

# St Imulus

**M**y brother Dennis Imulus was a fairly ordinary small time pastor in small town New Zealand. Sixty three and a half years old, average looking, reasonable intelligence, but not the x factor that put you in the league of super-pastors. Congregation: 70 or so on a Sunday morning (average age: 68), three afternoon home groups (with an assortment of Mildreds and so on), one evening group. Enjoyed his annual trip away to the denomination's national conference (he'd fly to that, the '92 Corolla was reserved for round-town stuff). During his first eight years the church had put aside \$100 a year towards study leave. It was now enough to cover a week at, well, the Gold Coast – but the Gold Coast was currently right out-of-stock of study leave placement resources for sabbatical pastors.

Dennis had often looked covetously at some of the neighbouring Christian “warehouses” (as they appeared to him) with their energetic and charismatic (and Charismatic) cream-jacketed shining-haired gleaming-teethed pastors (complete of course with their gorgeous blonde wives). *Those* pastors got decent salaries (six figures even, he was told), drove European cars and often went on overseas study and ministry trips to stimulating places (USA) and exotic locales (Thailand and India especially) where their ministry was clearly powerful and effective.

Dennis was a good bloke deep down who tried to be content with his lot. But also deep down he was open to enjoying a few more trappings of office clearly available to the others. Over the years he'd signed up for any and all Christian mailing lists, from Hosanna Ministries to Trevor Barclay Ministries, and even the rare Sheila Ministries. They all had glossy pamphlets, smart websites and all –

and they sure could put on a good event.

And then it finally dawned on Dennis what distinguished *them* from him. His “printer's blue” business card identified him as Dennis Imulus, Pastor, fullstop. But *their* full-colour business cards printed on imported linen paper stock had one key additional word: *Ministries*. Therein lay the secret to his future success.

“Dennis Imulus Ministries” the folded A3 glossy flyers, emboldened by the eye-catching designer logo and complete with included interactive CD, would say. Turn your average meandering going-nowhere congregation into a vibrant vital energetic charismatic Spirit-empowered born-again Bible-believing gifts-using power-house for God. In this multi-media seminar, Dennis Imulus, founder (even President, perhaps?) of Dennis Imulus Ministries, will demonstrate how you can turn your church into a vital part of God's future for our nation, using the best resource available, *you!*

This was energising stuff. Seminars with high tech presentation, good food and ambient up-market venues: part of Dennis' strategy. So too the big evangelistic events (complete with a contemporary Christian band – awful music, but they *do* bring in the youth, so what can you do?). *Crusades* he would call them – still quite a trendy term in some quarters, yes he knew it would cause offence to Muslims, but hey, isn't that just what the Gospel is about: causing offence in Jesus' name – the more the better!

Then there would be the Dennis Imulus Ministries tours to India. He'd heard a lot about those from leaders of other Ministries-es. Research showed that you could sponsor a pastor there for less than twenty grand, fly across and visit his church at least once a year, add to the

kudos by taking a team or two over for good measure and bring said pastor back over to your church in NZ. He could do a couple of sermons and the like to keep the connection up, and to keep congregational funds flowing for the annual junkets (sorry, visits) over there.

To show that Dennis Imulus Ministries had a wider sphere of interest and influence, there would be Bible smuggling trips to, let me see, China I think is the one that gets good mileage. Far more mileage in fact than the previous annual church \$100 donation to the Bible Society to assist with their in-country printing programme.

6:30am: Dennis Imulus' clock-radio alarm clock broke into his dream, providing him with his laid-on instant devotional thought of the day in the edition much-loved by the Ministries set: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” Humbly? *Humbly?* HUMBLY?!

Dennis recalled another verse – from, um, Psalms was it – well, somewhere in the Old Testament anyhow – shared with him by one of the Ministries men who had once ministered to him – and paraphrased by the anointed Ministries man to make it sound more, well spiritual: “the Lord seesteth not as man seesteth; man looketh on the outwardest appearance, but God looketh on the heart, yeah.”

“Bugger *Dennis Imulus Ministries!*” he muttered to himself as he climbed into his Toyota to drive to the morning congregation of 69 or so (one of the Mildreds had died overnight), humming “will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?”

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