

FOREWORD BY BILL JOHNSON

CULTURE OF HONOR



SUSTAINING
A SUPERNATURAL
ENVIRONMENT

DANNY SILK

ALSO BY DANNY SILK

Loving Our Kids On Purpose

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*C*ULTURE OF *M*ONOR

*S*USTAINING
A SUPERNATURAL
ENVIRONMENT

DANNY SILK

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DEDICATION

To Bethel Church: thank you for your tireless efforts and participation in this grand experiment called “Bethel.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bill Johnson and Kris Vallotton—thank you for your courageous leadership!

Bethel's senior management team—you are the “masters” at making all this work. It is a perpetual honor to work at your side.

Allison Armerding—you never cease to amaze me with your life of honor toward others. Thank you for pointing it at me!

Dann Farrelly and Andre Van Mol—to your gift of critique I am forever in debt.

ENDORSEMENTS

God is in the process of restoring Kingdom mentality to the church, and those who “get it” will move under the blessed order of God’s government. This book is both an indication of this process and a clarification of the strategic issue of honor as it relates to how Christians work together in church. [Chapter 2](#), entitled “The Funnel From Heaven,” is an absolute must-read for those who not only are wondering why the fivefold ministry is not working as we had hoped, but for all who have not seriously considered this vital approach to church life. Danny’s contribution toward the Kingdom Church will help us all navigate this adventure of Kingdom life together.

Jack Taylor

President, Dimensions Ministries
Melbourne, Florida

In this book, *Culture of Honor*, Danny Silk unearths the ancient foundations of the Kingdom of God. With great wisdom and insight he examines and explains the fundamental building blocks of a supernatural society and constructs the framework for a powerful Christian life. This is more than a book; it is a manifesto of reformation, destined to become a classic that will be a reference for generations to come. *Culture of Honor* is a must-read for every serious believer. It is essential that this

book find its way into every seminary in America!

Kris Vallotton

Senior Associate Leader of Bethel Church,
Redding, California

Author of several books, including
The Supernatural Ways of Royalty and
Developing a Supernatural Lifestyle

Pastor Danny Silk has written a wonderful book sharing one of the core values of Bethel Church in Redding, California, that has been foundational to the revival that Bethel has been experiencing for a number of years. I believe the “culture of honor,” as Danny presents it, can bring and sustain revival and reformation to anyone who lives out this biblical principle. I highly recommend this book.

Ché Ahn

Senior Pastor and Founder, Harvest Rock
Church
Pasadena, California

Sometimes I read a book, and many times my experience is that the book reads me. *Culture of Honor* is one of those books. I want to live this book! Bethel Church has been an open Heaven for many years, and I am grateful to be a part of the family at Bethel Church. The Kingdom of God is a “family business,” and in this book Danny Silk gives us the DNA of Heaven on earth. *Culture of Honor* is destined to be a classic that will be read and lived from generation to generation. Read the book, and let the book read you!

Dr. Leif Hetland
President, Global Mission Awareness
Florence, Alabama

Culture of Honor is a revolutionary book that will transform the leadership paradigms that have been so prevalent in every institution, including the church. I believe Danny Silk captures the essence of how Jesus led His disciples and how the disciples led as apostles in the early church through honor.

Culture of Honor will transform the way you think about leadership and the way you lead. You will learn how to be an empowering leader, through practical Kingdom core values that are taught throughout the book. Your leadership lid can't help but to increase as you apply these biblical principles of honor.

Every leader should read this book! Every church leader should read this book! Every husband and wife should read this book! Every parent should read this book! Everyone should read this book!

And then, read it again!!

Kevin Dedmon
Author of *The Ultimate Treasure Hunt:
Supernatural Evangelism
Through Supernatural Encounters and Unlocking
Heaven: Keys to
Living Naturally Supernatural*

Danny had me hooked from the stunning first-chapter demonstration of how a jaw-dropping, leadership-imploding fall was redeemed through application of a culture of honor. In both its fullness of content and crafting of delivery, this is the finest book from any Bethel author yet. Danny's call and challenge is for the Church to purposefully live empowered and empowering in the New Covenant through a compassionate, safe, liberating, relational culture free of fear, legalism, control, shame, and impotent victimhood. Danny makes the scriptural basis, conceptual models, and successful applications—on congregational, leadership, family, and individual levels—robustly and disarmingly clear. This book is a catalyst for transformation.

André Van Mol, MD

Family Physician

Elder, Bethel Church of Redding

Vice President, Pray North State

I am grateful to Danny Silk who, in *Culture of Honor*, has explained the “recipe” that is the backbone of a 10-year-plus revival that is rapidly accelerating into a movement—and already impacting the nations of the world. In 40 years of being a Christian, I have not witnessed a “movement” that has been sustained for more than 10 years. It is not for lack of gifting or anointing, for that was present in abundance, but it was for lack of an understanding of the “culture of honor” that could allow leaders and followers to flourish in the empowering atmosphere it brings.

Andrew Sievright
President, Heroes of the Nations

The church has for the longest time been in need of governmental reconstruction. Not only are we in need of having our notions of “Kingdom government” conceptually and structurally redefined, we also need to have our heart language of Kingdom definition revisited and restated. It is out of our hearts that we will speak and therefore live. Danny Silk, in his book *Culture of Honor*, goes a very long way in giving us an inspired, informed, and creative approach to understanding what needs to be the heart culture of the Kingdom. His wit and intelligent authorship will seduce you into your own moments of revelation. “Free people cannot live together without honor” is a truth that is non-negotiable and in need of application. This book could be one of the most significant to come out of Bethel Church. An essential read for those who desire supernatural fruitfulness. That fruitfulness will come out of the context of honor.

David Crabtree
Senior Leader of DaySpring Church Castle Hill,
New South Wales, Australia

In 2003, when I first came into contact with Bethel Church and this revival, my life and ministry went through a tremendous and sometimes painful transformation, mainly because I was deeply immersed in religiosity and legalism. Seeing and experiencing the supernatural really impressed me and caused me to wonder about my beliefs and core values.

I saw miracles and healings, but I also saw freedom, unconditional love, empowering, acceptance, healthy confrontation, and many other elements of a genuine “culture of honor” that had not been a part of my life. It was actually the culture of honor in every one of these “weird people”—as they appeared to me in the beginning—that pushed me to make the choice of accepting revival and submitting to this transformation and all that it means.

About a year later I met Danny Silk, whom I consider to be one of the most authorized spokespersons of the culture of honor in the midst of this amazing revival. He has become one of my best friends and one of the most influential people in my life and ministry. From him I have learned what the culture of honor looks like, and that revival without this culture of honor is like new wine in an old wineskin.

What this book contains needs to be learned and embraced by every person, whether a leader or not, whether a believer or not. It is urgent that every one of us get tuned in to this culture of honor while seeing Heaven invading earth.

Angel Nava

Senior Pastor, Seeds of Life Church (Semillas de Vida)

La Paz, Mexico

This book could turn your world upside down and help you extend the Kingdom of God wherever you live. The “culture of honor”

talked about in this book has the power to lead you on an adventure that will result in the transformation of you, your church, and your city.

As you read this book, be prepared to be challenged to think anew, to review your Christian thought and practice, “to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” As you do so you will be better equipped to transform the culture in which you live.

Dr. Pete carter

Senior leader of North Kent Community Church
United Kingdom

“Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not yet sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.”

Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
February 14, 1776

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FOREWORD

An adulterous woman was thrown at Jesus' feet. She knew the punishment for her sin was public stoning. The fact that she was caught in the very act only heightened the shame and intensified her fear of a painful death. Her accusers stood with confidence because the law of God supported their position. They held the stones that would soon take her life, while she waited for them to display their outrage for her complete disregard of God's standard of holiness. Then the Master began to write in the sand.

We don't know what He wrote. All we know is that the atmosphere created by the writings of the "grace giver" completely disarmed her accusers. They fled as the grace of God drove away the judgments of men as quickly as light displaces darkness. Grace is that superior.

No one needed to tell her to put her faith in Christ. The atmosphere of grace made faith in Jesus the most logical response. Perhaps this is why the apostle Paul taught us that faith is "*according to grace*" (Rom. 4:16). ***Grace is the atmosphere created by love that makes faith the only reasonable response.***

Few things overwhelm me more than an authentic display of the grace of God. Whenever the presence of God enables a person to become free from lifelong issues, you can't help but be amazed at such a wonderful Savior. But grace goes beyond healing from the past: it also launches us into our divine destinies.

I read this manuscript with great joy. But I also read it with many tears as I recalled the impossible situations that we faced together as a church family. They were the kinds of problems that only God could heal. And He did, again and again. It's that same grace that

leaks from the pages of this book. It is not a new theology. It is just a clearer manifestation of the original—the heart of God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. But that is only half of the story, for grace is but one of the expressions of this revolutionary force of His Kingdom come to earth—the culture of honor.

When I teach on the culture of honor, most everyone says “amen” to show support for what they already believe. Soon after the message they proceed to tell me that they too have a culture of honor. But the response is much different once they’ve had a chance to come to Bethel for a week or two and they watch the interaction of the staff and the church family. Invariably they leave asking us to please mentor them on developing this as a reformational way of life. Giving honor actually releases the life of God into a situation.

Many people live in atmospheres void of honor and desperately seek our help in creating such a culture. Pastors often ask us to come and teach their church and staff how to show honor. The need is real, and the desire is genuine. But this culture is never built around “what I need.” It is built around “what I can give.” And if I don’t learn to give it to those who deserve it the least, I will continue to live in an environment without honor.

I absolutely love *Culture of Honor*. I’ve waited a long time to see this revolutionary way of life captured and put into words. While many on my staff teach on this subject, God has given Danny Silk the best language for it. And the spoil he obtains for the Master through his wonderful insights is becoming legendary. In carrying the empowering presence of Jesus in everything he does, he lives to show God’s value upon each person he serves, regardless of his or her station in life.

The church is in need of a radical reformation. I believe that this book is a part of God’s prescription to address this need. As we succeed, we’ll be positioned to help bring the cities of our world

into transformation. And it's a transformation through honor—that which communicates the grace of God so beautifully.

Bill Johnson

Senior Pastor of Bethel Church,
Redding, California

Author of *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind* and
When Heaven Invades Earth

PREFACE

I realize that in this book I am challenging what many understand to be true. I am messing with long-standing paradigms. Nonetheless, I find myself undaunted in a course to shed light on many topics long held in a type of darkness by my beloved community, the Church. As a first-generation Christian there are many cultural traditions that have not directly affected my life or family. Equally so, there are many that have not yet taken hold and strengthened my legacy. But as for some of these traditions that I have come across, unfortunately I find them to be highly unjust and a poor representation of who I have come to know as my Lord. The “culture of honor” is a contest to those long-held approaches and core values one can easily find in the historic and contemporary Christian church culture.

I mean no disrespect in presenting this perspective. It is confronting and reforming what we’ve come to know about church leadership, authority, and church discipline for literally centuries. Please know that I know this is a “grand experiment” at Bethel Church and we have much to learn about how to steward an environment of freedom. Nonetheless, I will present what we’ve learned thus far.

Peace!

INTRODUCTION

Within these pages you will find what one of my friends calls a “recipe.” The *ingredients* in this recipe are a set of beliefs and practices. The *steps* in this recipe combine these ingredients in such a way that they create something powerful—an environment that is uncommon on the earth today. It is an environment that attracts and hosts the presence of God. We at Bethel Church, in Redding, California, call this environment the *culture of honor*. By no means is our “recipe” the only one that creates a culture that hosts the presence of God, but we can tell you that it is one that works.

When God first speaks of honor, in the Ten Commandments, He promises that long life will be our reward for honoring our parents. At Bethel, we believe that this command reveals a principle of honor in general. We often say, “Life flows through honor.”

The Principle of Honor states that: *accurately acknowledging who people are will position us to give them what they deserve and to receive the gift of who they are in our lives.*

Honor creates life-giving and life-promoting relationships. The key here is “accurately acknowledging who people are.” We can only do this when we recognize their God-given identities and roles. This is what we see in the statement of Jesus: “*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.*”¹ Names and titles are important. Mother, father, son, daughter, apostle, prophet, Christian, human being—such names define a person’s role and identity and when used correctly, establish God-designed relationships in which specific “rewards” are given and received to build and strengthen us.

A culture of honor is created as a community of people learns to discern and receive people in their God-given identities. Throughout this book we will explore some of the “names” that have enabled us to establish very specific kinds of relationships in the Bethel community. These are the relationships that attract and sustain the outpouring of God’s presence and power in our midst. The names “apostle,” “prophet,” “teacher,” “pastor,” and “evangelist” and their distinctive anointings, mindsets, and gifts create a network of relationships designed to bring the focus and priorities of Heaven to earth. Names like “free sons” and “children of light” define the way we must honor and relate to one another, particularly when addressing areas of behavior and relationships that need discipline and restoration. Descriptive names like “royalty,” “wealthy,” and “benefactor” shape our relationships with our resources and with the wider community that the Church is called to bless and encounter with the love and power of Heaven.

In a culture of honor, leaders lead with honor by courageously treating people according to the names God gives them and not according to the aliases they receive from people. They treat them as free sons and daughters, not slaves; as righteous, not sinners; as wealthy, not poor. Leaders also acknowledge their interdependence on the diverse anointings God has distributed among His leadership and their design for functioning as a team that creates a “funnel” from Heaven to earth. They lead in teaching and preaching a Gospel that accurately acknowledges God’s identity as good, as love, as *shalom*, and look for clear manifestations of these realities as signs that God’s presence is truly welcome in the culture. And in the safety and freedom that grow as His presence grows, leaders lead by developing ways to help people get along with one another in a free culture. They have tools for confrontation that are congruent with people’s God-given identities and are motivated by the passion to protect and grow the connections that God is building among us. Finally, leaders in a culture of honor naturally lead their people in extending the honor of the Kingdom to the wider community,

creating ways for our cities to experience the life that is flowing among us.

Life flows through honor. The clear fruit of establishing a culture of honor is that the resurrection life of God begins to flow into people's lives, homes, and communities, bringing healing, restoration, blessing, joy, hope, and wholeness. If we are not seeing this fruit, then we must ask ourselves whether we are truly honoring those around us as we ought. As you will find in the coming pages, I am convinced that there are some patterns of relating in the Church that are based on false versions of who people are, and we must confront and dismantle these if we hope to see abundant life growing in our midst.

My prayer and hope is that this book will guide you as you seek the ingredients and steps for creating a culture around you that hosts the presence of God. Admittedly, this book is just a start, but it's a great start!

CHAPTER 1



A SUPERNATURAL CULTURE

*‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’
says the Lord of hosts.*

(Zechariah 4:6)

If you’ve heard of Bethel Church in Redding, California, chances are that you’ve heard testimonies of the supernatural happenings that take place there on a regular basis, particularly miracles of healing. What you may not have heard is that these supernatural events are directly related to the *supernatural culture* that the community of saints at Bethel has been developing for over a decade. The heart of this culture is the conviction that Jesus modeled the Christian life for us. Jesus explained that all the supernatural things that happened through Him flowed directly from His intimate connection with His Father, and that same connection was what He came to give us through His death and resurrection. Sustaining a supernatural lifestyle, where signs and wonders follow us, is therefore totally dependent on living out our true identities as sons and daughters of God. Armed with these truths, the leaders at Bethel understand that their primary role is to empower the saints to know God and walk in the fullness of who He says they are. As these core values have been taught and demonstrated, a group of people has grown up with faith and courage to bring Heaven to earth.

In order to help you understand Bethel’s culture of supernatural empowerment, I want to show you what it’s like. I am going to share something that happened in our School of Supernatural Ministry several years ago. Since this incident, hundreds just like it have been added to the list, but this particular story is the classic case that we refer to in teaching our staff to *create a safe place*. (Creating a safe place will be further explained in the chapter entitled, “The Top Priority of Leadership.”)

To set the stage for this story, I need to mention that every member of our staff shares a great mutual delight in our First Year graduates. We are so proud of their zeal and love for revival. After each summer break, our staff interviews the graduates returning for Second Year, and this always reignites their excitement to spend another year with the amazing people we call our students. These Second Year students are the cream of the crop and are leaders to our fresh batch of First Year students.

One year we had two First Year students, amazing people, who were leaders in worship and other ministry activities. After graduating from First Year, they decided to get married in December while attending Second Year. So they applied for Second Year and were accepted. Of course they were—they are amazing!

Shortly after Second Year began, Banning Liebscher, the Second Year pastor, came to me and said, “We have a problem. I have two students who have confessed to me that they had sex over the summer.”

I asked him what he was going to do.

Banning then said, “Well, if having sex was all that was going on, that wouldn’t be as much of a problem. They stopped about a month before school started and are truly repentant. And I really believed this guy when he told me that.”

“What else is going on?” I asked.

“I just found out that she is pregnant,” he said.

Now this was a *situation*—an unmarried, pregnant Second Year Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry student roaming the halls. That was something we would have to explain. I could see a certain

dread in Banning's eyes. He knew that we would have to remove these two students from the school. This was the first time he'd been the leader in a scenario quite so extreme.

I said, "Let's get together with them and talk about it."

So Banning and his co-pastor, Jill, came into my office with these two students. Now, I did not know them and they did not know me. Neither of them made eye contact with me as they entered my office. Their heads were slumped low, and their eyes were pointed to the floor. It was clear that they were absolutely ashamed of what they had done, and they came in expecting us to punish them for their mistakes. Not only did they believe they deserved judgment for their sin; they were aware of the commonly held conviction that church leaders must protect the whole from the rebellious few. They knew they had been rebellious and that this would most likely be "the talk." What else could we do but tell them we love them and show them the door?

