I think he's birthed about 60 out of them already without us doing that. And now what we're trying to do is support them to become, see there is a journey here where a table gets formed in the city where the spiritual leaders of the city form the unity of the City, but then the game is actually that's not the game right. That's the vehicle that 'has' to be formed first, and then it's about mobilization of the people of God into the City to bring His Shalom to bring His justice, to bring His love to be His hands to be His fate. God's already there, our job is to go there be with Him and point him out to everybody and the engagement of His presence in His beauty within the city releasing and mobilizing the church is the end game here,

Rick - Which is a big paradigm shift from how we as pastors are trained and raised in church life and even held accountable to for KPI's or whatever our job descriptions maybe. You've lent into a little bit of language, what does the 'city changing church' look like?

Greig - I think one of the keys as I've travelled is learn from pastors who have been in Unity. The thing that struck me is quite often they would share their past unity experiences through tears because it was the greatest season of ministry enjoying their lives and it struck me. I want to experience what they experience.

They've lost it, and part of my asking questions was to learn why did we lose it cause I don't think unity is a fad, I think it's what God wants, it's the way God wants us to be as His church forever. So we're not talking about a fad for the next 10 years we're actually talking about a paradigm shift in the way we lead and be the church in a city for our kids, for our grandkids and for those who haven't been born yet.

Rick - It's not about just unity but focusing on why, that it's for the city. The church is there for the city.

Greig - I think our churches, we've actually learned how to be local churches who gather together but there is a new paradigm shift here where we say how do we be local churches who together bring Shalom and justice to the city. That's what a city changing church does. Now how do we become city changing churches, I don't have all the answers to that yet? You know we're on a learning curve is to know what that looks like.

Rick – What are some of your ideas, what is some of the thoughts? I mean you are a great learner, you've travelled, you've dialogued and gleaned what is some of the distinctives that you might apply to what could be a city changing church?

Greig - I think a city changing church for starters, I think do we have to visit our vision I think we've made our vision so small that we can achieve them and I think that's very dangerous. I was talking to God the other day he was asking me about my hopes for next year for our church and right as I was rattling off all these incredible stats and things were gonna do and he just stopped me mid sentence and said, "I want the city". I realized oh my goodness His vision is so much bigger than ours, so the first thing we need to do is actually visit what are our church visions. Like do we actually have it are we bold enough to say our vision is 'the city' you know, so it starts with the new, vision? Are we bold enough to change our pastors job description to say where we want you to bring us into unity with the other churches in the city and we want you to spend time on that we want to value that and we're gonna assess' your performance based on that. Are we prepared to change what we understand ourselves to be as churches, to not be pew sitters who join together on Sunday, but to be city changing people where we where I can shake every hand in every church and they can tell me where they're placed in the city who they're walking alongside how they're seeing the city transformed with the Shalom and justice of God. That's city changing church stuff, you know when you come into a church and you start to look at what they talk about what they pray about what they vision about, you know there's not often the cities there.

Rick: There's a long way for us to travel so you have gone from a local pastor of 80 – 100 people meeting together to now you're thinking oh there's a there's thousands of us.

Greig - When you go from being a hundred or 200 or 500, I don't care what you are when you go from that to being a church for the city everything changes the possibilities change the potential changes and to be honest, I think the provision of God changes because now you're walking in God's desire for the city. You're' now walking in God's structured plan as to how to bring that about and so His provision, His provision and His smile is amazing on unity.

Rick - It's been great to have been with you. I'll catch up with you again soon because you're about to release a book. What's it about?

Greig - Essentially I've tried to bring the learnings together, so it's a practitioners guide to how do we navigate this space to church leaders? What have we learned? What are some of the principles, what are some of the languages, and what are some of the strategies that might be helpful for us to navigate the space?

Rick - It was great catching up with you. Go to the Kingdomworks website www.kingdomworks.org.au that's where you can find us. It's been a great joy being with you and I'm looking forward to being with you again' soon bye for now.