

Occupy Wall Street: Will The Strategy Work?

☒ Whatever you think about the Occupy Wall Street Movement (OWS), it's instructive to take a look at the strategy. Today, anyone who needs to engage the larger culture to share an important message needs to think seriously about issues like perception, platforms, competition, timing, passion and more. That's why churches, ministries and nonprofit organizations could learn from what's working and not working with Occupy Wall Street.

At our company, Cooke Pictures, our first job is to help our clients get noticed in a crowded, cluttered marketplace of ideas. Then, it's to get that target audience to embrace or act on those ideas. From that perspective, here's a few strategy related thoughts about Occupy Wall Street:

Repent and Change

Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. **—Matthew 4:17**

It Will All Work Out

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

—Romans 8:28

Oxford Professor Mocks Evangelist's Spelling

In the ongoing battle of words between professor Richard Dawkins and evangelist Ray Comfort, the Oxford University professor has produced a video mocking the spelling ability of the best-selling author of more than 70 books. The war of words is nothing new between the two. Dawkins once called Comfort, creator of [The Way of Life](#), an “idiot” on CNN, for which CNN quickly apologized.

In this video, he mocks Comfort for his spelling of the word “thought” as “thort.” Comfort responded, “Whether the learned professor likes it or not, the English language is evolving and some of us old fossils need to evolve with it. Texting is changing the way we spell. I’m delighted that I was able to catch the wave of social media, a wave it seems Mr. Dawkins missed.”

In reference to the texting generation Comfort said, “Horrific though it may be to a cultured English-speaking professor, words like ‘thought,’ with its superfluous ‘ugh,’ give way to the expediency of words like ‘thort,’ and for the millions who

have to learn the complexities of the English language, it's about time."

Comfort added that this was just another example of Dawkins mocking something he doesn't understand: "But in his attempt at mockery, he has not only made himself look old-fashioned, but he has promoted *180* throughout the atheist world. The 'pope' of atheism waved my movie from his balcony. You can't buy such publicity. I'm grateful that he's helping others around the world to watch the video and hear the gospel."

Comfort's 33-minute award-winning movie went viral and received over 1 million views within 22 days of being placed on YouTube. When a family said that they would be seeing Richard Dawkins, they requested that Comfort write a personal note on the cover of a DVD version, and they would get it into his hands.

Greek Financial Crisis Causes Ministries to Dig Deep

In an interview with OM Greece's country leader, Kees den Toom, we learn about the current situation in Greece and Operation Mobilization's response to it. From the Netherlands, Kees has been based with OM in Larissa, Greece, since 2000. Although Kees and his wife, Rahel, from Switzerland, initially planned to work amongst Albanian immigrants, they soon realised the need to invest into the local Greek Evangelical Church. In 2006, Kees was appointed elder of his local church. Their three children (10, seven and four years old) attend the local Greek school.

Kees, can you please summarize the current situation in Greece

today?

Although the economic situation in Greece remains dire, political parties seek to gain power in the midst of the prevailing chaos. With every election, new people are appointed into government based on their political loyalties and less on their professional qualifications. Hardly anybody takes responsibility for their deeds, yet they are very easy to judge others by what he or she has or has not done.

The Euro helped develop some of the country's infrastructure, but much was lost in other pockets. Corruption has become a way of life for many, although not all benefit from the system equally. And those who have been proven guilty remain unpunished, while their bill is still being paid by those of the lowest income (the rich have their assets in off-shore companies and foreign accounts). Personal relationships are crucial if problems are to be solved.

As long as people benefitted from the system, it was never questioned. People are now either very upset for fear of losing all their "rights", inciting acts of violence. Others realise that measures need to be taken, but they remain hard to swallow as huge cuts are made to their incomes and pensions, and property taxes are introduced. The poor condition of social services and the corrupt juridical system only adds coal to the fire.

How is the local church responding to the current situation?

Ninety-eight percent of the population is Greek Orthodox, and the institutions of baptism, marriage and burial are still practiced as a means to attain salvation. In most cases, what is said and done in the church has hardly any relation to everyday life. Abortion rates are extremely high and one in four men visit brothels. Materialism has also become the god of many.

