

## THE DAY OF THE TENT IS OVER???

I remember, in the beginning, in 1974 when the Lord permitted me to be a part of the street and tent ministry of 'Christ is the Answer', a statement that has always stuck with me was made by good intentioned believers. The statement was that it would be very unwise for me to pursue a valid future in ministry using tents as the days of tent ministry were over. Now television, large denominations and other modern methods were the only real valid works today. Some tried to influence me to be a part of something that had a big name or that was more centered on a personality or great speaker. In other words... to do something that was more stable.



### LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT TENT HISTORY:

The first historical account of God using a large tent was the Tabernacle of Moses. This was used over 3000 years ago. Not much has to be said as it is common knowledge of how God manifested Himself in this large tent. It shouldn't be ignored of how this structure was in God's plan for a long period of time. When the Temple was built in Jerusalem by Solomon did it mean... 'the day of the tent was over?'

After World War II a number of large tent ministries were very evident in America and other parts of the world. They were mightily used by God to save souls. In Sweden many works of evangelism were conducted throughout the country and large tents were a part of this great work. However, the phenomena passed as the fifties passed and the ministries became much fewer. Did this mean that tents were no longer useful in evangelism today? Was the day of the tent over?

### LOOKING BACK:

We can look back to the 1800's and see men like Charles Finney using tents with great effect in his revivals. In fact, tents were used in the great 'Bush

Harbor Revivals' in the central part of the United States. Multitudes of people were saved and the American society was changed by the Gospel forever.

The 1890's saw the beginning of massive mission expansion for the Gospel and tents were always a factor in what God was doing. By the early part of the 1900's a great awakening to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was moving across America and the world. The Azusa street revival sparked a great awakening to the Gospel and many went out using tents as tools for evangelism. D.L Moody was one of the most renown and probably used more than anyone else in the 1900's for evangelism. His great semi-permanent tent structures became famous as centers of the Gospel. Many of the big Pentecostal denominations of today can trace their roots to a movement of the Spirit that was at it's highest by 1918. From this, many tent ministries moved from place to place taking the gospel to rural areas and also to the big cities.

## **TENTS WERE USED AFTER WORLD WAR II**

After World War II men and women with a vision for the Gospel started using tents as never before. Tents that held over twelve thousand people were on the move. Men like Billy Graham, Billy Sunday, Oral Roberts, William Branham, A.A. Allen, T.L. Osborne and Jack Cole were just a few of the big time tent evangelists that changed the Evangelical Church of America and the world. And even today with all the fast movement of these times and modern diversions that consume people's time from public Gospel meetings, tents still have a place. They always will as it's not the tent that is the issue but the flesh and blood people that commit themselves through sacrifice and hard work to see people saved from their sins and changed by the Power of God. Tents are also used for the gathering of the Church so they can be challenged to greater works and edified in the Spirit. A tent is just an instrument and means that God uses. God will use any means, if brethren will commit themselves to using it, to the Glory of God.

When my family and I first came from America to Italy in 1975, we once again, were told that the time for tents is over. However, once again, the issue is not tents but people working together in love and sacrificing their lives for the preaching of the Gospel. This will never be over as long as we are on this old earth. AMEN!?! This is our heart and desire because we, as a team and Christian community, see the big tent as just an instrument to be used in the endeavor of sharing Jesus in a mobile way to touch the most people with the love of Jesus. If the Lord gives us the opportunity to continue to go forward, as we have in the past by using a big tent as a means to reach people, we will consider it to be a great blessing, although this not the

issue. The issue is the unconditional commitment to love the Body of Christ in every part of Italy. Whether this love is returned or not, this will not discourage us or change our feelings that we all, who are part of the Body of Christ, must love and accept one another. Coming together under a 'neutral' area like in a large tent and demonstrating love for one another and for our Beloved Savior, this is our desire for the use of the big tent. Also to make Jesus a public issue on the streets and preach His love to all through our words and lives. We do this so that the world can see we are His disciples by the love we have for one another and the love we have for you and the lost.

We have been through many trials and tribulations to take the big tent from city to city over these thirty plus years. And there may be many more trials in our future! Pain and sacrifice are always waiting for us in every location wherever we move to, like the pressures from authorities and from landowners. At times, being chased from one lot to another after already days or weeks of constant labor in the heat or in the cold. At times, the small amount of finances we have are taken by greedy people, wanting gain to give us permission, to just exist in an area for a few months.

Feeling unwanted in this world are not only words we sense, but as a team, at times it is a harsh reality. Of course, not to speak of the rain and mud that seems to never end, especially during the winter months! Oh, how many times I have cried out to the Lord to just stop the rain for a few days so that we can get the tent out of the mud and to the next city. And not to speak of the accidents that have almost taken my life or also of those in the team on different occasions, only have exasperated situations that are already intense. And all the time raising our children in the midst of these pressures from the outside and from within.