I began the process by saying, "Thank you both very much. You don't know me, or what is going to happen. Thank you for the vulnerability and trust that you have just offered. I know this is scary, and I don't want you to feel scared. We have not made any decisions because we don't really know what the problem is. Do you need any water? Are you okay?"

After they had responded, I addressed the young man. "Now, let me ask you this. What is the problem?"

He looked at Banning, stunned, and asked, "Didn't Banning tell you what happened? Didn't he talk to you?"

I could tell this question made him uncomfortable.

“Yes, he has. Banning has talked to me,” I replied.

He asked, “You want me to say it?”

“If you know what the problem is, I want you to tell me,” I said. My hunch was that he probably didn’t yet know what the problem was.

“We had sex this summer—a bunch of times!” he exclaimed. “Now, I thought you stopped doing that.”

He said, “Yes, we totally did. We stopped doing it about a month before school started.”

“So, what’s the problem?” I asked again, trying to send him searching further into his heart for the problem.

“Well, she is pregnant,” he said, searching for the next thing I might not know.

I asked, “Well, is there anything we can do about that?”

“No!” he fired back emphatically, sending me a clear message that abortion was not an option. He was clearly frustrated by my questions. Apparently, he had not intended to do so much thinking through this process. He had anticipated punishment, and this was catching him completely off guard.

“Okay, so what is the problem?” I asked once more.

He looked at me for a few moments, shook his head and said, “I don’t think I understand the question.”

I chuckled. Banning and Jill chuckled. We all chuckled. No one seemed to know what the problem was, and everyone was wondering where I was going with my question.

Finally I said, "If we were going to spend our time today solving a problem, what would that problem be?"

"I don't know."

I asked him if he had repented.

"Yeah. Of course I have," he replied, as if this was a no-brainer question.

"What have you repented of?" I asked.

After a long pause he admitted, "I don't know."

I said, "All right. Well, that is part of the problem, isn't it? How can you repent from a problem unless you know what that problem is?"

"I see what you are saying. Yeah."

"So, we need to find a problem here to solve," I said. "That is what this is about. Let me ask you some more questions."

My whole plan was simply to ask him questions. I was not going to tell him what I thought or tell him what to think. I was not trying to convince him of my amazing perspectives or my powerful discernments. I was searching for the glory, wisdom, and capability in this young man. It needed to be raised to the surface so that he could remember who he was in this house. The shame of his mistake had made him forget who he was. He thought he was one of those

people who needed to be kicked and spit on, and he was ready for our leadership team to kick him to the curb. Questions led him, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to run around and search for the wisdom and knowledge inside of him and find a solution that would change his life forever.

I lofted a couple of slow balls to him. “Tell me, did you not know it was a bad idea to sleep with your girlfriend?”

“I totally knew that,” he shot back.

“Well, then, what happened?”

“I don’t know.” He lowered his head, breaking eye contact.

I gave him a choice to consider and an opportunity to stay with me. “You don’t know, or are you not wanting to think about it anymore?”

“Well, it is probably because we were staying up until like 2:00 in the morning watching movies at her house.”

“You think?” I raised my eyebrows.

“But I tried to leave. I tried to leave over and over. I would say to her that we shouldn’t be in this situation. We shouldn’t be here doing this. I told her that we went too far last time and we shouldn’t be doing this.” As he sheepishly looks over at her, she is pursing her lips and her face is flushed, but the fear of the unknown of being in this room has her in a bit of verbal paralysis.

He continues, “She would get so mad at me! She would call me names, tell me that I was rejecting her, and it was just hellish for

days afterward. So I just wouldn't say anything and stayed there. I am not saying that I didn't like it or wasn't a part of it. I totally was. It just wasn't worth fighting with her about it."

"All right. So what you are telling me is that you were more concerned about her being mad at you than you were concerned about doing your job of protecting her from you."

Slowly, he answered, "Yeah."

"So what you are telling me is that when you are around angry people it is easy for you to let them control who you are. Is that what you are telling me?"

"Yeah," he said sheepishly.

"So all it takes for you to abandon your character and your integrity is someone who is upset at you."

"Yeah." He was starting to get a revelation.

I asked, "Dude, is that a problem?"

"Yeah."

"So if we could build a solution to that problem, would that make our time today worth something to you?"

"Totally." He looked up again and made eye contact, trying to hide a smile. I could tell he was unsure about feeling better when this was supposed to be a process that made him feel worse about what he'd done.

“Fabulous. Then let’s work on that,” I said, with a big smile on my face.

The whole room felt hopeful. Banning and Jill were smiling. I could sense their expectation and sense of responsibility to help this young man deal with the problem he had just identified. But instead, I turned to the girl, who had been watching this whole process with her boyfriend. I could see that she did not want to go through the same thing. Her arms and legs were crossed and her chin was lowered to her chest. I ventured in anyway.

“What is the problem?”

“I don’t know,” she quickly shot back, defensive. “You don’t know, or you are afraid to think about it?” “I don’t know.”

I gently said, “I can see that you are scared. I don’t want you to feel afraid. I do want to help you find out what is causing you to add so much pain to your life. Will you let me help?”

For the sake of time, I’ll cut the dialogue down and simply say that we eventually got down to the revelation that she did not trust people. It was a stronghold in her life and showed up in numerous behaviors. She struggled with suspicion, and it kept her from letting people speak into her life. Several students had tried to address their situation over the summer, but she did not allow it to affect her decisions. She felt like those people were trying to control her, and her fear blinded her to the care and concern they had for her. This issue had wreaked havoc with her for many years. She was fearful, isolated, often stubborn, and guarded. I got to the bottom of things with her through the same process: questions. I only asked questions—lots and lots of questions, but the right questions.

Asking the right questions in the right way is one of the keys to creating a safe place. A successful confrontation depends on how safe those being confronted feel. If we ignore their need for a safe place, we set them up to act like defensive, blaming, unloving, selfish people who are more interested in saving their own lives than cleaning up messes they've made. We then completely miss who they really are and blame them for their behavior. A process that respects the need for trust and honor will have an entirely different outcome because it allows them to be free—free from control, punishment, and fear. This is how we do Kingdom confrontation. (We will explore this process more fully in a later chapter.)

We had two people in the same situation with two completely different problems. He was afraid of other people being upset with him, and she was afraid of other people controlling her. By the time we discovered these problems, they no longer expected to be beheaded over them. We had created a safe place for them to be themselves, the amazing people they truly are. It was then time to help them fix their problems and set them free from the shame of their mistake.

I asked them another question. “Who is affected by these problems in your life? It's like you walked through a room with a big bucket of paint and then dropped it. Paint has splashed all over the place. Who has paint on them?”

They began to remember the people they loved, the people who didn't yet know that she was pregnant. These were people who loved them, who believed in them, and who had honored them. These were the relationships they wanted to protect—their parents, siblings, leaders in the School of Ministry, and leaders back home. His small home church had been taking a monthly offering to help pay for his school tuition. She had a newly saved brother who

thought she had hung the moon. These two represented Jesus to him.

It was as though Banning, Jill, and I could see these two remembering all these people in succession, and as they came to mind, they realized how this situation was going to hurt them. They wept as they listed the names, finally experiencing the pain that this problem had created in their lives. Our team just sat silently, recognizing that this was the “*godly sorrow*” that the Bible talks about.¹ It was leading these two to repentance, and we needed to let it do its work and bear its fruit.

They continued to sob. No amount of threat or punishment could have created what was happening inside of them in that moment. It was a beautiful thing, and it all happened from the inside out. No one forced them to see anything. No one tried to talk them into repenting. This all came to the surface because we trusted them to have a great deal of love and respect inside of them, and because we asked them the right questions.

After they listed the people in their lives who would be most impacted by the news that she was pregnant, Banning, Jill, and I mentioned some people they didn’t get to, people who were important to us. I asked, “What about the rest of the Second Year students? How are they going to be affected by this?”

“This news will totally affect them. They are our classmates,” he said.

But she retorted, “Some of them will care, but most of them don’t even need to know about it!”

“Ah, is this some more of that same problem?” I asked her. “What?” she asked, seeming not to understand.

“Is this another time when you think that you need to defend yourself from the people who most likely do care about you?”

“I don’t know,” she said, knowing she had been busted.

“You don’t know, or you see what I am saying?”

“I see what you are saying,” she admitted.

“Good. Thanks for taking a look at that. Now, what about the First Year students who see you as leaders in this community? How will they be affected by this problem?” I specifically addressed her with this question.

“What! They are a bunch of strangers to us! Why would they be affected by this?” she barked out, upset by my audacity.

But her boyfriend said, “You’re right. We are supposed to be leaders in this school. They will totally be affected by us and what we’ve done.”

I asked her what she thought of that perspective. She didn’t like it but did agree that it might affect some of them.

“Might? Or *will* affect them?” I asked her. I was committed to pinning her down each time that issue of trust and vulnerability tried to keep her from showing her best self in the situation.

“Will!” she blurted out, followed by a half smile to thank me for not letting her get around it.

I then asked, “What are you going to do? You made a pretty good-sized mess here. We know who has paint on them. What are you

going to do to clean it up?”

They went through the list and began to come up with solutions. “We are going to call these family members and we are going to write letters to these people. We will inform them of what’s going on, repent, and ask them for forgiveness.”

I asked them, “How much time do you need?”

After they conferred together, he said, “One week. We want a week to be able to contact our family and clean up this mess.”

“All right,” I said. “We will wait and take care of the School of Ministry students involved in the mess later.”

And so they did what they had said. Within the week, they contacted their family members and their church leaders, and also went to Pastors Bill Johnson and Kris Vallotton, and some other school staff members. No longer were these people ready to be kicked out of the school. No longer were these people who deserved to be punished. They were met by a stream of loving responses and affirmation by almost every person they approached. There were a couple of unfavorable responses, but this couple had more than enough grace toward those folks.

You see, ***shame is removed through love***. Shame tries to keep people trapped in their mistakes by convincing them that there is nothing they can do, that they are powerless. When we lovingly removed the shame over them, these two became powerful again, faced their consequences, and went around cleaning up their mess. All they could do was clean up their mess. They could not change the past, but they could go to those they loved and ask for forgiveness. In asking forgiveness, they were saying, “Please allow me to manifest my love toward you and protect this relationship. Please let me

clean up this mess.” Love cast out their fear and made them powerful again.

The following week they came back to school. Banning and Jill found a break in the class schedule. Banning called my office and asked me to come up to Second Year and facilitate the “clean up.” I knew how difficult this might be for some of the students. I knew that some of them would have no place to put what was about to happen. So I wanted to put the experience in a context for them to consider over the next few minutes and months. I gathered the class together and said, “All right, everyone. Something is about to happen that many of you may have never experienced before. Before they say a word, I want all of you to remember something very important. It may be tempting to judge these two for what they are about to share with you. So, please, remember this: each and every one of you in this room, without exception, is a low-life scumbag without Jesus in your life. Please keep that in mind while you listen to what they have to share with you. If any of you have judgments toward them, I want you to come and talk to me personally, before I hear it coming from somebody else that you spoke with.”

Then I signaled for the couple to come up. The young man started by saying, “I want to apologize to this class because I know that we are a part of you and you are a part of us. Over the summer we ended up messing up and now we’re going to have a baby.”

I was struck by his humility and vulnerability. He was truly repenting to this group of peers. He went on to say, “I’ve discovered a problem in my life I didn’t know I had. It has been causing a lot of problems for me. I am working on it now. I have more hope now than I have ever had about solving this problem. But as it stands, this is what’s going on.” He explained the whole thing. She stood there with him, humble and vulnerable, and after he had finished, did the same thing.

I invited one of their fellow students, Brandon, who held a fatherly role in the class, to come pray for them, forgive them, and restore them to a heavenly standard in relationship with the rest of the class. When he got up, 47 other students—the whole class—got up with him and surrounded these two, pressing in on them. Some began to weep. Brandon began to pray prayers of forgiveness and love. He welcomed them back into fellowship with the community of the class. Someone else told them how much they loved them and thanked them for not leaving the school. Another student thanked them for trusting the class with this part of their lives.

Then the students prophesied over them and the baby. They accepted the baby into the community. The whole class wept together. It was truly an amazing time. I was stunned by the response, but at the same time I knew these people, and that all of them were amazing!

The room felt much lighter as people hugged and smiled through tear-covered faces. Then someone came in from First Year and said, “Hey! First Year has time to do this now.”

“Do you want to do this now?” I asked them.

They said, “We might as well.”

“All right, let’s go.”

I led the way. As the two of them headed to the First Year class, the 47 Second Year students followed them. The First Year students could not help but be aware of a huge presence entering their classroom. The 47-student entourage lined the walls of the room like an army of guardian angels as this couple stood before 100 strangers and repented.

I asked Kevin Drury, a pastor who had taken a year off from his ministry to come to BSSM, to pray for them, bless them, and forgive them. As he got up, 100 First Year students stood up and gathered around the couple to pray and bless them. Kevin began to pray and prophesy over them, breaking the curse of shame and illegitimacy over this baby and severing the enemy's legal right to access and destroy this child through shame. It was a powerful time of love and reconciliation.

One hundred strangers embraced and loved on this couple that day. They had done all they could to clean up their mess, and carried on as some of the prime examples amongst our Second Year students for the remainder of the year.

Months later, they got married and shortly after, welcomed a daughter into the world. But from the day she was born, she was fighting for her life. Something was wrong with her blood, and she was dying day by day. Her light was going out. They were living at a specialty children's hospital in Northern California, sending us report after report that the baby was dying. Wherever we were when these reports came in, as well as in our church services and staff meetings, we prayed. But she continued to decline for weeks.

There was desperation in the last phone call we received from this new mother. "She is going to die. The doctors have all said that she won't make it through the night. Please pray!" After this call, I specifically remembered and declared Kevin's prayer. I remembered that there was no shame on this child. I remembered that the enemy had no right to this baby. I reminded our team of the process of restoration they had gone through. We remembered the honor and protection that we had given to this family. Our team prayed in our staff meeting and declared that Kevin's prayer canceled the shame. Death and destruction had no jurisdiction over this child's life.

The next day we got a call.

“The doctors don’t know what happened, but they are calling our baby ‘The Lazarus baby,’” said a very excited new mother. To this day, their baby girl is alive and well. She is strong, beautiful, and full of life.

The following year, this same young mother was one of the speakers at a Third Year gathering. She got up and, through tears, said, “I just want to thank the leaders in this house. You transfer strength and life from this culture to everybody who comes into it. You build strength in other people. You’ve given us an inheritance. We will never be the same because of how you managed a situation in our life. Not many other leaders would have handled our situation the way you did. You will never know how deeply that has affected us. You gave us life in a situation that could have easily derailed us for many years to follow. You’ve given us a relationship that we will die for. Thank you!”

The miraculous recovery of this child was nothing short of supernatural. But the environment in which it occurred is what we simply call “Bethel.” As I mentioned, it’s becoming a place known for its many miraculous testimonies. But it’s the stories of the people who make up this miraculous culture that illustrate the lifestyle and relationships that actually create an environment that draws Heaven to earth. Our culture is what this book is about. Without understanding the core values that drive us, you won’t understand the fruit we are getting.

At the heart of this culture is a value for freedom. We don’t allow people to use this freedom to create chaos. We have boundaries, but we use these boundaries to make room for a level of personal expression that brings what is really inside of people to the surface. When people are given choices, it reveals the level of freedom they are prepared to handle. When people discover their true capacity for self-control and responsibility, they then have the revelation and

opportunity they need to grow toward the freedom that God desires for each of His sons and daughters.

Before we begin to explore the core values of Bethel's culture, however, I feel it's important to expose you to our leadership structure. Our leadership is responsible for empowering and equipping the saints with the revelation and impartation they need to exercise their freedom in a safe place, and I believe we have been successful in this because our leadership has been aligned with the *apostolic* and *prophetic anointings*. I will explain these terms and how they work in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2



THE FUNNEL FROM HEAVEN

There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.

(Nelson Mandela, South African Statesman)

I believe that one of the primary factors that has kept Bethel Church in a state of *preparation for* and *stewardship of* the outpouring of the Spirit is the “wineskin” of its leadership, which has been established with an *apostolic and prophetic foundation* and with an expression of each of the other fivefold ministry graces described in Ephesians 4:11—the *pastor, teacher, and evangelist*. I believe this is true because I, as a member of this team, have seen firsthand how these diverse anointings each address an essential part of the identity and purpose of the Church through their specific areas of focus and motivation. Without a complete, mature expression of these graces that equip the saints, the people of God cannot be adequately prepared to contain what God is pouring out and release it to the world around them.

I am convinced that one of the reasons senior church leaders experience the disheartening cycle of great outpourings that gradually return to business as usual is a lack of understanding of the fivefold ministry, of their own ministry anointings and callings, and of how their anointings shape the direction of their churches. I hope in this chapter and throughout this book to lay a foundation for understanding these roles and anointings so that leaders can recognize how they themselves and others on their teams can begin to draw on and administer the grace God has deposited in them.

Before I do that, lest you think that every leader at Bethel grew up knowing that he or she was called to ministry and exactly how God

had anointed him or her, I want to share the story of my own calling to pastor.

My history as a church leader started in March of 1995. At the time, I was working in a foster care agency called Remi Vista in Mt. Shasta, California. I had just completed eight years of college to complete my Master's degree in social work from UC-Sacramento. My wife, Sheri, our children Brittney, Levi, and Taylor, and I were finally ready to pursue my career in marriage and family therapy. Sheri's litany through that extremely stressful eight-year journey was to joke, "Show me the money!" We were ready for some payoff.