The evangelical community is very small, making up 0.2 percent

of the population. The church in general is very fragmented and divided and was inward focused for many years. Some churches are starting to respond to the needs of the community with a deep commitment to shine God's light in their neighbourhood and beyond. A revival is still needed in most denominations, not to mention a better understanding of what it means to live and work in unity.

We are excited to see more and more churches catching the vision to reach out to their neighbors, and more and more people understanding the need to change our way of "being church." As the church's income continues to shrink due to extreme economic pressure felt by many—especially those who have lost their jobs in the past months (and subsequently social benefits)—the needs of the church are growing.

What are the fears and hopes for the future?

Generally speaking, there is great unrest and fear for the future. Much heated discussion is placed on the current political and economic situation. Pessimism and even fatalism are emerging. Younger people are leaving the country in search of jobs. Again, the weakest are the most desperate as they struggle to find enough food to survive. Electricity bills and rent have not been paid for months. And this is only the beginning, many fear.

Also many immigrants think about leaving Greece, but it is very hard (especially for Albanians and others outside of the EU) if there is nothing to return to. There is not a lot of hope in the political system anymore, and as religion is often one of tradition, people don't look to the church for solutions either.

How has the ministry of OM Greece changed as a result of the current situation?

As our society is shaken, OM Greece seeks to respond by sharing the message of hope through Christ, while meeting the

basic needs of the most needy—the homeless, gypsies and immigrants. As the crisis is also a spiritual one, we are seeking to address this in our local church. Churches realize more and more that they need to reach out and yet often lack the necessary resources. People raise questions such as “Why do we exist as a church?,” “How should the church function?,” “What is our answer in this time of great turmoil?,” “How can we help our members that struggle to meet ends?”

With the breakdown of social services, we also see challenges and opportunities—the need for a place of refuge for battered women and their children, as well as feeding programs. We know that only Christ can bring restoration and healing to this country, and we need to share the message and biblical ethics to a society that neglected the church’s direction and authority a long time ago.

So yes, OM Greece has become more involved in aid projects, but we lack the capacity to respond to all the requests; for example, the needs of an Albanian gypsy group we work with have grown to an extent that even if we were to raise 1,000 Euro a month, their structural problems would remain unaddressed and ultimately nothing would change. Of course, we try to work as much as possible with the local church, but these are often small and challenged by the crisis themselves. With a small team of six adults, we need wisdom to know how to strengthen and challenge the church, while at the same time respond to the needs around us.

Please pray for the ministry of OM in Greece. Pray for wisdom as they minister in their local churches. Pray that the local churches will find ways to reach out to their neighbours in need and bring hope to the hopeless.

Ads Urge California Parents to Rescue Children From Sexual Indoctrination

A California family values organization is running Web ads urging parents to rescue their children from a raft of laws that mandate admiration and support for "LGBT" lifestyles at every public school, behind the backs of parents.

"The clock is ticking for dads and moms to rescue their children from unnatural and unhealthy homosexual-bisexual-cross-dressing role models coming January to every California public school," says Randy Thomasson, president of , which promotes moral virtues for the common good. "Since there's no parental opt-out or opt-in, no child is exempt from this confusion. The only way to exempt your child from SB 48 and other sexual indoctrination laws is to exempt them from the entire government system."

The web ads inform parents about SB 48 and seven other California state laws that require all public school instruction and activities to positively portray homosexual, bisexual and transsexual lifestyles to children as young as kindergarten. The ads link to , a special site operated by .

"The most in-your-face law that forces children as young as 5 years old to admire homosexuality, bisexuality, cross-dressing and 'sex changes' is SB 48, which goes in effect in January with its 'supplemental materials' mandate on every public school in the state," Thomasson explains.

SB 48, passed this year in the Democrat-controlled legislature and signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, mandates that children from kindergarten through 12th grade, in all "instruction in social sciences," admire "the role and contributions of ... lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans."