Many times, during our daily street meeting, we met a few folks who show very little or any interest in the Gospel. During the heat of the summer or the bitter cold of the winter always tries to dampen our spirits. Sometimes the dwelling voice of the devil tells us, "What is the use in all of this anyway?", can bring discouragement at the very moment when you need encouragement the most. Many times, we work day and night in the elements to put up the big tent and afterwards there are those in the area who just show apathy and could care less if we are there. Also many wishing we were not even there and that we didn't exist at all! Then, if this is not enough we are being threatened to be expelled and treated as criminals by the authorities because of a permission being unjustly taken from us for some little technicality.

How many times has my heart broke to see the tent where thousands could congregate to praise the Lord but few, if anyone, seem even interested in what we are doing for the Lord. How many times have we battled the forces on the outside and the forces on the inside of ourselves to just forward another day. Some may ask, "Why do all of you do it just for tent meetings? Why don't you all just give up and go home? Live a normal life!"



**These next sentences bring me great joy to write:**

I want to repeat, "The reason is not a tent but people." My greatest joy is when someone approaches me and says, "I got saved in the tent many years ago." Or they say, "Remember when you were in our city and you were young and had lots of hair... that is when I met Jesus!" Or the many families who have been blessed by the hearing of the Word and their lives have been changed in the tent or on the streets. It is such a blessing when a brother or sister approaches me and asks, "Do you remember me? I got saved twenty-five years ago in the children's meeting!" They are now adults with children of their own and the love of Jesus is just shining through them! It brings me great joy to remember the times that we have been shown so much love by the local believers in an area. Sometimes there would be only a handful who would attend the tent meeting but the love shown was that of a multitude. Oh, the joy of the Lord, when great numbers have embraced us in the love of God. The beauty of seeing unity and love as believers come together in a town, I feel, warms the heart of Jesus. And we have seen God use the tent time and time again. Sometimes, we see brethren from the same town, who have never met, that come together in the tent and love one another for the first time, this is emotionally moving to say the least. John 17:21 is manifested as we see the last prayer of Jesus right before our eyes fulfilled in a small way. I rejoice to think how many times this has taken place amongst the brethren under the big tent in many localities where we've been to.

**THE BIG TENT AND CAMP IS OUR CENTER OF COMMUNITY:**

The tent has also been a center for our community of team members. We have the opportunity to visit all the local fellowships and Churches in the towns and in the surrounding areas where we are holding our tent meetings.

What a blessing as we get to know the local believers and demonstrate the love Jesus wants us to have for one another. It brings a richness to our spirits that has no boundaries!

Another great blessing is when city officials get touched by the love of God and then speak on stage, expressing their thanks to us for bringing the gospel message to their city. Also to see the city Mayor accept a Bible and give us a word of encouragement of the good that is being done. In these moments, I feel all was worth it and no sacrifice is too great for what has been done. And we are ready to do it again and again as there is nothing more valuable to do in this life than to see Jesus in the lives of others... as we have seen in our travels throughout the years.

There are times when it can be very difficult but also there are many blessings in the big tent and on the streets. Living together and suffering hardships together for the Name of Jesus builds something inside you that there are not enough words to describe. Although, the times we go through, are not always difficult. There are seasons of blessings when we see the Lord work miracles: financially, physically and spiritually for us, so that we can go forward. I cannot remember how many times the Lord has touched the hearts of officials to let us stay in a location, when we were told we were to leave. Or when the rain has stopped and the sun shined just long enough for us to get the camp up. When the tent fills up with people praising the Name of our Beloved Lord Jesus and His presence fills the place! It is spiritually electrifying and you just do not want it to stop. The feeling, deep down in the soul, is wonderful and once again all the things we have endured seem like nothing compared to the great joy of the moment we are living. When it seems hopeless, financially, and in the flesh it looks like the end of our work is at hand, then and there God supplies in a miraculous way at the last minute to take us to another city and into and through another day! Again, I repeat, "This is a motivation that there are not words to describe!" Witnessing God's Hand and His intervening power, in a direct way, many times leaves us in total awe!

I always feel so humbled when someone says that the Lord told them to send or give a certain amount of money or bring a donation of food. And it is just what we need and is enough at the moment to go on. What a great privilege, I feel in my heart, that God spoke to someone for us. Who are we that we deserve such interest from God? In these moments, I know it is all worth it. If God stopped us tomorrow, and He could easily do it... as every day is truly a day of faith for us in the team, I would feel our life wasn't in vain and every day we have lived was worth our meager effort. I would

thank Him for every day that we have lived and served Him in these past years.

It is not a tent but a life with many other team members who want to be used, even in a small way for the gospel, with a big blue and white striped plastic tent that pushes us onward. I feel to say that the day of the tent will be over when there is no one who will use them.

Please... always keep us before the Lord in prayer that the day of the tent will continue.

Blessings!  
Brother Clark Slone