One weekend in March, we made our annual two-hour trek through the mountain roads toward home: Mountain Chapel in Weaverville, California. Sheri and I both grew up in this small community and attended the same high school there together. We had many "Before Christ" memories of this little town, and we had both accepted the Lord under Bill Johnson's ministry at Mountain Chapel within a month of each other.

Going to church in Weaverville was always worthwhile for us. This particular trip, like all of them, was filled with great fellowship, catching up on the lives of so many friends, and informing them of all the current events in our own young family. After church that Sunday, Kris Vallotton asked Sheri and me to join him for lunch because he had a "proposition" for us. We were excited just to catch up with another dear friend, but we were also certainly curious to find out about this new idea Kris had up his sleeve that, as he had hinted, could possibly alter our whole lives.

After some small talk, he asked us if we knew that Bob Johnson, Bill's brother, was leaving Mountain Chapel to start a new work in Redding. We hadn't known this. He then went on to inform us that he had permission from Bill and the church board to ask us if I would consider replacing Bob as the new associate pastor under Bill.

My hands and nose started to get cold. I could see Kris's mouth moving, but I couldn't hear what he was saying. I was going into shock. We told him that we would need some time.

I remember lying in total darkness that night next to Sheri. We were silent, which was unusual, since Sheri, the ultimate verbal processor, was still awake. Finally, out of the dark silence she asked, "Are you thinking about what I am thinking about?"

"Yes," I said, and we burst into nervous laughter. We couldn't believe what was happening.

Within a few months we moved our family to Weaverville so the kids could start school fresh in September. I continued to work in Mt. Shasta and drove home on the weekends. In November, I began my new staff position at Mountain Chapel. But in between those two events, something interesting happened.

One Saturday in September, Bill and Beni Johnson called us into Bill's office to talk. We figured there would be many of these "little chats" to help us get our bearings, keep us informed of our new position, and spell things out for us, as we were coming completely fresh and untrained into the ministry. We were mistaken.

We noticed that Bill and Beni seemed to be laughing nervously as we began the meeting. Beni opened the conversation by telling us how glad they were that we were there. She said that they had never felt the peace that they now did and were so comforted by our presence on the team. She and Bill talked about our pastoral gifts and said that the people would be loved and well cared for under our leadership. I felt something rising up inside me as they went on, but it wasn't pride or great satisfaction. It was fear. The more they talked to us, the more I sensed what was coming. The bomb finally dropped when Beni said, "We've been feeling like the Lord is going

to move us on from here. We've felt it for many years, but up to now could never feel good about who we would trust to lead the church. But now that you two are here, we feel so relieved."

I could feel the blood running out of my head. I felt like I was going to faint. Had I just heard what I thought I had just heard? My thoughts raced in my head. *Do you think I came back here to ruin the church that I love, the home where I got saved? Do you have any idea what it would be like to pastor this church of radicals in the small town where you grew up as an unbeliever? Are you kidding me?!*

Bill and Beni were laughing. I am sure my face was frozen with shock and terror, in spite of my greatest efforts to conceal what I was feeling. Suddenly, I had a clear thought. *What was the time frame they had in mind for this change?* I asked, "Are you talking about five years from now? Three years?"

Beni answered, "February. We think we are leaving in February. We have no idea why, but that's the month we keep getting."

"February 2000?" I whispered.

"No," she laughed, "February, six months from now. 1996." At that point I thought for sure I was going to faint or vomit.

That was the last "little chat" about our coming on board. Sure enough, six months later they were gone. Bethel Church interviewed Bill in December of that year, 1995, and offered him a position as senior pastor. He informed them that he had to "train" a new pastor back at Mountain Chapel and would need some time. "February," he told them, "will be the earliest that I can come to Bethel." Just like that, we were sliding toward the leadership role as pastors. I guess we could have said no, but we knew that the Lord had a plan.

After our meeting with Bill and Beni that September morning, however, I was mad. I was spitting mad, mainly because I was so scared. I had thought that we would come to Weaverville and learn from the “Master Pastor.” This hope had been dashed in a few moments and suddenly turned into an unexpected, terrifying... promotion. I worked to master my fears by telling myself, *Maybe God is in this. Maybe He is going to stay here even if Bill leaves. Maybe this is going to turn out all right. Maybe He will be with me. Maybe this is what He was trying to tell me 13 years earlier.*

Thirteen years earlier, I was 21 years old and had just given my heart to the Lord. I began helping Kris Vallotton, who was already a leader at Mountain Chapel, with the high school youth group, and at one point Kris prophesied this over me: “One day you will pastor here in Weaverville.” I could hardly imagine that at the time, but I did my best to make the word come to pass by looking for a Bible college that I could afford. After some time of fruitless effort, however, I gave up, and in a couple of years I forgot all about that word—until it came crashing back into my mind early in the process of returning to Weaverville. Eventually, it became the weapon with which I fought my fears and inadequacies.

Remembering “He is with me” changed the way I perceived everything. After I forgave Bill for luring me into a situation I could not escape, I started to see what he saw in me—a pastoral anointing. I didn’t call it that, but I started to recognize that the peace and comfort that he and Beni mentioned in our “little chat” that day was actually coming from this anointing they could see on our lives. They knew that our hearts would be focused on the people. We would make sure that their flock, the people in whom they had invested 17 years of their lives, were going to get our best.

Thankfully, they were right. As the pastor, I began teaching and preaching material from my counseling background. I started building true identity as dearly loved children of God into the hearts

and minds of the people. My schedule was filled with appointments to meet with people. Couples, families, parents, men, and women were continuously coming to my office to get healed and strengthened. Our leadership team began a series called “The Search for Freedom” and started a journey to heal the wounds and lies of their pasts. One of our elders went through a radical transformation during this time that led our whole church to another level of healing, freedom, and community.

The kind of growth I have just described is the passion of the *pastoral anointing*. The pastor needs to know that the people are healthy and strong. He or she knows that the Gospel comes alive as the saints apply and manifest true love and freedom in their lives. This anointing allows God to cultivate His heart in His people. The Good Shepherd is at work through the anointing of pastors.

Bill and Beni had known that their church had been without a strong pastoral anointing for years. Bill’s *apostolic* anointing had been growing stronger over the previous decade, and his focus was increasingly more caught up with Heaven’s concerns than human concerns. His associate pastor and brother, Bob Johnson, carried a strong *evangelistic* anointing, and his focus was on the lost. And the other leader with a strong anointing was a *prophet*, Kris Vallotton. Each of these anointings turns the attention and priority away from the saints and places that urgency elsewhere, as I will explain in more detail in just a moment.

Stepping into that pastoral vacuum was a little heady. Because I wasn’t replacing the apostle but was providing a fresh perspective that met different needs, it was easy for the church to value and receive me as a leader. I remember Bill telling me that the transition of leadership was supernatural, describing it as “scary smooth.” He was right. Mountain Chapel was ready for what the pastoral anointing would bring. We were both expecting much more fallout after his 17-year stint as the senior leader. There was none. This was

my first lesson in understanding the nature and importance of each member of the fivefold ministry, and the Lord has only continued to build on this understanding since then.

The Fivefold Anointings

I think I can best introduce the attributes of the fivefold anointings by describing what might happen if they all arrived together at the scene of a car accident:

The pastor is the first one out of the car. He scrambles to assess the situation and begins a triage approach in applying First Aid to injured victims. He gathers blankets, jackets, water, and anything else he can find to try to comfort them. He surveys the situation to see if anything is threatening the safety both of those who are receiving care and those who have been drawn to the scene of the accident. He talks with each person to find out his or her name, marital status, and whether he or she has children. He gathers vital sign information and any available emergency contact information in order to help the emergency response team when they arrive. He brings a sense of calm to the situation, and each person there feels a genuine feeling of care and connection to the pastor. He wonders whether he should have been a doctor.

The teacher is next on the scene. He studies the situation in order to figure out what caused the accident. He steps back, notices the patterns of the skid marks and the distance each car moved before and after the impact, and estimates the speed of each car at the point of impact. Drawing from his deep knowledge of the driver's manual and traffic laws, he develops a theory about who was at fault. His conclusion is

that, overall, drivers need more training and would most likely benefit from mandatory classes and continuing education requirements.

The evangelist arrives on the scene and asks everyone lying in a safe, comfortable place (thanks to the pastor), “If you were to die as a result of your injuries, do you know where you would go—Heaven or hell?” He then notices that there is a large gathering of bystanders and people in their cars who have pulled over to watch. He begins to address the larger crowd with the same question. “There are no guarantees that you will make it home safely. Do you know where you would go?” People give their hearts to the Lord right there on the side of the road. He explains to all these new believers that the greatest gift you can ever give to someone else is the gift of salvation. He trains them to lead others to Christ and prays for the baptism of the Holy Spirit to come upon them all. Afterward he says, “This was great!” and decides to go purchase a police scanner when he gets back to town.

The prophet knew this was going to happen because he had a dream about it the previous night. Because everyone in the dream had survived the accident, he rebukes a spirit of death and declares with great faith and unction that all shall live and none shall die. He also proclaims that there are angels surrounding the scene of the accident and prays that the eyes of all the people’s hearts will be opened to see in the Spirit. Then he walks around and starts to

call the destiny out in various people. He releases a spirit of revelation within the group. And finally, and quite naturally, he begins to ask around to find out who is in charge at the scene. When he discovers the one in charge, he discerns whether this is God's chosen leader or not. Or if he finds that no one is in charge, he will appoint a leader.

The apostle prays for the injured. He invites the supernatural healing touch of God into the scene. He begins to tell testimonies of when he has been on the scene of car accidents and witnessed the power of God manifest itself in those situations. The faith level of the people begins to rise. He then asks if anyone can feel heat in his or her hands. He puts those who raise their hands to work praying for others to be healed. He demonstrates to all who are near that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. He then opens a school for those who arrive at car accident scenes and sends them all over the world to do signs and wonders.

Hopefully this scenario displays the reality that each anointing is also a *mindset*. Each anointing determines how a person will see various circumstances and situations, and as a result, makes different solutions available and applicable to the same situation. No anointing is more important or more correct. They are simply God's gifts to His Church to help bring Heaven's perspective to the earth.

Apostles and Prophets

Before we explore the five primary anointings in more detail, along with their strengths and weaknesses, let me point to the scriptural basis for both the offices and the priority order of the apostle and prophet:

*Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church, **first apostles, second prophets, third teachers**, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.¹*

Paul clearly lays out an order of priority in this passage, and this order is related to the realms of the supernatural that correspond to each particular office. As you could see in the previous illustration, the anointing on the apostle and prophet creates a perspective that is primarily focused on perceiving what is going on in Heaven and bringing that to earth. The teacher is focused on being able to describe everything that happened accurately, and the evangelist and pastor are focused on the people. Each of these areas of focus is vitally important, but in order for them to function together as God intended, they must relate to one another according to His order of priority. The areas of heavenly focus come first and influence the areas of earthly focus.

When Paul makes apostles first, prophets second, and teachers third, he is describing a flow. The flow streams through the teacher, is released in miracles and healing, and continues through helps and administrations and tongues. Tragically, in many churches today, the practices of teaching, helps, and administration have become largely devoid of the supernatural. It seems as though these gifts were plucked out of the list and separated from the *flow* of the supernatural supply of Heaven, and actually, that is exactly what

has happened. In order to protect this flow, the Church needs to be founded upon leaders who carry a primary core value for the supernatural.

Rather than having the apostle and prophet at the foundation of church culture, today the American church has largely placed the *teacher, pastor, or evangelist* at the helm. But effectively divorcing the supernatural from ministry in this way has drastically impacted the general understanding of the true role of each anointing. Today in most churches the role of a teacher is to state clearly and accurately the truths of the Bible in a theologically sound message in an effort to build security into the lives of believers. The role of the pastor is to create a church that has strong family values and systems in place to nourish strong character and relationships. The role of the evangelist is to emphasize church growth and to train church members to share their faith and lead others to Christ.

The problem is that these are earthly-focused models of leadership. Without the flow of grace from the apostles and prophets, who are not only focused on seeing what is going on in Heaven but also on releasing that reality here on earth, these models will inevitably lead us to focus on what we know God has done in the past and miss out on what He is doing now. They lead us to care more about knowledge than experience.

It's even harder to avoid this imbalance when we live in a society that is permeated with it. Most of the schools, colleges, and universities of our land have embraced a dualistic worldview that separates knowledge from experience. This worldview reduces the goal of teaching to the mere transmission of information. This paradigm is certainly present in the Church, and the result is that much of the teaching ministry in the Church today is devoid of supernatural revelation and power. It is limited to what can be done from earth's authority and resources.

But the fivefold anointing of teaching, one of the gifts of Christ, who modeled just what each anointing does, is very different. Jesus exercised His teaching gift by both *preaching* and *demonstrating* His message with miracles. Those who experienced His teaching were shocked by how different it was, and it was different because, unlike their other teachers, He taught with authority.² Christ is the model that defines the ministry of teaching in His church, and the implication of His teaching model is that unless we bring people into the tangible, supernatural reality of the Gospel, we have no authority to teach it.

I realize that the kind of government I am describing, in which there is a clear order of priority in the various roles, is difficult to understand and embrace in American culture. Our American style of democratic government is designed to keep all its governing members in a system of checks and balances, where each branch of government must be accountable to another branch so that no one legislator, judge, or president can gain control of the whole government. I understand that and value this in an earthly model. Nonetheless, it is there in the Scripture: “first apostles, second prophets, third teachers....” I believe that much of the Church has ignored this Scripture and has been using templates gleaned from earth’s governors in an attempt to replicate Heaven. But only Heaven’s template can reproduce Heaven on the earth.

When we use other models, the Church becomes no more than what people already expect from their earthly experiences. This is a huge and fundamental mistake, with serious consequences. I think we’ve been duped! When we use man’s governing systems to define or reproduce Heaven, we’ve started down the path of implementing an inferior system. Heaven will not conform to or replicate an inferior system. Heaven must be the source.

In the passage from First Corinthians 12 quoted previously, Paul pointed to Heaven’s template for government. He clearly stated an

order in church ministry, of which I've heard little outside my immediate environment throughout my 20 years as a Christian. This order is supported by Ephesians 2:17-22 (NASB):

*And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

“God’s household” literally rests on the foundation or leadership of the apostles and prophets. This design allows the Body of Christ to be built up into a “holy temple” and ultimately to become a “dwelling place of God.” Isn’t this what we desire?

As I’ve been hinting, the critical flaw I see in the American design for church structure and government, though it’s not limited to America, is *disorder*, meaning that the roles and relationships of leaders are out of order according to Scripture. The foundations and leadership of most churches today consist of pastors, teachers, and administrators.

We’ve empowered the wrong portion of the list in First Corinthians 12 to be the primary leaders, and the reasoning behind this decision is not spiritual, but earthly. James 3:13-18 (NASB) warns us against this practice of pulling earthly wisdom into our lives:

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the

*gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. **This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

When Heaven is the model for our culture, the primary result is *peace*. Peace is the goal of Heaven because it is the primary quality of the government of God. But the disordered forms of government to which we've all become accustomed create not peace, but *control*, which is their intended goal. Man has the opposite goal of Heaven. Earth's leadership structure is motivated by the desire to protect the rule of those in office. When we primarily structure the environment of God's house to protect the will of the people, we've stepped off the path of the "wisdom from above."

To see the seriousness of doing things according to human reasoning rather than Heaven's, we need only remember one of the strongest rebukes in the Gospels, the rebuke Jesus gave to His good friend Peter. If you recall, Peter tried to talk Jesus out of going to die on the cross. Peter wanted to protect what he could see was a good thing. His primary concern and motivation was to keep the current benefit flowing to earth. Jesus turned to him and said, "*Get behind Me, Satan! ... You do not have in mind the things of God, **but the things of men.***"³ It was not one of Peter's finest moments, but it is a clear word to all of us watching. Heaven is the model—not earth.

“... First Apostles...”

You have likely heard the term *apostolic ministry* used more in recent years. I am confident that we will hear and see more of it in the years to come. This term is something that needs defining early in this book because I will make frequent references to it from here on. Through this term, I will be referring to the primary goals and objectives of the apostle's leadership, and therefore, *the goals with which all the people under the apostle align themselves*.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He brought a key phrase into their core values. He told them to pray, “*Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*”⁴ His instructions taught them to long for Heaven on earth. I believe this core value is the primary objective of the apostle's ministry. Apostolic leaders are focused on Heaven, and their mission is to see Heaven's supernatural reality established on the earth. They long to see the evidence of Heaven's touch in the environment they lead or influence. Having this motivation at the foundation of a church leads to an entirely different emphasis in the church's governing priorities. The apostle will make the presence of God, the worship of God, and the agenda of Heaven the top priorities in the environment. An apostolic government is designed to protect these priorities.

The apostle Paul refers to himself as the “*master builder*” in First Corinthians 3:10. This is a translation of the Greek word *architekton*, the word from which we derive the English word “architect.”

This perfectly describes the role of the apostolic ministry. It is as though God Himself has given blueprints to certain individuals to reproduce Heaven on the earth. Along with this blueprint, the anointing of the apostle contains a quality that stimulates and draws

to the surface the diverse anointings in the people around him. As those around the apostle begin to manifest their own unique anointings, it creates an environment of “sub-contractors” who help the “master builder” to realize the blueprints of Heaven.