As of Jan. 1, California public school districts must implement the new requirements of SB 48 through supplemental "instructional materials" (i.e., handouts, homosexual biographies, classroom discussions, essays and other homework, outside speakers, videos, dramas, etc.); textbooks will come in a few years. As a result of SB 48, all public school districts in California are under the following orders:

1. Textbooks and instructional materials must positively promote "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans" as "role" models.

2. Children as young as kindergarten will be taught to admire persons who engage in homosexuality, same-sex "marriages," bisexuality and transsexuality (cross-dressing and "sex change" operations).

3. Because SB 48 requires "particular emphasis on portraying the role of these groups in contemporary society," children will be taught to support the political activism of so-called "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning" (LGBTIQ) political groups.

4. Teachers will be made to positively portray homosexuality, same-sex "marriages," bisexuality and transsexuality, because to be silent can bring the charge of "reflecting adversely" or "promoting a discriminatory bias."

5. School boards will be required to select textbooks and other instructional materials that positively portray LGBT lifestyles, because to be silent on these subjects opens them up to charges of "reflecting adversely" or "promoting a discriminatory bias."

6. Parents will not be notified, nor will they be able to exempt their children, from this new core curriculum.

As Thomasson sees it, because of the Democrats' social-engineering laws, children left in California government

schools are guaranteed sexual brainwashing, but proficiency in reading, writing, and computing are not guaranteed at all. Parents who want the best for their children are recognizing these clear and present dangers, he says, and they're taking their children back from the government system to save their kids from being ruined morally, socially and academically.

"These days, the only way to protect children from becoming sexually confused and dumbed down is to enroll them in a solid church school or to do homeschooling, in order to raise up a productive, respectful and moral generation," Thomasson says.

Knowing God Isn't Finished With You Yet

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. **-Philippians 1:6**

Mobile Developer Offering Free Smartphone Apps for 1,000 Churches

Is your church social media savvy? Do you have a mobile mindset?

Lifeway Christian Resources and mobile app development group

ROAR partnering to offering free mobile apps to 1,000 churches through the month of December.

ROAR will customize mobile apps on the platform of the church's choice: Apple or Android—or both. The mobile apps feature customizable logos, colors and content.

“We can collect all of the content on a church's website and from other pages—Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, iTunes—and package it together in an app so people can find it all in one place on their phone,” says Matt McKee, president of ROAR.

Developing an app usually costs approximately \$750 per smartphone platform per church, McKee explains. As part of the giveaway, churches only have to pay a discounted hosting fee of \$30 per month for one app or \$50 for two platforms.

“Churches can upload audio sermons as podcasts, post calendar events and event details, upload photos from church events or mission trips, create separate pages for separate ministries, and allow people to donate to the church from their mobile devices,” says Matt Morris, project manager for LifeWay's Digital Church.

Pew Research data from July stated nine in 10 smartphone owners use their phones to access the Internet or email. As the number of smartphone users continues to increase, Morris says churches can't deny that communicating through a church app connects with people on-the-go.

“We want to resource 1,000 churches with this technology,” Morris says. “Churches will be able to communicate their messages to people through a device that's almost always in their pocket or purse.”

A Word for the Weary: God Will Finish What He Started!

Here's a trivia question: Which building project took the longest to complete?

- A. The construction of the Pentagon.
- B. The carving of Mount Rushmore.
- C. The digging of the Panama Canal.
- D. The building of the Empire State Building.
- E. The carving and assembling of the Statue of Liberty.

The answer is C. It took 31 years to dig the Panama Canal, mainly because that superhuman task was started and stopped several times due to floods, mudslides, unexpected costs (the total bill for the United States was \$375 million in 1914) and a horrific death toll (20,000 French workers and 6,000 Americans died on the job site.) The moral of that story: Expect delays when you cut a 50-mile-long canal to connect two oceans.

I'm not attempting to move millions of tons of earth to make room for cargo ships. My ministry assignment is different. But I still feel overwhelmed at times by the task. God calls each of us to join Him in His work, but accomplishing anything spiritual (such as building a church, winning the lost, or influencing culture for Christ) is impossible in human terms. We can't accomplish anything for God without supernatural faith.