The following are some of the key characteristics of an apostolic environment and culture:

1. Worship and supernatural activity are priorities in the environment and the lifestyle of the saints, because God’s presence is the top priority.
2. The saints are sent, as Jesus was, to destroy the works of the devil, including disease, sickness, and affliction. The saints live to demonstrate to all the people on earth that God is always the good guy and the devil is always the bad guy.
3. The Kingdom of God is “*joy in the Holy Spirit.*”⁵ Therefore, church is to be a place of exceeding, abundant joy.
4. God desires those who don’t yet know Him to come into a relationship with Him where the primary emphasis is love, not merely service.
5. The Body of Christ is being built up and equipped to become a glorious and victorious Bride, no matter how the conditions of the earth may presently appear.
6. The Church is to create global awakening and impact.
7. Successive generations must be equipped to carry and demonstrate Kingdom revelation.

At Bethel Church we have an “offering reading” that we declare as a congregation over our region each Sunday. A few years ago, Mike and Debbie Adams moved to Redding from another state to attend Bethel’s School of Supernatural Business. After being in the congregation and absorbing the culture, Debbie wrote what has become affectionately known as “our second offering reading.” It really best sums up what I mean by apostolic ministry:

As we receive today's offering we are believing
YOU for:

Heaven open, earth invaded
Storehouses unlocked and miracles created
Dreams and visions
Angelic visitations
Declaration, impartation, and divine manifestations
Anointings, giftings, and calls
Positions and promotions
Provisions and resources
To go to the nations
Souls and more souls
From every generation
Saved and set free
Carrying Kingdom revival

*Thank You, Father, that as I join my value system
to Yours, You will shower FAVOR, BLESSING, and
INCREASE upon me so I have more than enough to
co-labor with Heaven to see Jesus get His FULL
REWARD! HALLELUJAH!*

An apostolic environment is an exciting place, because the focus on Heaven allows prayer, worship, miracles, signs, and wonders to become normal in our daily lives. However, there is one particular area that the role of the apostle is not designed to address directly: the needs of people. Do you remember what the apostles said when confronted with the needs of the people in Acts 6:4? "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (NASB). They were acting like apostles. The increasing needs of the people were a distraction to their role and anointing. It's not that they didn't care about the people. They did something to make sure that quality men in their community addressed those needs. But an apostle has to have the freedom to pursue Heaven if he or she is effectively going to fulfill an apostolic call.

The Downside

When an apostle pursues his or her calling without the other ministry graces in place, several real issues creep into the environment and threaten success for the apostolic leader. Unusual manifestations not found in the Bible, unprecedented scenarios and styles, an uncomfortable focus on the supernatural, and a noticeable inattention to the needs of the people begin to create friction for any apostolic leader. All the people can see is the distance growing between them and the apostle. As the people's needs go unmet, they can begin to resent the way the apostle is choosing to use his or her time. Travel, meetings, connection with other apostolic leaders, and prayer seem like luxurious expenditures of time when the needs of the people are screaming in their own ears.

I've heard people say, "Signs and wonders are great. Miracles are amazing. I am happy for all those blind people who can see now. But we are going to another church where they care about people, where they teach the Bible, and where they are less emotional. This church doesn't even have a way for new people to get plugged in." This may seem petty, but it is a real complaint that moves people away from an apostolic leader and a revival environment after a while. Open heavens and open back doors are the sweet and sour of the apostolic leader. This is why they need the rest of the team.

“... Second Prophets...”

The next vital piece in the government of a revival culture is the role of the prophet. This is the next piece of the plumbing that pipes Heaven to earth. The foundation is incomplete without the presence of the prophetic anointing. God emphasizes the vitally important role of the prophet throughout the Scriptures:

*Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.*⁶

Success is built through the value we maintain for the prophetic voices in our environment, because our prosperity comes through our agreements with Heaven’s culture, and the prophets clarify the reality of that culture for us and invite us to enter it. Our experience of prophetic leadership in Bethel’s culture has come in many different forms. The number of prophetic voices poured into the formation of our course and destiny seems enormous, from Bob Jones to Bobby Conner; from Dick Joyce to Dick Mills; from Mario Murillo to Michael Ratliff; from Jill Austin to John Paul Jackson; from Paul Cain to Patricia King, Larry Randolph, Mahesh and Bonnie Chavda, Iverna Tompkins, Cindy Jacobs, Wes and Stacy Campbell, and Rolland and Heidi Baker. Along with these global and national prophetic voices and more, equally important local and regional voices have shaped our culture and destiny, including Wendall McGowen, Mary Andersen, Deborah Reed, Dan McCollam, Judy Franklin, Nancy Cobb, and many others.

Kris Vallotton is the primary sculptor of Bethel’s prophetic environment. He is a gift of Christ to our house and to the Body of Christ. His role as a prophet in our environment has cultivated our expectation to discover the heights and depths of the Good News.

The Gospel is more than the words on the pages of Scripture. It is a reality that must unfold in the life of each believer, and one of the primary ways it does so is through prophetic ministry, which apprehends the promises of the Kingdom for individual destinies and calls them into reality through declaration. (In his book *The Supernatural Ways of Royalty*, Kris introduces the world to the core values and revelation by which he has established a prophetic culture at Bethel.)

Kris's leadership and influence as a prophet has also cultivated our expectation for God's presence. We need someone to keep us expectant and aware of the ever-present reality of the Kingdom. Apostles keep us believing, but prophets keep us expecting that God is coming. The dynamic ways in which God speaks to the prophet, including dreams, visions, and trances, create awareness of God's involvement with us. These supernatural tools introduce an infusion of sensitivity toward Heaven's activity and plans.

But more than making us aware of Heaven through his or her experiences, the anointing on the prophet actually equips us to have our own heavenly experiences. Matthew 10:41 tells us, "*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward...*" What is this reward? The reward is to see and hear what the Spirit is doing and saying. The prophetic anointing carries a *seer* dimension, and it gives people sight to see what was invisible prior to the prophet's influence.

Jesus, who modeled the office of the prophet, walked around giving supernatural sight to others all day long. He often asked His disciples and those around Him, "*Do you not yet see or understand?*"⁷ The answer was always no because He was introducing an entirely different view of life, especially to the religious leaders of the day. But that question led those same people to begin looking for something they had never considered seeing before. As a result, they received *eyes to see*.

The prophet and the apostle can get along famously because both are looking into Heaven and recreating what they see there on the earth. They should work together like a bow and arrow seeking the same goals. Doubtless, this is why they are the foundation of the New Testament church.

“... Third Teachers...”

Next we have teachers. As I mentioned, the teacher is generally accepted as the highest anointing level in the American church. But the truth is that it is not the highest anointing, but only the third level of anointing. It is a “C” in a grade scale, and it is what keeps the Church only *average* in its effects and influence. Our need and opportunity to upgrade the anointing to an “A” is growing.

Before I get too far into this section about teachers, I need to confess that this will not satisfy the needs of the teachers reading it. For most teachers, this section would have to be a book in itself, because teachers need lots of information before they can conclude most anything. I respect that about teachers. I am not going to try very hard to convince teachers that I am right or they are wrong. I am simply going to present why I think we’ve made a big mistake in making the teacher the highest anointing operating in the leadership of the American church.

Our current church culture has a high value for the security we feel when we are able to prove that what we have devoted our life to is right. In order to assert our faith, we assume that we must be able to argue a case to a logical conclusion. But the fact is that our need for so much certainty comes from great *uncertainty*. When Heaven stops manifesting itself in the Church, Christians have to *prove* somehow that they are reasonable for following Jesus. When the power of the Gospel is replaced by arguments, everyone should be concerned. When cancer, paralysis, tumors, and mental illness leave people’s bodies and minds, we do not require an argument. A person experiencing the touch of Heaven is proof enough that Jesus is who He says He is.

But when the Church insists on having a logical culture, we demand a logical gospel, and therefore, we turn to the teachers. Most teachers today are fixated on the *written* Word of God. They believe that the Word of God is the source of life and truth on the earth. Their value for the Word is much higher than their need for the supernatural. These are the lawyers, scribes, and Pharisees of our day. They can wield the “Sword” with the best. The teacher has a deep, driving need to be right, and predominantly sees the world in terms of “scriptural” and “non-scriptural.” Because the teacher’s focus is on the Word, the anointing of the teacher influences the Church to focus on the Word. Please don’t misunderstand me; I am not trying to devalue Scripture. But I want us to understand how unimportant Heaven has become because of this dreadful error and disorder. The teachers, as the primary influence in the Church, have turned our attention to the law.

When we focus solely on the Word, eventually we begin to fight amongst ourselves over the Word. We begin to pull apart the Body of Christ because there is a right and a wrong. Each teacher is compelled to be right. As Paul said to the Corinthians, we have “many teachers” in the Body of Christ.⁸ And when the teachers disagree, and many do, there is division. Leader after leader begins to assert his or her case of doctrine and theology and builds a case to prove his or hers and disprove the others.

What then is the role of the teacher in the church if it is not to prove that Christians are right to believe what they believe? In order for teachers to play their true role in the culture of the Church, they will first have to be willing to pursue a supernatural lifestyle. They will have to be dissatisfied with the armor of their arguments and the lifelessness of their theology. They will need to increase their courage to risk failure and live a life that is unable to answer all the questions of their world. The teachers must embrace mystery.

The anointing on teachers will always cause them to have a high value for education. They will be those who believe that most problems are solved through training and informing people according to Scripture. But the real change they want to see will come under the leadership of an apostolic and prophetic culture. In a supernatural culture, teachers will teach with supernatural results.

When Jesus taught a crowd about the Kingdom of Heaven, He always *showed* them the Kingdom. His disciples were in a never-ending classroom experience. Jesus took “show and tell” to a whole new level. Our teachers must put the “show” back into their lesson plans. I’ve heard Bill Johnson say many times, “Jesus is perfect theology.” I agree. If we see Jesus doing it, then we are on to something good. If He wasn’t doing anything like what we are doing, we’d better ask ourselves, “What went wrong?”

Teachers must take the passion and the revelation of the apostles and prophets and show us how it becomes truth that we apply to our lives. The role of the teacher is to help replicate the processes of the supernatural and then train and equip the saints to cooperate with those processes. The love of Scripture and the knowledge that teachers carry help them to communicate complex processes in simple analogies and applications.

Randy Clark of Global Awakening is a prime example to me of someone with a teaching gift who uses it to help the world and the Church understand the supernatural. Although he is an apostolic leader himself, his teaching gift operates in that higher anointing. Therefore, he uses his understanding of Scripture, history, theology, and people to connect mysterious revelations to practical daily life. His models for training people to pray for the sick are excellent and highly effective methods for mobilizing prayer teams to minister to large groups in his crusades. Believers who have never prayed for others to be healed in their whole Christian experience are, within a few hours of training, seeing miracle after miracle.

A successful revival culture has teachers who are perpetuating the supernatural in it. The days of teaching our limited experiences are over. We now must learn to teach how and what Heaven is doing every day to everyone.

Where Do Pastors Fit In?

Ah, the beloved pastors, where will we put another role that has helped complete the disorder in church government? Senior Pastor. What a strange title when you look at the list that Paul laid out in First Corinthians 12. Actually, if you look at that list, pastor isn't even mentioned, let alone numbered. How is it then that Senior Pastor is the title of the most important person in the church structure? I have a hunch.

When a group of people comes together, whether it is a family, a community, a business, a school, or a church, it isn't long before that group organizes itself in such a way to get its needs met. Imagine a survival scene from a movie: The ship sinks, the plane crashes, and the people are lost. Whatever the incident, the steps are the same. The priorities are food and water, shelter, safety, and then hope for rescue. The longer the rescue delays, the more another priority develops: Who is going to lead us? The nod usually goes to the one who has the most aggressive plan to save the group, the "Indiana Jones," if you will. If that doesn't work, then the group begins to think about long-term survival. The leader they pick for the long haul is much more compassionate, steady, practical, and predictable. This leader will make sure that the needs of the people are met. He will ensure that they are civilized and safe. He will be their pastor.

Pastors emerge as long-term leaders when all hope of rescue is gone. People gather around a leader they believe will tend to their particular needs. It shows up in politics and businesses as well as churches. If the people's primary focus is on themselves, they will elect a leader who has the same focus. When the issue becomes long-term survival, the people will look for a pastoral anointing in their leader. It's as simple as that.

If the pastors are not connected to the apostles and prophets, then their leadership will only lead people back to a self-focus and the pastor will have to give them a natural alternative to a supernatural life. When a pastoral anointing is the primary leader, the people expect to be the center of the universe. And unfortunately, the pastor thrives, for a season, in that expectation, burn-out usually follows.

But when the pastoral anointing is connected to the apostle and prophet, it provides another vital piece of the flow from Heaven to earth. These caring, compassionate leaders are the necessary solution to the “back door” problem that apostles and prophets have in their leadership environments. Pastors in a revival culture bring leadership to the people. The pastoral anointing creates great favor with the people because of the connection pastors develop with them. These are the leaders who will be in their lives, homes, and families. These are the leaders who will sit with them and work out marriage problems. These are the leaders who will know about their struggles with employment or raising teenagers.

If pastors can learn to maintain a dual focus on Heaven and people, then they will be the ones who bring a revival culture to the everyday lives of the saints. Keeping this balanced focus requires effort, because pastors naturally want the people to feel loved, disciplined, connected, and protected. But when they are submitted to apostolic leadership, they are able to develop cell groups, for example, without making cell groups the primary focus of the church.

With the expansion of purpose and vision, pastors are far less territorial and empowering. Allowing other pastors to rise up at their side is no longer an opportunity for competition or threat. Pastors in an apostolic anointing can lead many more people, because the people no longer need the power of the presence of the pastor.

Pastors bring the nourishing presence of God into the lives of people. They connect the people to the supernatural environment created by the apostles and prophets. Instead of leading people to themselves and then showing them the love they have for people who are hurting, pastors begin to lead the people into the presence of God to find the solutions for life's problems. It is the pastor's good pleasure to see the saints find the green pastures of freedom and comfort made available by the apostolic ministry.

“What About the Lost?”

Evangelists form the end of the funnel that ensures that Heaven's flow from the apostles through the prophets, teachers, and pastors makes it to its intended target—those held in darkness. The evangelist's anointing causes him or her to focus on the souls who do not yet know Jesus as the primary concern and motivation for ministry. And realistically, unless the ministry of the Church is reaching those who don't yet know the Lord, the function of the other anointings is fairly pointless. Perhaps it is this conviction that, strangely enough, causes evangelists to be Christians who seem to be mad at Christians. It can be an eternal frustration for those with this anointing to see that we are having another Bible study or potluck at church while people around the city are perishing to everlasting damnation. It just doesn't make any sense to them.

Nonetheless, we are all on the same team. Becoming frustrated with one another doesn't help us flow together, so what is the solution? I believe it's time for the ministry of the evangelist—which both reaches the unsaved and equips the saints to do the same—to be more deeply integrated into the larger purposes of apostolic ministry.

It is easy for us to believe that anyone can lead another person to Christ. We have great faith that when we pray with someone to accept Jesus, the person is truly born again, right there on the spot. The vast majority of the Christian church today believes that to be true. This concept has only gained momentum since it was introduced several hundred years ago in revival. It was captured by teachers and pastors and preserved among the people in the church. Today the Methodists, Baptists, and other Evangelicals are champions of salvation throughout the world, and nearly every Christian denomination sends missionaries to carry the message of salvation to the ends of the earth. The culture of most churches has

an evangelical practice among the people. Teachers teach it and pastors encourage it. The evangelists beat the drum everywhere they go: "We must go and win souls!" But the bigger question is, "Then what?"

The Kingdom of Heaven invading the earth is the goal, not unsaved people invading the Church. The cooperation between all the ministry gifts is the only way to accomplish the primary objective of the Church. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in carefully and intentionally assembling the pipe that funnels Heaven and all its power and freedom to the earth. When we do, the importance of the entire Christian church being fully equipped by all the ministry graces so that the Kingdom of Heaven "leaks" from our lives will soon be a concept as widely accepted as praying a prayer of salvation.

Honor Is the Hardware

Honor is the hardware that bolts all this plumbing together. This “funnel” is actually a network of relationships, relationships in which the “flow” I’m describing only continues as we learn to recognize these God-given roles and anointings, release people to operate in them, and receive what they have to give. Those called to operate in a fivefold anointing, as my personal story shows, need other fivefold ministers, especially the prophets and apostles, to identify those anointings. None of us are self-appointed in the Kingdom. God anoints a person, and His Spirit in the rest of the team creates a corporate witness that acknowledges God’s anointing and receives the person in his or her role. Only acts of honor such as these can establish and sustain these relationships.

The fivefold design for leadership is obviously a team design, so the one-man show version of Church leadership is clearly not an expression of it, and neither is the bureaucratic, homogenous, “everyone can do every job” style of leadership. Diverse anointings each contribute something entirely unique to the project of bringing Heaven to earth, and this requires an honoring (and undemocratic) attitude that says, “You have something I don’t have, and I need what you have.”

When fivefold leaders model this kind of honor amongst themselves, then “equipping the saints” becomes a matter of extending honor by releasing every individual believer into his or her unique identity and destiny. Each believer comes to understand his or her significance in relationship to the whole Body, and the conviction begins to take hold: “I carry something that no one else carries. I must develop and release my gifts into the Church and the world and do my part in bringing Heaven to earth.” Honor empowers people.

It is time for everyone in the Church to begin honoring those with fivefold anointings, especially those with fivefold anointings! Apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, and evangelists must honor each other and receive each other with the right “name.” Church leaders and believers alike must come into right relationship with Heaven’s government. As we do, those things that are out of joint will be restored to their rightful place and hooked up to the flow of the funnel.

Honor has fallen on hard times in our culture. Independence is worshiped. We focus on our private relationships with God and have a hard time recognizing spiritual authority and considering others as more important than ourselves. The result is that we are cut off from the flow of Heaven. The remarkable growth that Bethel has experienced in the last ten years is a testimony to the remarkable difference people are seeing in an environment where the funnel is connected and people are getting in on the flow.

Like Moses pouring oil over Aaron’s head, God is continuously pouring life, joy, health, peace, and all the other blessings of Heaven into His funnel. The many wonderful effects of a supernaturally charged environment are overwhelming. “We are not in Kansas anymore, Toto,” is the feeling many have when they experience a church where Heaven fills the room. It is the powerful experience of a wineskin that is fully capable to carry and release the outpouring that God has promised to us all along—an outpouring for which we were made. But only honor will build this wineskin, keep it intact, and get us involved with what is inside it.

CHAPTER 3



GOVERNING FROM HEAVEN

*...And the government will be upon His shoulder...
Of the increase of His government and peace there
will be no end, upon the throne of David and over
His kingdom, to order it and establish it with
judgment and justice from that time forward, even
forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform
this.*

(Isaiah 9:6-7)

This whole chapter strikes at the heart of the Accuser. But first, I have to give you a little warning because I'm going to offend you for a few moments. I'm going to mess with your entire paradigm of justice. I'm going to take it out, laugh at it, tickle it, and then I'm going to kick it down the stairs. Okay? You're going to have to chase it down the stairs if you want it back.

Imagine this. Your fifth grader comes to you and says, "Here is my report card." You take his report card, open it up, and there is an F on it. Your fifth grader got an F. *Aaugh!* The spirit of fear manifests in you, just as it would in the heart of every parent. "A fifth grader with an F! He's doomed—doomed! It's over. You can't get F's until high school."

Sure enough, with fear gripping your heart, all you can think about is, "How do I control this child's educational outcome?" This could be the thought of any good parent. How are you going to control your child toward *your* goal, because you love him? This is part of the lesson of love that most of us send to our children: *That which we love, we try to control.*

I'd like to introduce another option. Imagine the parent going to the child and saying, "Oh, nooo! An F in fifth grade? We have an early

bloomer, ahead of the curve—I knew this about you. I just want you to know that your mother and I have talked. We’ve figured something out here, and we want you to know this—we are going to love you no matter how many years it takes you to get through the fifth grade. And son, we figured this out too—if you just wait two more years, your little sister will be in your class with you. You and her buddies could go to birthday parties together and stuff.”

Your fifth grader is going to look you in the eye and say, “Years?”

“Uh-huh.”

“It’s not going to take me years to get through the fifth grade!” And lo and behold, ownership of the problem has settled into the heart of the one who should own that problem.

The way we parent our children when they make mistakes reflects most clearly what we believe about human failure, particularly sin. So many of us think that sin, mistakes, and falling short are more powerful than God’s heart for us. So many of us think that human failure is this powerful force that will overcome us, and that therefore we must manifest pseudo-power over it through partnership with a spirit of fear! But when the disciples were going to call down fire on the audience that was disrespectful to Jesus, Jesus just shook His head. “*You do not know what kind of spirit you are of.*”¹ Second Timothy 1:7 tells us we have not been given that spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind, or self-control. Please notice here that it is not a spirit of “other-control.”

When we are afraid of other people’s sin, it makes us crazy in the presence of sin. We are not ourselves. We are not ourselves when we are dealing with other people’s mistakes. This weird thing happens to us, and as a result we end up giving parenting and leadership in general a bad name. Do you know how many people are in

counseling because of damaging leadership interactions? It is an all-too-familiar experience for us as leaders to cooperate with a demonic plan motivated by the spirit of fear. When we are confronted with people's mistakes, with something that we might not control right there in that moment, we become scared and exercise our authority in the wrong spirit.

Then we project onto God the idea that He's just as afraid of sin as we are. But what exactly is God afraid of, anyway? Nothing. That's exactly right—nothing. He isn't afraid of anything, because love casts out fear, and He is love.² He is the love. If you aren't feeling the love when He's there, something's wrong, because that's Him—*love!* When you're feeling fear, that's not Him.

So we have to decide—what partnerships are we going to make when we are in the presence of sin? This was the thing that made Jesus look like a genius. Jesus could come in and out of sinners' lives. He'd walk into a bar with the harlots and the thieves and go, "Hey guys, how you doin'? Hey, there was this rabbi, this priest, and this Baptist preacher." And those people loved Him! They were going, "I don't know who that guy is, but I love Him, love Him, love Him!"

But the Pharisees were more like, "Here, leper. Ring this bell whenever you come around, because you scare me. Uh-oh, a woman on her period. Uh-oh, dead people. Where can we hide? Where can we go? Let's go in the temple. Don't you sweat on me, don't you sweat on me!" Jesus had the love thing down, but the Pharisees didn't have a clue. So, in the presence of sin, the Pharisees were afraid, but when Jesus was in the presence of sin, He was the solution, the remedy. He was powerful.

We Are Un-punishable

Through the cross, Jesus introduced something into the world that we still don't understand. He has made each and every one of us unpunishable. We are un-punishable. It's not wishful thinking, and you've probably even heard this preached. It is our theology to reach the lost. "Come into the Kingdom of Heaven free and clean of your sins." We declare this from every pulpit in the land.

Sin does not need to be punished. It doesn't need to be controlled. It's not a powerful force. It's just that we don't believe it. It's easy to preach stuff. It's another deal living it!

Let's consider some of what the apostle John had to say about how we deal with sin after the cross:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous?³

John mentioned something that we don't talk about enough anymore. At least, I haven't heard it in quite a while. He said, "We have an advocate in Jesus Christ. We have the best lawyer in town. We're going to get out of this." Jesus is right there with us at every moment to help enforce the victory He's won over sin in our lives. After making this point, John goes on to spend the rest of the book explaining that, because of the cross, our life is no longer about trying not to sin, but about fulfilling the commandment to love. But we are successful in fulfilling the command to love according to the degree that we really understand and believe what the victory that Jesus won actually means:

*He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*⁴

Now that verse introduces something, but you have to know what the word *propitiation* means, right? It has to mean something to you. You can't just read over that and say, "Blah, blah, blah. Whatever, something...something old." Propitiation is the word for atonement. He paid the ransom. It literally means that Jesus satisfied the wrath of God toward sin. Jesus' death on the cross satisfied the need for God to punish sin in man. When Jesus went to the cross and gave His life as the perfect sacrifice, He ended an insatiable condition. He also introduced an entirely different reality based on an entirely different relationship between God and mankind. He removed the need for punishment. He removed fear from our relationship with Him.

First John 4:18 says, "*There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love*" (NIV). If we're going to lead our communities in revival and build a house for the presence of love, we have to know how to interact with one another in such a way that eliminates the punishment option, the need to control people when they fail. When we stand in the presence of sin and respond in fear and control, it makes us look like idiots. This would be a good thing to unlearn. This would be a good thing to break our agreements with. Those who sin do not need to be punished. We have to figure out a response to the real lives of the people around us, the real lives of the people that we shepherd, the real lives of the people in the communities where we live—a response to sin that contains no punishment.

The Fork in the Road

I believe that the primary thing that will help us to change our response to sin is to gain a deeper understanding of the new covenant that Christ established for us. The apostle Paul was passionate about showing us that we have a choice to live in two different kinds of relationships with God, and when we don't understand the nature of those relationships, it causes problems. In Galatians 3, Paul asks the Galatians, "Who has bewitched you? What happened to you? I was just here a minute ago and you were fine. What's going on? Who has deceived you? Who has allowed you to completely alter your belief system?" Then he diagnoses the problem: "You're trying to practice two covenants. You're trying to live in two camps."

In Galatians 4 he distinguishes the Old and New Covenants by comparing them with the two offspring of Abraham. Ishmael, son of Hagar, the slave woman, represents the Old Covenant, and Isaac, son of Sarah, the free woman, represents the New Covenant. In Galatians 4:30 (NASB) he quotes from Genesis: "*Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the sons of the free woman.*" In other words, the two covenants cannot coexist in the same place. You're either a slave under the law, or you're a free son. Love and fear have no fellowship. You can't do two; you have to choose.

He concludes by identifying those who have embraced Christ: "*So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.*"⁵ The next verse, Galatians 5:1, says, "*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery*" (NASB). He's saying, "All right, you have two choices. If you want to, you can live a life protecting your relationship with the rules. But if you want to commit your life to

preserving your relationship with the rules, then you will find yourself in the Old Covenant.”

The reason Paul is so concerned is that these two different covenants produce different results. Earlier in his letter he mentions that he had rebuked Peter, who should have known better, for trying to get Gentile believers to obey the rules of the Old Covenant, and then explains why this was causing problems:

*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! **For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.** For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain”.⁶*

He is saying that when we start to obey the rules of the Old Covenant, we allow ourselves to be defined as those for whom that covenant was given, namely sinners. When we define ourselves as sinners, we, by definition, deserve to be judged and punished. When we protect our relationship with the rules, the result cannot be anything but punishment. Not only that, when we choose this covenant knowing that Christ has already dealt with the sin issue

and opened the way for us to relate to the Father as sons and daughters, then we are actually saying that Christ's death was pointless and are cutting ourselves off from the only thing that can save us—grace. You can see why Paul was so upset with Peter.

Unfortunately, the same issue still needs to be addressed in many of our churches. The downfall of the teacher's anointing is to elevate the teaching of the rules as supreme in the environment, leading people to pay attention to and cultivate our relationship with the rules of God, of Christ. We say, "Hey, it's not a religion, it's a relationship." We have promoted that on bumper stickers and T-shirts, and car washes that have banners. But look at how most church environments respond when someone breaks the rules. All the responses are to shepherd the person back into a right relationship with the rules. Punishment is the tool *par excellence* to restore a person to a right relationship with the culture of rules.

The problem is that in Christ we have not, in fact, been given a relationship with the rules, but a relationship with the Spirit, a relationship heart-to-heart, a relationship that practices love. In Romans 7, Paul talks about two laws—the law of sin and the law of life in Christ—and declares that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death, from the law of relationship with the rules. But that is not the relationship or the reality for most people. Most people have a relationship with the rules, and thus their behavior is motivated by fear of punishment, rather than love.

I'll give you an innocuous example. You're going down the freeway. Everybody is going with the flow of traffic...except for this one guy dodging in and out. That guy's going a little faster than the flow of traffic. The next thing you know, there's a highway patrol car coming down the on-ramp. There he is. Everyone is extremely aware that the highway patrol is right there. "Oh my gosh, there's a cop here. I'm going to be late. I didn't factor this into my time and

travel equation. What am I going to do?” It’s like, “Shark in the water! Okay, everybody, who’s he going to get?” And everybody speeds up, right? No. Not usually. Everyone slows down. “I’m just going to stay behind him. I’ll just slow down. We’ll all try to stay behind him.” Why? Everyone wants to protect his or her relationship with the rules and avoid punishment. When the cop either pulls that guy over or pulls off the freeway, everybody goes back to the “flow of traffic.”

Of course, everyone knows that traffic laws are good and should be enforced. Similarly, Paul explains that God’s law is good in that it revealed the power of sin in his life and his need for redemption. That was the purpose of the Old Covenant. However, the law itself could not bring about that salvation. Only in Christ’s death can we die to sin and be free to live according to a different law.

Paul says:

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.... Who will set me free from the body of this death?⁷

He goes on to say:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh [that which died with Christ] the law of sin.”⁸

In the previous chapter he gives us a key for stewarding ourselves to walk in the reality that brings us out of the Old Covenant and into the New—“Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God

in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁹ That word *reckon* means to consider the evidence and make a judgment. God’s verdict over every believer is that we’re dead to sin in Christ.

Paul explains that the law was only for sinners. Since we’re dead to sin in Christ, we have been delivered from a life of protecting a connection with the rules. Romans 8:1 tell us, “*Therefore, there’s no condemnation [punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus....*” Then it tells us that being “in Christ Jesus” means we are “*those who walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.*” Our experience of life without condemnation happens according to how we *walk*. We experience no condemnation when we walk, not according to a relationship with the rules, but according to a relationship of love. Being un-punishable is the result of walking, through faith and grace, in a relationship with Spirit. It is all about my heart-to-heart connection, my union, my attention to a relationship with Christ.

As we walk in the Spirit, the question we must constantly ask is, how is my life affecting our relationship? Keeping the law of life in Christ means that I manage myself in order to preserve and protect my connection to His heart. It’s not about living to protect myself from the punisher when I break the rules. Many of us believe that when Jesus said, “*If you love Me, you will keep [obey] My commandments,*”¹⁰ it meant, “If you love Me, you will let Me control you.” If I still have a mindset informed by the law of sin and death, I hear Jesus saying, “Keep your relationship with My rules!”

An Old Testament perspective makes John 14:15 sound like another attempt of God to control us. “If you love Me, you will obey my commandments.” The problem is, of course, there is no list of commandments from Jesus. We may attempt to assemble one in an effort to protect our relationship to His rules, but that is not the point of that verse. Jesus is not trying to introduce the New Old Testament to those He’s died to make free!

But when we hear this command from the mindset of the law of Christ, we hear, “If you love Me, it’s going to show up in how you treat the things that I told you are important to Me. The way you manage yourself in our relationship is going to be a clear indicator to Me of your love. What are you going to do? I don’t want control over you and I don’t have control over you. This is why I’ve given you a spirit of self-control. It is your attention to our relationship and your ability to manage yourself in this relationship in order to create and sustain intimacy that manifests the law of life in Christ. Intimacy—’In-to-Me-you-see’—is how you learn what is important to Me, and if you love Me, you’ll adjust your behavior to protect My heart.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus laid out some statements that look an awful lot like a stricter version of the old rules. In fact, the kind of behavior He described is impossible for any sinner to hope to exhibit. But Jesus wasn’t giving these commands to sinners—He was giving them to the sons and daughters of the New Covenant who would have access to an entirely new nature and supernatural grace. He was simply describing how these new people would behave. Remember, the Old Covenant was an external covenant, a system of controls designed to keep sinners in line. But the New Covenant is an internal covenant for sons and daughters who, because of their new nature, can be trusted with the responsibility to govern themselves and have access to the power of self-control through the Holy Spirit. The behavior Jesus describes is evidence of the superior power to walk in righteousness possessed by sons and daughters of the New Covenant.

Obviously, we do face challenges in learning to walk in the Spirit, but these are not the challenges we face when we are trying to keep the rules. They are the challenges of dying to ourselves and exercising our self-control so that we stay connected to the flow of God’s grace that enables us to live sin-free lives. So, in a way, this law of Christ is way harder than simply going with the “flow of

traffic.” But the rewards are infinite because this is where the Kingdom comes. The law that rules in the Kingdom is the law of Christ, the law of love, not the law of rule keeping, and when we line our lives up with love, the Kingdom of love manifests in our lives. Paul’s point is, “If you don’t have love, if you don’t have this, you have nothing.”¹¹ There’s no life in the rules. You can be amazingly obedient to the rules but not manifest the life of the Kingdom because there’s no life in the rules.

If you think you have a relationship with Jesus going on and love isn’t showing up with your relationships with people, then I don’t know what you have. If you cannot cultivate heart-to-heart relationships and practice intimacy with people, guess who is fooling whom? If you don’t know God, He’ll look a lot like you. You’ll make Him up, and you’ll be a rock star in that relationship. When we don’t know who God is because we don’t know His love and how His love works, we get scared and we turn Him and our relationship with Him into what we already know.

And guess what we’re going to teach our kids? We’re going to teach our kids what we already know. We are not going to teach our children a relationship of heart-to-heart connection. We are not going to teach our children intimacy. We’re not going to teach them how to manage their half of “us” if we live life in relationship with keeping the rules. Do you know how unappealing it is to have a relationship with rules? Just ask your teenager. Your teenager will show you.

The truth is that we give everyone in our circle of influence what we know, and this contributes to the development of a relational culture that is either rule-driven or love-driven. And only one promotes honor, because only one accurately acknowledges the fullness of our God-given identities. There is no culture of honor without a strongly shared belief that we are free sons and daughters of the New Covenant, not slaves of the Old. We must do whatever it

takes to courageously embrace this truth of who we are, walk in it, and come to know it as our reality. Only then can we create and pass on life, love, and freedom—the Kingdom—to those around us. We always pass on what we know and what we have. If all we know is fear and control, and this is what we keep seeing in our environment, then we must address our core beliefs about ourselves, sin, and the work of the cross.

Generation after generation in the Church has lived life attempting to protect a relationship to the rulebook. You can say you're not all day long. What happens when somebody breaks the rules? That is your barometer. What happens when somebody violates what you're living to protect? That's where it's going to show up. That's your feedback right there. What happens when Johnny brings you an F on his report card? Your "Cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs" response is evidence of how important the rules are to you.

When we panic in the presence of sin, it is evidence of how important the rules are to us. I would say we have enough evidence to assert that the rules are centrally important in much of church culture. It is time for us to look at this evidence and admit that our fearful responses directly contradict the message of Christ that we are preaching. Scripture is clear that we have two options—we can choose either to protect the rules and create a religious culture, or to protect our relationships and create a culture of love. And only one of these options is the covenant that Christ died to make with us.