God gives us a promise—that's the easy part. Then He reveals His strategies, works miracles and sends provision. Working with God is exhilarating when these things happen. But faith is also warfare. The devil hurls doubts and obstacles in our direction. There are battles and, sometimes, casualties. These are the times we are tempted to quit.

Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two men commissioned to rebuild Solomon's temple, struggled with intense discouragement as they looked at the ruins of Jerusalem. The task was overwhelming, the cost was prohibitive, the workers were dismayed and their enemies were fierce. They started the work in earnest, but they heard a familiar voice that whispered: "You'll never finish this. God is going to abandon you in the middle of this project."

Fortunately, just when Zerubbabel and Joshua were about to throw in the towel, the prophet Haggai showed up with a refreshing announcement. He told them: "'But now take courage ... and work; for I am with you,' declares the Lord" (Hag. 2:4, NASB). The Lord also promised He would see the building project to completion. He said: "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former ... and in this place I will give peace" (v. 9).

Those powerful prophetic promises propelled Zerubbabel and Joshua forward. The words invigorated their weary faith and steeled their determination. Their passion was refueled. They returned to the work, even though it seemed impossible. In the end, God's glorious house arose from an ash heap.

This is God's promise to all who are called to labor with Him. He does not tell you to begin something and then leave you halfway through it. God is a wise builder and an expert craftsman. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He finishes what He starts.

The apostle Paul knew this when he wrote: "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). The Message Bible says it this way: "There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."

Many of God's servants today are weary. Budgets have been tight, resistance is strong and trends are negative. The devil is busy trying to abort God's promises. You may have been tempted even this week to resign from your assignment. But I want to encourage you with the words of Haggai: "Take courage! The Lord is with you!" Regardless of what you lack, the Lord's mighty presence is all you need to finish the task. Hang on to Him and keep believing.

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Note: In case you are curious about the other projects mentioned in the trivia question, here are the answers: A. The Pentagon, the world's largest office building, was built in 16 months. B. Mount Rushmore was carved in 14 years. D. The Empire State Building was completed in 1 year and 45 days. E. The Statue of Liberty was carved and assembled over a 10-year period.

Presidential Candidates Asked to Sign Religious Freedom Pledge

The 2012 presidential elections could open the door for discussions about persecuted Christians and people of all faiths worldwide.

Open Doors USA has partnered with professor Tom Farr of Georgetown University, an International Religious Freedom (IRF) expert, to produce and promote the Presidential Pledge

for Religious Freedom.

Open Doors USA is presenting the pledge to presidential candidates—including Republican, Democratic, Libertarian and independent—asking each of them to sign it. Former Sen. Rick Santorum is the first candidate to sign the pledge.

“Religious freedom is foundational to American society, and a key indicator of prosperity in most societies worldwide,” says Open Doors USA Advocacy Director Lindsay Vessey. “Candidates need to hear from American voters that this is an important issue. We’re asking all freedom-loving Americans to sign the petition. This petition indicates that you would like your presidential candidate to sign the Presidential Pledge for Religious Freedom.”

A candidate’s signature indicates that he or she commits to upholding religious freedom for people of all faiths in America, nominating U.S. federal judges who are committed to upholding religious freedom as defined in the pledge and prioritizing religious freedom concerns in U.S. foreign policy. The complete pledge can be accessed at .

Open Doors will approach candidates, informing them how many Americans have signed the petition. This will help them understand that the public cares about religious freedom and wants our president to protect and promote it.

Farr says tens of millions of human beings are subject to violent persecution because of their beliefs or those of their tormentors. As he sees it, whoever wins the presidency in 2012 should make religious freedom, at home and abroad, a high priority.

“Religious freedom is in global crisis,” Farr says. “In the United States, religious associations are at risk of being forced either to abandon their core beliefs—for example, on the sanctity of human life—or cease operation. Internationally, 70 percent of the world’s population lives in

countries in which religious freedom is severely restricted.”