CHAPTER 4



DEARLY LOVED CHILDREN OF LIGHT

*Too often we give children answers to remember
rather than problems to solve.¹*

(Roger Lewin, Scientific Theorist)

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...”² Paul makes an amazing declaration and presents a piercing revelation with this statement. Many Christians are stuck in the revelation presented in the first half of this verse. We believe that the “nature” of man is dark, and we’ve had the most difficult time making the New Testament transition from dark to light. We lingered so long in the mentality of *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”³* that we’ve failed to cultivate the truth that we are “children of light.” Yes, we once *were* darkness, but that nature has completely changed. Our fear of sin must be removed and our offenses disarmed before we will allow Heaven to govern through us on the earth.

When people sin, it is offensive. When people break the rules, it is offensive to human nature. The world is offended by sin. Look at the headlines in your newspaper:

“Hollywood starlet is going to jail.”

“No, she’s not going to jail.”

“Yes, she is going back to jail.”

“She found God in jail.”

“She left God in jail.”

“Don Imus—the radio guy most of us had never heard of until he made some infamous racial comments—we’re going to crucify him publicly by kicking him down the stairs, and take national polls about firing him.”

“School teacher molests child.”

“Police officer breaks the law.”

People love this stuff. “Put it up there; let me read it! I’m not buying your paper unless there is something offensive in there.” It is natural to be offended when someone breaks the rules. We put people in prison and call them *offenders*. Our society is filled with sinners practicing sin, and naturally, our society is caught in a relationship with the rules. Even lawlessness is a relationship with the rules. Some people define their relationship with the rules by breaking them. Their message is “I will not be controlled.” But without a relationship with love, the only option our society has is to figure out a way to live life within the confine of rules.

Many rules call for many judges, and people love to play judge. That’s what headlines and newscasts are for, to help us sharpen our judgment skills. Just imagine the vast number of people who each evening sit in judgment and disgust as they watch their televisions. Now, imagine how many of these people are Christians.

We as believers living in this wider culture have to be aware of the schemes of the enemy. We have to be aware of how natural it is to be offended, and what offense does to you. What offense does to you is it justifies you withholding your love. I get to withhold my love from you when you have broken the rules, because people who fail are unworthy of love, and they deserve to be punished. In fact, what punishment looks like most often is withholding love. And when I

withhold love, anxiety fills the void, and a spirit of fear directs my behavior toward the offender.

When we are afraid, we want control, and our responses to the sin of other people are a set of controls that help us feel like we are still in charge. The typical practices of the family, churches, and the government are to set a series of behaviors called punishments in front of an offender and require the offender to walk through these punishments in order to prove that the family, churches, and government are still in charge in the environment. In doing so, we help to confirm the belief in the person who has chosen to sin that he or she is powerless to change and take responsibility for his or her behavior. This whole business is just what Jesus died to get rid of. He's introduced a whole other world with a whole other way.

A Man After God's Own Heart

Though he lived under the Old Covenant, David was a man who valued his relationship with God more than the rules. And in Second Samuel we get to see what happened to this man when he broke the rules. In Second Samuel 11 we read the story of the time that David should have gone out to war but stayed home instead. He stayed home and sent Joab out to work.

Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.⁴

He asked around, “Who’s that?” And they said, “Well, that’s Uriah’s wife.” Uriah the Hittite was one of David’s mighty men—one of the inner circle, one of his friends. And then we read in Second Samuel 11:4, “*David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her*” (NASB).

If we know anything about Bathsheba, we know that she was an amazing woman. How do we know that? Because of who she was married to. Uriah was stellar. He wouldn’t have been married to some loose woman. David took her, brought her to his room, and lay with her. It is quite likely that David raped Bathsheba.

That same verse goes on to say, “*When she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house*”—only to send David a message some time later that she was pregnant. Now, this did not happen in a weekend. This took months. This was before the blue strip came out—no plus and minus could be seen. I’m sure she waited until she knew for certain to tell the king that she was pregnant, so it had to be months later.

When David found out he said, “Where’s Uriah? Hey, go get him and let’s give him some time on leave. Oh, Uriah! So good to see you! Come on, bring him in here. Uriah, you amazing man you, come here. I just love you. Thanks for all that you’re doing supporting the war effort. Now, go sleep with your wife. I heard she’s been eating a lot lately. I think she’s kind of upset. You might want to comfort her. I need some help covering up the consequence of my sin.”

But Uriah wouldn’t do it. David sent him some food. “Hey, you know, go be happy.” But Uriah slept on the front steps of the king’s house. He would not go home. He said, “Why should I go sleep with my wife in my bed when the men are lying in a field? I won’t go.”

David thought, *Dang! A man with character. I wasn’t expecting this.* So he decided, “Hey, let’s have a little party. Let’s see if we can get him drunk. Maybe if we can get him drunk, we can get him to leave his senses, and then we can get him to cover up my sin. Uriah! Hey, dude, here’s some wine, the best I’ve got. You want me to fill that back up for you? Here you go, buddy. Why did I give you the big cup? Well, it’s a cup of honor. Yeah, that’s it.”

That time Uriah did go sleep in a bed—in the servant’s quarters. What was David going to do? “Okay, all right. Okay, we’re running out of time here. She’s going to deliver soon if you don’t get this together. Here, Uriah, take this note and give it to Joab. Take your death warrant and hand it to your commander.”

This did not happen in a weekend. This wasn’t just a little aberration in the character of David. David was practicing something. Sure enough, Joab sent Uriah to the front, pulled back the troops, and he was killed. The messenger came back and Joab said, “Tell David we lost some really good men in this fight. If he is upset with you, tell him, ‘Oh, and by the way, Uriah died.’”

So the messenger went back with the message, “We lost good men... and Uriah died.” David said, “You know, good people die.

Tell Joab, ‘Good people die in battle. It’s part of the war. Take the city tomorrow.’ That’ll make Joab happy—he likes to kill stuff.”

You know the story. At this point, it was time for the situation to be confronted. Nathan the prophet went to him and said, “Dude, it’s you.” So David spent seven days repenting on the floor, and the child died as Nathan said he would. Then we read Second Samuel 12:24: *“Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her, so she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon.”*

So...hmm. Yes, the Lord takes the child’s life. But something doesn’t quite add up here. Where was the “Old Testament” punishment in this story—punishment that really “fits the crime”? The Kingdom isn’t torn from him as it was with King Saul. Nor is he struck down by an enemy nation and hauled into slavery. His family is forever scarred by David’s actions. But we usually don’t feel the weight of what David did with Uriah and Bathsheba because God said he was a man after His heart. But who among us wants David as our modern-day pastor?

We need to see that if David were the president of the United States, he would be equivalent to a modern-day Bill Clinton—except that Bill Clinton has never killed one of his friends and married his friend’s wife. Do you remember having any offense with Bill Clinton? Do you remember rejoicing at any thought of Bill Clinton’s punishment? Do you see the natural response to sin that lives in man?

There are other examples worth noting in Scripture, examples that defy the expectations of justice created by the rules. Take Abigail. Abigail was an unsubmitive wife, basically. She did what her

husband Nabal had refused to do—took her husband's stuff and gave it to David, who was very upset. He was coming to kill Nabal. She did an end run, and this made her a rebellious, unsubmitive wife according to the rules. And what was the response? God killed her jerk husband and she married David.⁵

Then there was Peter. “Peter, you’re going to deny Me.”

“Oh, that would never happen. I’ll never deny You.”

“Before the rooster crows.”

“Never happen.”

“And you know what? If you guys deny Me before men, I will deny you before My Father.”

Sure enough, Peter denied Him, and sure enough, what did Jesus do? “Peter, do you love Me?”

“Yes.”

“Peter, do you love Me? Peter, will you protect the things that I told you were so important to Me? Peter, will you manage your life in such a way that you will protect Me?”

“Yes, Lord. Yes, I will.”⁶

The adulteress—what was Jesus’ response to her? “*Go and sin no more.*”⁷ Wow! That’s going to leave a mark! Or no, actually it’s not—certainly not the kind of mark the rest of the people were hoping to make on her.

What's the Difference?

So why did God respond differently to these people? Why did David and Peter get a different deal than they deserved? Why did they get a different deal than other people who made the same mistakes, or even less serious mistakes? What was the difference between David and Saul, for example? Well, Saul, he just didn't kill everybody that he was supposed to kill. What was the difference between Peter and Judas? Peter denied Jesus three times to Judas' one betrayal. So the real difference is something vitally important, and it is not in their sin, but in what they did afterward. It is repentance. But repentance only works when the priority of the environment is a heart-to-heart connection.

Repentance does not satisfy the broken rules. Repentance will not work in an environment where we are protecting a relationship with the rules. In a rule-driven environment, repentance has a different meaning. It signifies your willingness to let me punish you. You are repentant when you allow me to inflict my punishments upon you. And the issue of the heart that led you to make the mistake in the first place is never dealt with, because the issue of relationship and love is never touched. The general attitude toward someone who is repentant in a rule-driven culture is, "You have surrendered your will to me in our environment. I'll never be able to trust you though, because you have proven yourself to be a lawbreaker, and it will rest in my memory for a really long time. Until I begin to forget about how scared I was of you, I'll never be able to empower you again." This attitude is what presides over what we call the "restoration process."

But true repentance is a gift. It's not your option. It's not your call. It is a gift that comes in a relationship. There's no place for repentance in the rules, only for punishment. If you break our rules, then you pay our price. That's just how it works. You pay the price

in order to assuage the anxieties of the people in the environment that live within those rules. You do the crime, so you do the time. When we practice this in the Church, we are allowing ourselves to be defined by the limits of earthly government. When you break the law, the best earth's government can do is to say, "We hurt them sufficiently so that you guys would calm down."

The gift of repentance creates the opportunity for true restoration. In fact, it is absolutely necessary in order to heal a relationship that has been hurt by sinful behavior. True repentance can only come through a relationship with God in which we come into contact with the grace of God to change. David spent seven days on the ground repenting to God. Saul also tried to repent to Samuel for breaking the rules. But when David got off the ground, he was another man. How do we know that? He never did it again. There was no other Bathsheba.

So what is true restoration? An old meaning of the word "restoration" is to find someone with a royal bloodline who has been removed from the throne and then restore the person to that throne—to a position of honor. But putting a monarch back in his or her place of authority is rarely what the process we call "restoration" looks like when dealing with leaders in the church who have broken the rules. Most fallen leaders leave their churches or denominations and go find a "fresh start." That means that they find a group of people who are not afraid of them breaking the rules again.

But when God restores those who have repented, His process of restoration looks like reestablishing a royal family member in his or her place of rulership and honor. The restored believer can say, "I am now a son of God again." Restoration for the believer is always a restoration of relationship, because restoration is defined by the cross and restoration to relationship is what the cross did. After John declared that Jesus became the propitiation for our sins, he

concluded, “*If God so loved us*”—that is, if God was so willing to protect His relationship with us, instead of protect our relationship with His rules—“*we also ought to love one another*” (1 John 4:11)—to love one another in the same way. The standard of the government of Heaven is that we learn to cultivate and protect our relationship with God, with love, and with each other. And if we can’t do it, we won’t reflect Heaven to the society we live in. We will just have stricter rules that offend us quicker, and we will judge more often and become famous for being offended judges.

Jesus has given us a key to be free from the law that keeps us tied to an earthly model of government, particularly from how that model responds to sin. In my mind, the reason that an apostolic and prophetic environment is so important is that it constantly renews and refreshes our awareness of and trust in the core values of Heaven so that we can bring them to earth. It seems clear to me that the very best that we can do in an environment where teachers and pastors lead is to justify the behavior of utilizing earth’s models to deal with God’s people. When we start to implement the core values of Heaven into the culture of our congregations and families, including this core value that we are un-punishable, I believe that these cultures will truly be reformed. People will experience life in a completely different way.

Full of Light

I want to tell you a story that encapsulates what heavenly restoration looks like. A friend of mine, a pastor and teacher—one of the most capable, brilliant teachers that I personally know—called me one day and said, “I have a situation. I have a worship leader who just confessed to his wife about an immoral relationship. It’s been going on for four years. It was with his wife’s best friend. He and his wife were actually mentors to this woman and her husband when the couple came into the church and took a staff position working with our youth. He just told his wife, and they leave on vacation tomorrow.

“We don’t know what to do, because this isn’t just your run-of-the-mill worship leader. This guy is amazing. He has been taking our church to new places in God. Over the last four years, the anointing on our house has increased. We’ve started a school of ministry, and he and his wife run our school of ministry. This is our third year. We’ve almost doubled the enrollment of our school in three years. This couple is leading in creating an amazing environment.”

This pastor had called me because he knew something. He knew what had to happen when the truth came out, because he knew what had to happen when you break the rules and you’re in a relationship with the rules. They had to put this man through the “restoration process.” But this pastor also knew that the restoration process we had at Bethel looked different than the one he had always known. So he asked if I would be willing to meet with this couple first and then give him some insight about how to proceed.

I said, “We’d be glad to meet with them.” My wife, Sheri, and I met with the couple about two days later. When they walked in the door, the wife looked as though she’d been crying for a week. He

looked as though he had been wired to the undercarriage of the car during their eight-hour trip on the freeway. He was just wracked with shame. He knew that he had destroyed his relationship with the rules, and he knew that he needed to be punished. She was just distraught—her heart was broken. All the trust that she had ever held was broken; every bit of life that she had lived up until that point was lost and forever changed. *She* was going to lose *her* valuable ministry in the church. *Her* life had been ended because of *his* incredible selfishness.

So we just sat and we listened to them for a few minutes, and he did his best to let us know what an evil scumbag he was. “See, you’ve got to understand, I knew better. I totally knew better. I knew what I was doing. I was hiding it. There’s a war inside of me and I’ve had this problem my whole life. Eighteen years ago when we got married and she was pregnant with our first child, I committed adultery with her best friend then too.” He continued to attempt to convince us that he deserved to be punished.

Eventually Sheri prophesied something over him. She said, “I see this hand coming out of the sky, grabbing this handle and flipping this switch, and then all the lights just coming on. It is like you are full of light and everything is completely different. That is what the Lord is going to do.”

He said, “That’s really sweet of you to say that. I just can’t believe that right now. I feel a million miles from that place right now.”

We are watching a clash of two kingdoms: Fear and Love, Freedom and Control, Light and Dark. The earthly kingdom that this couple knew was severely limited in trying to restore a child of light. Once again, the truth is, “You once *were* darkness. You now *are* light. Live as dearly loved children of light.”⁸ But dearly loved children of light cannot be governed by the very best darkness we can find. The most

merciful, fair, just, capitalistic, democratic darkness cannot govern children of light.

Sheri and I had the goal of inviting them to experience the power of an apostolic environment that has made the resources of Heaven permanently within reach. We were aware that we had access to the resource of light in an atmosphere that requires light. When Heaven invades earth, it trumps the limitations of natural man and natural perspectives.

We did not believe that what this man had done was evidence of his true identity. Paul said we once *were* darkness, and we now *are* light. Just because you have darkness in you doesn't change your true identity.

A friend and I were out walking around the property of Mountain Chapel one day. We were trying to figure out where to put the new church building. As we were walking, I stepped on a board and a nail went through my foot. I lifted my foot and saw that there was a board attached to the bottom of my shoe. I could clearly see that a nail had entered my foot. But never once did I think, "I'm a nail!" I was, however, very interested in getting that nail out of my foot. And when a child of light discovers darkness in him or her, it does force the issue: "What are *you* going to do? What are *you* going to do?"

We can help as leaders when we come alongside people in this situation and help them to hear that this is what God is asking them. We send the message, "It isn't my job to control you. I'm not scared. What are *you* going to do?"

So we began the restoration process with this couple by asking some questions. We brought our light with us. Living in an apostolic governing system helps us naturally to pull light from Heaven into

our pastoral relationships. Therefore, we have a process that heals our relationships with people who break the rules. It makes us powerful in the presence of sin. We're not afraid of sin. Sin is nothing! Sin is darkness! One flick of the switch and *click*—it's over!

So I asked the question that I ask everyone in these situations: "What is the problem?"

He looked at me like I was drunk, because he thought he had done a stellar job telling me what the problem was. "I just told you. I am a lowlife scumbag, masquerading like a son of light. What do you mean, what is the problem?"

"What's the problem? Didn't you know this was a bad idea?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied.

"Didn't you know that whenever your wife or your pastor found out about this, it was going to end up badly?" I leaned forward in my chair.

"Yes," he replied again.

"And you did it anyway?" I prodded.

"Yes." He wasn't sure if I was setting him up for a punch in the nose or what.

"What's the problem?" I asked again.

"What?" he asked, his brow furrowed and his mouth pulled back on one side.

“What is the problem that would drive a man to do such destructive stuff to his family, to his life, to the church he loves, and to his peace with God? What would make a man get there? What’s the problem?”

“I don’t know,” he responded dejectedly.

“Have you repented?”

“Yes,” he replied with adamant fervor, though his tone betrayed doubt that this repentance was ready to stand up to a test.

“Of what?” I asked, boxing him in.

He looked at me, unsure if I was for him or against him, and answered, “I don’t know.”

“That’s what I was thinking. How is this going to change if you don’t even know how to repent?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” he said, resigned.

“That’s what I was thinking, too!”

Sheri and I were looking at this man from a perspective of light. We intended to solve this issue from a heavenly context, because that was part of our culture. It was natural for us to approach sin and failure from a perspective that makes God more powerful than sin. He, on the other hand, was convinced that he was darkness. He knew that the government of earth was waiting to have its way with him. He agreed with the paradigm of earth and was ready to welcome its verdict of judgment. It was our job to move him to see

himself from another vantage point. He needed to believe he was a dearly loved child of light.

“One more time. What do you think the problem is here?” I asked. “I really don’t know.”

At this point in the confrontation, I didn’t know what the problem was either. So I decided to explore a little. “Well, tell me this. What is your connection with your wife?” I asked, knowing that it was unlikely that he had much of a connection. Adultery is usually a symptom that a couple struggles to be intimate with each other.

“We don’t have one, or much of one,” he responded sadly.

“What is your wife’s love language?” I asked. I wanted to see if he knew how to love his wife.

“Encouraging words,” he said, looking up at her.

His wife, sobbing, said, “In eighteen years he has hardly ever told me he loves me.”

We were finally onto something. I could hear the bloodhounds of Heaven barking in my ear. I knew that this man was a passionate man. This man had been leading their ministry into great, anointed places. Their church had grown dramatically over the previous few years, and was vibrant with life under this man’s leadership. So I said, “Your wife feels loved when you adore her through words, and you can’t squeak out an ‘I love you’ toward her. Meanwhile she watches you lead the masses in singing ‘I love you’ to God. Is that what you are telling me?”

I could tell that he wasn’t quite with me, so I tried again to help him see the contradiction he was living. “Let me see if I understand what

you are telling me. You lead people in the adoration and passionate pursuit of God's heart. You write songs that express this amazing passion and love for God. But you do not point any of this strength toward your wife. How about your kids?"

"I can't tell anybody that I love them, not even my kids," he said through tears. "I've turned out just like my father. My father cannot express love to anyone either."

We had just found the problem. We sat there a little stunned. This was the bottom of the barrel that no one outside of this family knew about or experienced. But we also had another problem. I didn't know what to do next. We sat in silence, interrupted only by the sound of crying and sniffles. Then, all of a sudden, I got a word from the Lord. I didn't know if it was a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge or what it was. All I knew was that I didn't know it before I got it. I leaned forward, now confident that this was the key. I asked, "Are you trying to tell me that you can only love that which you think is perfect?"

He looked at me, paused, and said, "No."

"Let me say it again. Are you trying to tell me that you can only risk loving where there is no chance of failure? Are you telling me that you can only love what you believe to be perfect so there is no chance of getting hurt?"

His wife clearly got what I was asking, and fresh tears began to flow.

He looked at me like I had hit him on the nose with a rolled up newspaper.

I asked again, “Are you telling me that you cannot risk your heart to anything that might not turn out to be perfect?”

He started to shake his head, but then started to nod. Suddenly he said, “I have been deceived. This is the very thing I hated about my father. I’ve been deceived!” he said again and again.

So at this point I invited him to walk through a few minutes of forgiving his father. After he did that, *wham!* He turned to his wife and said with complete sincerity, “I love you so much. I am so sorry!”

In a moment the whole room lit up. It made you want to start singing, I am free at last, I am free at last! Thank God Almighty, I am free at last! Heaven touched me!

He kept confessing to his wife, “I love you. I love you. I didn’t know what was wrong with me....” As he said this, his wife’s countenance completely changed. Hopelessness left the room as this woman began to experience that which she had moments ago thought was only going to happen in Heaven. And she was right. That is where they keep that stuff. We just had to go get some and bring it to earth. In a few moments they were a couple of lovebirds, sitting there cooing.

There were two miracles that happened that morning. One was the gift of repentance that just hit him and knocked him down. And the other one was her willingness to forgive him in a moment. In a moment, the lights came on and he had a brand new life—they had a brand new marriage. So we just sat there and watched them. It was awkward. But we just let it go.

He said, “I feel like the lights are on all of a sudden. I can see like I’ve never been able to before. I feel like I am full of light!”

Simultaneously, we all remembered the word that Sheri had given him earlier in our time together. We talked and prayed more with them, and Sheri prophesied over them again. It was a glorious time together with some wonderful people.

Moments later he said, “You know...I don’t really know if I should feel this happy! I feel so hopeful. I feel so happy. But I feel bad for feeling happy.” A curious look crossed his face and he asked, “Well, now that I am a different man, what is my church’s leadership going to do with me?”

That was a very good question. As wonderful a group as they are, I was pretty sure they would have a different perspective on the situation. Thankfully, we had one key advantage to help us guide this process to a successful conclusion—their pastor. As I said, their senior pastor was a teacher—a strong, fivefold teacher. Therefore, he had a strong need to be right and to understand what God was doing. But fortunately, he recognized this about himself and had realized that he could reduce the anointing ceiling on his whole world simply by making his need to be right and understand everything the chief director of his leadership, his life, and decisions. This man had moved that cap off of his life by putting himself under apostolic ministry, which brought an apostolic and prophetic leadership anointing into his environment. This is one of the reasons he called us for help. As I said, he knew what happens here.

This couple returned home and I didn’t hear back from them for a while, mainly because I’d taken a group of our pastoral staff backpacking. We were gone for four days. (When I say “backpacking,” I need to point out that it was a two-mile hike. We consumed 80 trout in three days. It was more like a cruise. The year before I’d taken them on a 38-mile, six-lake excursion through the Trinity Alps. Our staff team refers to that trip as “Danny’s Death March.” Now *that* was *backpacking*.) When we got back to the house,

I headed straight to the shower because I really needed one. The phone rang as I walked by it. I never answer the phone when I am at home, especially if it's a number I don't know, which this was. But for some reason I answered the phone. "Hello?"

It was my pastor friend. He said, "Danny! Hey, I have been trying to get a hold of you."

"Yeah," I said, "I have been backpacking."

"Do you have a minute? I'd like to ask you a few questions about the couple we sent up your way."

Since I didn't think he could smell me, I said, "Sure."

"Oh, great!" he said, as though he knew I was going to say that. "We have you on the speakerphone right now at our elder's meeting. We are trying to figure out this situation. We heard some of the ideas you were sharing with them. We'd like to have you expound on those a little bit."

"Sure." I accepted that the shower I had been fantasizing about for the whole trip home was going to have to wait. My friend first shared some of the ideas that their board had been pondering. The basic plan was something like this:

1. Inform the congregation of what was going on and have them pray for the restoration of these leaders.
2. Have this couple step down for few months to work on their marriage.
3. Review their progress after three to six months and if favorable, slowly reintroduce them to the ministry.

This is the “from earth to Heaven” model that I know most every church will attempt. It is earth’s best effort to build trust and credibility back up for the people. It is designed first to comfort the people and then to address the life of the leader. This is tough to admit, but when the anointing of the senior leader is primarily focused on people, then the needs of the people will rule the environment. Again, this is earth’s best effort to bring about justice, fairness, or another necessary human comforter.

When this couple had been in my office a few weeks earlier, I had shared a “Heaven to earth” model of handling this situation. They were encouraged by hearing about the process but could see that it was going to be a near-impossible stretch for their leaders to get their minds around it. I could hear that my pastor friend wanted to understand what it was that I had shared with them. The unspoken explanation for his phone call was, “I think I understand what you shared with them. I want to come over to where you are. I want to address this from the light of Heaven and not the darkness of earth’s models. I am just not sure how to prove it scripturally.” The need to “prove” something scripturally was part of his ceiling, a limitation that strengthened his focus as a teacher but constrained his ability to operate with other priorities when it came to other tasks of leadership. He recognized this limitation and was working to draw on the perspective of another anointing in order to recognize and operate from Heaven’s priorities for this situation.

He said, “We would really like to get some input to help with our decision.”

“All right, well, here is what I see,” I began. “I see that for the last four years you’ve had a man who has led your congregation into the heart of God, and God has been pouring His blessing out on your congregation. More and more people have become attracted to the freedom that is growing in your environment. I see that in those four years you have birthed new ministries that are blessed and

saturated with life and vigor. And the whole time, you have had a great, big, fat, lying, lowlife, scumbag leader living a double life. You have given him raises and empowered him and his influence more and more in your environment.

“Now what you have is a man who is in the best spiritual shape of his life. He went home from that week’s vacation a changed man. He went home, gathered his children, sat them down, looked into their eyes, and said, ‘Please forgive me. I have withheld my love for you your whole lives. I am so sorry. I only love you. I only adore you.’ He showered love on his children for the first time in their lives, and then invited them to speak up at any point they feel it dimming. Their whole household is filling up with light.”

I went on, “This man has repented. He is a changed man. But because you now know what has been hidden for the past four years, you think you have to punish him. If you do that, wouldn’t it have been better if he had stayed a lying scumbag, a prisoner of his bondage, for the benefit of your church? What are you going to do with the truth? This man doesn’t need punishment, removal, a sabbatical, a vacation, a restraining order, or anything of that nature. This man needs some accountability to make sure he keeps the light on. And he needs to clean up his mess.”

They said, “Well that brings up another point. We were going to have him stand in front of the congregation and share what has happened with the church as an accountability measure. What do you think about that?”

I said, “Well, let me see if I understand this. As it stands, it’s as if he had a gallon of paint, dropped it, got it all over your elder team, this other couple, you, and his wife and family. You are going to give the man a 500-gallon bucket of paint and a grenade as a way to clean up his mess. Now, I am all for people taking responsibility for their messes. I just don’t understand why you would make a bigger

mess than you already have. I think this mess is pretty easily cleaned up and I think it is pretty easily repaired. That is what I think.”

It was very quiet on the other end of that phone. One of them asked another question about something, and that was it. I said, “Bless you guys. I need to go take a shower.”

That happened in August 2006. Three months later at Bethel’s Leader’s Advance I met with my pastor friend and he said, “You would not believe how amazingly they are doing. His entire family looks like they have been raised from the dead. The light and the nourishment that have come to that home are breathtaking.” He also said, “We handled the situation exactly as you suggested. It’s awesome and it’s working!” As of the writing of this book, it’s been nearly two years and they are all getting stronger.

The devil is working to destroy us, and the “earth to Heaven” model will usually help him accomplish his goal in the Church. I know that we are not trying to be destructive, but we are confined to our earthly limitations when our senior leaders are teachers, pastors, administrators, and evangelists who have not been hooked up to the flow of anointing and revelation in an apostolic government.

Now, please understand something. I am not a proponent of “keeping things in the family” as a way of handling destructive behaviors among Christians in the Church. If you throw the lights on and see that someone needs to go to jail, don’t send a ministry team in to see the person instead. While I was the senior pastor in Weaverville, I reported five people in as many years to Child Protective Services, and two of them were incarcerated. I have no problem involving the public authorities in situations when I know the Church can neither hold the people accountable nor supply them with the level of services necessary for them to get well. We must set clear boundaries, as Scripture teaches, for dealing with people

who do not repent. But we must also learn to stop needing to punish people who *do* repent.

I'm not saying that we give them a "get out of jail free" card. But instead of punishing them, we call people to walk in their higher identity and responsibility as children of light rather than crushing them even further into the life of a sinner. When Heaven confronts us in our mistakes, it is like the Lord encountering Job: "*Prepare yourself like a man!*"⁹ Walking in the light is not for wimps. It requires a deep faith in God's love and the power of His grace to give us what we need to change.

A church's discipline culture is built to protect what people think—what they think about leaders and what they think about those who fail. Again, when the comfort or expectations of people are held as the primary concern in the culture, and when the core belief of the people is that people who make mistakes are sinners, not sons, then discipline simply will not be administered in a Kingdom way, for the primary concern in a Kingdom culture is "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

Punishment's main purpose is to ease the anxiety of the people. We want to call it justice, but it is simply the fear of man in leaders who need to stay in favor with the people. As we saw in the lives of David and Peter, God's justice is baffling to human beings. We can only understand it when we give up trying to protect our relationship with the rules. When we start to protect a relationship with the law of life in Christ, our goal is never to assuage fear, but to restore a broken relationship and to get life and love flowing again, and there is only one process that will accomplish that. There is satisfaction through repentance. *We* have to lose our fear of sin and our fear of man, and *we* have to stop punishing those who repent.

It is for freedom that Jesus set us free.¹⁰ He has given us a way to stay away from the yoke of slavery to the rules and offers us a way to live our lives protecting our relationships—first with God, and then with our families and those in our sphere of influence. Our children are those we influence most profoundly, and that which we model is reflected clearly back to us in them. When our children don't need to be punished for their sin and when they begin to learn that the priority when they fail is restoring relationship rather than accepting punishment, they begin to cultivate a high value for relationships as the priority in our culture. This is how we teach people to live a life of love and liberty, and how we learn the power of trust and intimacy.

CHAPTER 5



FREEDOM PRACTICE—DEVELOPING A WEALTH MINDSET

*I cannot afford to have one thought in my mind
that is not in His. (Bill Johnson, Bethel Church)*

After my oldest son, Levi, finished eighth grade at Bethel Christian School, he faced the question of where he would attend high school. His older sister, Brittney, had started at public high school and ended up finishing her high school career in home school. Home school was not for Levi, however, because he wanted to play football. So he asked us if he could go to public high school.

Now, this was a family decision because it would affect our whole family. Issues ranging from transportation to trust were at hand. We also knew that this decision was going to set a precedent for our youngest son, Taylor. The biggest concern for us was the fact that at the public high school, Levi would be faced with freedom and options he'd never faced. He'd have to make successful decisions like never before. Bethel Christian School had had about 145 students while Levi was there, with 40 of those students representing the middle school grades and about 15 his eighth grade class. The public school he wanted to attend had 500 incoming freshman and 1,800 total students—half the population of Weaverville, the small town where he had grown up. Beyond having to get used to a bigger school, he would be moving from a Christian school environment that supported our family's core values to a public high school where it seemed he would virtually be living on the beach set of an MTV program. We were not going to be in Kansas anymore, Toto!

The new level of consequences for his choices in life stared Sheri and me in the face. Did we believe that Levi would protect us with his decisions? Did we trust him with our hearts? Were we willing to allow his learning journey to affect us as deeply as these decisions

could? Were we willing to live that vulnerably with a 14-year-old boy?

First, we announced to him that this idea scared us. Then we reminded him of the extreme control freaks we could be when we were scared. And finally, we asked him how he planned to protect us through this proposed venture. Our to-be freshman lowered his brow and began to realize that he was a powerful participant in this conversation and decision. He thought for a moment and then simply stated, “I’ll be smart...and I won’t break your hearts.”

Urgh! That was the right answer. And we believed him.

The summer before his freshman year started with afternoon football practices in the triple-digit heat of Redding, California. Levi began working his tail off to be on the team, surrounded by the 70 other freshmen that were trying out. When the game season began, the coach instructed the freshmen players to attend a varsity game. He wanted to enhance their idea of how to play the game of high school football by showing them how the “big boys” played.

On the day the coach told them to do this, Levi came home and told us. “Coach wants us to go to the game this Friday night and watch the varsity play. Can I go?”

When I looked into Sheri’s eyes, I could see what she was thinking. She was thinking the same thing I was thinking. We were both having flashbacks about what we had done at high school football games—and it had nothing to do with the football game! We turned and looked at Levi. We knew that we could not put any of our adolescent mistakes on him, but we were still scared of the numerous possibilities that lay out in that Friday evening waiting to tempt him. So I said, “Son, we are very scared, but you can go.”

“I can go!” he shouted, swinging his hand through the air like Tiger Woods putting it in for eagle. “Really? I can go? Awesome!”

I was certain that he hadn’t heard me say that we were scared. He was too excited about joining his teammates in their quest to learn more about football. I took him to the game and agreed to pick him up at 10:00 P.M. At that time, I drove back out to the field and with the gift of technology that is the cell phone, found him. There he was, right where he had said he would be. My heart was relieved that my whole night of worry had been for nothing. He jumped in the truck and told me all that he’d learned that night. It mostly had to do with how cool the varsity helmets and uniforms had looked.

We pulled up at home and got out of the truck. As we were heading into the house, Levi reached over, touched my arm and said, “Dad, thanks for trusting me.”

“You are welcome, Levi,” I said. “Thank you for protecting us tonight, son.”

“You are welcome.”

The Power of “Us”

Levi knows that he carries tremendous responsibility in our relationship. He knows that no one can do his part of “us” but him. He feels the weight of “us” whenever he is out in his freedom. He knows that he is free to do whatever is in his heart to do. His heart is his to manage. And because it is in his heart to protect his relationship with his mom and dad, he makes decisions with a consideration of how those decisions are going to affect us.

That is freedom training. Paul put it like this to the Corinthians, “*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable.*”¹ Freedom causes our personal responsibility to rise to the surface. We either rise with it or lose our freedom. The only way to cultivate freedom is through experiencing and learning how to handle an increasing number of options. Managing increasing options is how we expand our lives into ever-increasing abundance.

Jesus said that the thief is the one that came to steal, kill, and destroy. It’s the devil who presents us with limitations, who removes our options and makes us afraid to live free lives. But Jesus came that we “*may have life, and have it abundantly.*”² Jesus has it in His heart to offer us a life of unlimited options.

Abundance, freedom, and choices are all ways to describe a condition of the soul that we must master if we want a revival culture. The development and expansion of a *wealth mindset* is an essential key to our successful introduction of Heaven coming to earth and having it remain on earth. The practices of wealth are exercises in abundance. If we are to learn to steward the resources of Heaven we must first learn to practice a wealth mentality.

Wealth Creates Freedom

The first mistake so many believers make when someone mentions wealth is to equate it to riches. But the idea that money makes someone wealthy is like suggesting that holding a football makes you an NFL quarterback. Riches or money are external conditions and wealth is an internal reality. Our insides will always manifest on our outsides.

For too many centuries a religious fallacy has tried to rule the mind of believers and convince them that riches are the root of all evil, and thus that the poorer you are, the more spiritual you are. Somehow being a poor, weak, uneducated, lowly Christian is something God is cheering on in Heaven. Yeah, just like you are cheering your kids on to be welfare-dependent, high school dropouts. I am fully aware that in more recent decades, the American church has swung to the other extreme and experimented with a “Wealth Gospel” that has led many to pursue powerful Cadillacs and comfortable lifestyles rather than powerful lifestyles and the Comforter. But a wealth mindset is not really about money or idolatry. It’s about freedom.

God and Abram

To help define a wealth mindset, I want to present you with a journey that God led Abraham through. In this journey, Abraham started out as “Abram” and eventually became “Abraham” as God moved him through a process that brought out the full measure of God’s intended greatness in Abram’s life. When he began this process, Abram was already a rich man. He had many possessions and much land and was faithful in stewarding his wealth. He was a man whose outside already matched his inside. But in order for God to take him to the next level, He introduced a powerful set of instructions and steps that expanded Abram on the inside.

In presenting Abram’s journey, I want to challenge you to embrace this same process in your life. This is the process that allows us to confront our own mindsets and the limitations we bring with us into our relationship with Heaven. We limit our life in God so easily and so often because we do not see that which hinders us.

In Genesis 12 we read of God’s first interaction with Abram:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”³

This is quite a “Hello! How are you?” Up front, God made it clear that He was going to transform Abram’s life from something that he thought was pretty good to something he could never fathom: “In you, Abram, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul tied us to this same promise. He wrote in Galatians that if you are in Christ, you are Abraham's seed and heirs to the promise that was given to Abraham.⁴ Through your life also, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. That is what you are carrying in your DNA. That is what you are carrying in your Father's name and in your identity as a child of the Most High God.

Four Keys to New Freedom

There are four key aspects to the process that God began with Abram in Genesis 12. The first aspect is Abram's *name*. We focus on the fact that *Abraham* means "father of many nations," but it's important to see that *Abram* means "exalted father." An exalted father is not just a father. Abram was not just a regular guy. His very name reveals that he was willing to take on a higher position with more responsibility than an average father. That was the guy God was working with—"Exalted Father." Similarly, those of us who are taking strides to understand and carry the anointing and the revival that is happening today need to understand that God has asked us to take on a greater level of responsibility than the average person. Understanding this responsibility is what shapes us into people who are willing to follow God to a place "*whose builder and maker is God.*"⁵

The second aspect of the process for Abram is the first thing God said to him, and I want you to hear this as though God is saying it to you. He said, "*Abram, I want you to leave your country.*" In other words, God said, "I want you to leave your land. I want you to leave your territory, your geography. I want you to leave the limitations that you have come to accept as your container, your security, your realm of comfort and influence."

In a move of God, one of the recurring messages we hear is that God wants us to leave our comfort zone. The reason we must leave our comfort zone is that we must have nothing but God to fall back on if we are going to tap into the wealth of Heaven. I recently spoke at the Spiritual Hunger Conference in Spokane, Washington. Heidi Baker was one of the other speakers, and in one of her talks she gently reminded the North American audience that too many of us have a "Plan B" ready to go in case God doesn't show up. She pointed out that this kills our hunger. It also stops up the heavens

when we channel our resources to provide for our own comfort instead of channeling them toward Heaven's agendas. The wealth mindset, the mindset that prepares us to participate in the flow of Heaven to earth, is a mindset that embraces Christ's command to seek the kingdom *first*, knowing that God will take care of our needs and desires.

The third aspect of Abram's process was God's next statement: "*I want you to leave your family.*" Interestingly, when Abram obeyed God, he took his family with him. What could God have been saying other than, "I am breaking up your family"? Well, our family defines the circumstances of our birth. You and I gain an identity from those we grow up with, and it's very difficult for that identity to shift and expand once it's been established in the perceptions of those around you.

It looks something like this: Say you are the youngest in a family with five children. Even though you're grown up, everyone still sees you as "little Joey!" When you show up at your family reunions, they grab you, take turns rubbing your head and messing up your hair, and go, "How's our little Joey doing? How ya doing, Joey?"

"But Dad, I am the CEO of IBM."

"I know, son, but you are always going to be our little Joey."

You carry a particular identity in an environment filled with people who are very familiar to you. Whenever you are around them, they look at you in such a way that says, "Ha-ha! Look at you! You will never escape the box that we have put you in." Now, that identity may be a very comfortable box. You may be respected and admired by your family. But the reality is that only God, the One who designed each of us, understands our true identity and calling. And

in order to discover and become who He made us to be, we will need to go beyond the limits of what our family expects from us.

The Lord says to us, as He said to Abram, “I want you to leave your physical, geographical limitations, and I want you to leave your authority limitations. I want you to leave the territory that you have become comfortable in and I want you to leave the identity that comes from the people who are most familiar with who you’ve been.” And finally, He says to us, “*I want you to leave your father’s house.*”

This issue of leaving your father’s house is the thing I want to focus on for the rest of this chapter. Our father’s house is the place where we receive our father’s identity, our father’s covering, and in particular, our father’s socio-economic status. For example, say that you were born into a family where your father was a blue-collar worker and made \$15 an hour. Your mom stayed at home raising you and your four siblings, and had an Internet business selling things on eBay. The combined yearly household income stayed around \$50,000 per year. This experience put you in a socio-economic class, and this socio-economic class has given you a lens through which you look at the world and the resources in your life. You naturally function within a particular class of people. You identify what is valuable, what is possible, and what different circumstances mean through your socio-economic class.

Our socio-economic class usually comes with an accompaniment—a group of people who validate what we believe is true and what we see as valuable. We are surrounded by people who see the world the way we do—our neighbors, our parents’ friends, our closest friends, and our schools. All of these people, along with numerous other cultural reinforcements of which we are mostly unaware, create our “normal,” and we usually have no reason to think things are otherwise. All of us judge or make fun of the other classes and hold on to ours like it is the one true class, the one true worldview. For

most of us, our eyes have not yet been opened to the fact that there are more ways to see the world than the one that we are carrying around.

So, what I want to present to you next is something that I hope will open up your awareness to the way you see things now and the way your new identity, your true identity, is designed to see things. I hope to expose and confront the way you see things, because you are called to be rulers. You are called to be princes and princesses. You are royalty. You are wealthy beyond your wildest imagination. But unless you think like a wealthy person, you won't be able to handle your identity, role, responsibility, and resources.

Called to Be Rulers

Proverbs 28:16 says, “*A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, but he who hates covetousness will prolong his days.*” Let me state it this way, “*A prince who does not see himself as a benefactor will punish others with his power, but he who hates gain by violence or controlling others will build a lasting legacy.*” When a prince *thinks* like a pauper, he *lives* like a powerful survivalist.

The pauper learns one powerful lesson in life, and that is how to stay alive on this planet. The socio-economic worldview of the poor is completely defined and governed by the fear of running out of their daily supply of resources. And when you throw someone who has been trained to survive a recording deal or a professional sports contract or a winning lottery ticket, he becomes a super-survivor. He has great resources, but he uses them to protect himself instead of to benefit others, because he naturally believes that is what his resources are for. He sees the world as something that is there to serve him. He is an opportunist. What he doesn't realize is that by misusing his resources, he is oppressing those around him. He destroys his life, and often the lives of those around him, because his worldview was formed around how to survive, not how to thrive.

As believers, we are all in danger of being princes who think and live like paupers. Unless we are renewed in our thinking, we not only will be abusing the great power and responsibility that we've been given; we won't even be aware that we are doing so.

Poverty, Middle Class, and Wealth

We are all constrained by the class view that we received in our father's house. In order to understand these constraints and identify

both how we think and how we should think, I am going to show you three socio-economic class views—a view that looks through the lens of poverty, a view that looks through the lens of the middle class, and a view that looks through the lens of wealth. I will show you how each of these classes views and experiences things so completely differently.

As we go through this exercise, I want you to understand that the class view you agree with the most is probably yours. You also probably have a case for why the other two are wrong. That is okay, because everyone else reading this is doing the same thing. We are not going to debate what is right or wrong. I simply want to give you the opportunity to see that, while you are now wealthy as a son or daughter of the King of Kings, you, like many of us, may not carry a wealth lens for viewing your life.

On the following page is a chart by Dr. Ruby Payne from her book called *Understanding a Framework of Poverty*. This book is an effort to diagnose and treat some of the root causes behind the educational system failures in inner city schools in Texas. In particular, Dr. Payne wanted to lead middle class teachers to better understand and influence children of poverty in their classrooms. She contended that, because the worldviews and life experiences of the teachers and the students were so completely different, the teachers were hopeless of ever being able to educate the children who were not of their own socio-economic class. So Dr. Payne began a system of introducing the teachers to another set of values, beliefs, and motivations, thereby enabling these teachers to “step outside” their own limitations and reach a class view they knew nothing about.

In her book, Dr. Payne illustrates how the different classes experience and view the world, and I’ve found her analysis to be extremely insightful and helpful in understanding these differences. She does a great job of describing how we all live in very different worlds while sharing the world in which we live. This chart

describes what each class values most in various aspects of life. Once again, as you review the following topics, I think you will find yourself feeling confronted by what you see as most valuable, and challenging the other classes' values. After presenting this chart, I will select a few of these topics and break them down in an effort to show you why we must "leave our father's house" and align ourselves with our new "Father's house."

A Framework for Understanding Poverty by Ruby K. Payne, PhD⁶

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Possessions	People	Things	One of a kind objects, Pedigrees, Legacies
Money	To be used, spent	To be managed	To be conserved, invested
Personality	Is for entertainment. Sense of humor is highly valued.	Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued.	Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued.
Social Emphasis	Social inclusion of people they like.	Emphasis is on self-governance and self sufficiency.	Emphasis on social exclusion.
Food	Quantity most important	Quality most important	Presentation most important
Clothing	Individual style and expression of personality	Quality and acceptance by peers, label important	Artistic sense and expression, designer important
Time	Present most important	Future most important	Traditions and history
Education	Valued as abstract but not as reality	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
<i>Destiny</i>	Believes in fate. Powerless to change much	Believes in choice. Power to change future with good decisions	<i>Noblesse oblige</i>
<i>Language</i>	Survival	Negotiation	Networking
<i>Family Structure</i>	Matriarchal	Patriarchal	Whoever has the money
<i>Worldview</i>	Local	National	International
<i>Love</i>	Conditional upon being liked	Conditional upon achievement	Conditional upon social standing and connections
<i>Driving Force</i>	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work, achievement	Financial, political, social connections

I'd like to zoom in on the topics of Food, Destiny, Worldview, and Driving Force—first in order to see the distinctions between these class perspectives more clearly, and second in order to see the influence of these perspectives on us as believers in the Church so that we can recognize where we need to line up with Heaven. All of the 14 areas mentioned above are interesting in their own right, so hopefully my analysis of these four will encourage you to go through the others and make the same kind of comparisons.

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Food	Quantity most important	Quality most important	Presentation most important

I picked food first just for fun. It's such an everyday experience that I thought we'd laugh at ourselves for a minute. The thing is, the way we relate to food indicates a lot about the way that we relate to all the resources by which we meet our basic needs.

When we go to a restaurant with a poverty mentality, we have a certain expectation. We go there because they give us tons of food:

“If I am going to spend good money on going out to eat, then I want to leave that place stuffed.”

“Hey Bob! We are going to the Brown Bear tonight. We love that place. They give you huge portions for just about any meal you order. It’s great!”

“We are going to the buffet. We are going to the buffet because it’s an ‘all you can eat’ place where you can get as much food as you can stuff into your torso for \$9.99. They are going to be sorry I ever walked in there, I tell you what!”

When our main concern is survival, our relationship with food is one of hoarding. The belief that we are not sure when we will eat again doesn’t actually have to correspond to reality for us to behave as though it does. With a belief system built on the priority of survival, I live in an experience that meets my need for “quantity” when I relate to food. Buffet!

When I cultivate the impulse to hoard, whether I am hoarding food or something else, it effectively prevents me from being generous to anyone except those I think are worse off than myself. I have friends who are waitresses. A general consensus is that the “Sunday afternoon crowd” is the worst group to deal with. They are typically demanding, irritable, and stingy with their tips.

Unfortunately, Christians with a poverty mentality go out for lunch after church and share their limited view of Heaven with their

community.

I submit that we also often see a poverty mentality at work when we take an offering in church. It goes something like this: “Today we are going to show you a video of starving children in Africa. These kids are way worse off than you. We are going to play sad worship music and show you tragic scenes so you can feel guiltier about keeping your money than you are afraid of giving it. Thank you for your generosity.”

The middle class is more than free to eat whenever they want. Their resources give them many more options. Therefore, quantity is not a driving force in choosing what they eat. The middle class recommends a restaurant like this:

“Oh! You have got to go there. They have the best chicken *cordon bleu* in the world! It is so good. They also have the best rib-eye steak I’ve ever eaten in my life. There is this sauce...Oh my, it is so good. It is like \$50, though. But it is so good. You’ve got to try it.”

“Oh yeah, we tried that place when it first opened, but it’s kind of dirty now. So, we go to this other place that is much cleaner, and the food is great.”

The value placed on food is determined by its quality. If it doesn’t taste good, then the middle class will pass. But if it’s delicious, they will pay extra and come back later for more. They know that they have the choice of where to spend their money and had better get quality in both food and service, or they simply will not patronize that business in the future. Nor will they recommend that establishment to their friends and family.

This class view shows up commonly in how believers select a church. The middle class knows that they have options. They can

attend any church in town. So, the quality of the experience had better be there or they won't be. How was the teaching? How is the nursery? Do they have a quality children's program at this church? How difficult is it to park at this church? Were they friendly and helpful when we arrived? Do they realize that we can choose any church in town and that it is their job to keep our money and us around this place? Do they know that we know people in this town? They do know that we can go somewhere else, right?

The wealthy are some strange birds for most of us. They can have as much of the highest quality food they could ever want. Therefore, they see food as a work of art, something that should have *presentation*:

"If it doesn't impress me in the way that it is presented, then I am not sure I am in the right place. Elegance, style, and beauty are what make an establishment worth patronizing. So, when it comes time to eat, make it do something for me. Make it pop!"

Everyone serving food to the wealthy is competing on how it is dressed up. The restaurants of the wealthy don't have cooks; they have artists and creative sculptors working in the kitchen. Now, if a poor guy goes into a restaurant for wealthy people, he or she is going to be shocked at the dainty portion covered by a bunch of "weeds." He is likely to be furious and think he is being ripped off when he discovers that this drizzle costs a week's salary. Our class perspectives set us up to relate to resources in a certain way. If we have little, then we don't expect much more than getting our most basic needs met. But if we have more than enough, then we expect even the everyday experience of eating food to be an encounter with beauty.

Believers with a wealth class view expect much more in their experience with God than salvation. While that is good and they are happy they are going to Heaven, these believers are very aware of

what life on earth is supposed to be like. They know there is more provision, beauty, power, and joy than they could ever exhaust, so they make sure that they are living in it every day, all day long. Anything less would be ridiculous.

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Destiny	Believes in fate. Powerless to change much	Believes in choice. Power to change future with good decisions	<i>Noblesse oblige</i>

Powerlessness is one of the primary effects of poverty. When people live in a resource-starved environment, they soon feel the very real constraints of limitation. Their lack of options makes them feel like victims, that their lives are determined by more powerful external forces. As a result, they live superstitiously, believing that a force they cannot control determines their life. They believe in fate, the idea that their life is something that happens to them, and that their job is to do their best to adapt to what happens. Believing in fate is like driving at night with your lights off. You can't really do much about what happens, so you just try to keep your car from being totaled by whatever you hit.

Destiny is oppressive to the poor, because an external force has all the power and leaves them with no power. The poor are slaves of their lives, and the feeling of powerlessness naturally creates anxiety, leading the poor to look for comfort by hanging their hopes on a lucky turn of events. It's not the wealthy that are buying lottery tickets. It's the poor who want a miraculous rescue from life's conditions, which they cannot change. Life is about surviving within the context of their birth, and everyone they know has the same mindset. The young may hope to escape that context, but the hopes of the older ones among them have been crushed by the cruel life of poverty and they believe it to be immutable. They may know a few gifted and "blessed" individuals who have escaped this

oppression, but most are trapped by a set of limitations that have kept them captive for generations.

When believers see their destiny in God through a poverty class view, they live a natural, not a supernatural, life, and find themselves trapped in natural problems with no hope of heavenly intervention. They learn to blame God as the One who has the power to do something about their desperate situation but chooses to do nothing. As they experience a powerless gospel, they create a theology to sanction that experience, a theology where Heaven is a lot like earth, God is a lot like them, and the outcome of their lives is predetermined. Fate is called “God’s will” and a life of limitation and powerlessness is called “humility” and “perseverance.” These are virtues to live up to and model—after all, it’s in the Bible, so it must be true.

The big “lottery ticket” for each generation is the Rapture. Since God is apparently not powerful enough or inclined to change their circumstances, the thing that gives them hope is the idea that He is planning to rescue them out of those circumstances. The concept of being powerful eludes those in a poverty class because life in God is not a supernatural experience, but is just more of what they have experienced so far.

The middle class has a much more powerful interaction with life. They believe that their destinies and the quality of their lives are influenced by the fact that they have choices. Having options creates an expectation of freedom, and access to resources creates an expectation that one has power to change the environment by adding to it. When faced with problems, the middle class expects to be able to change a system or most limitations in order to move ahead with the desire within them. The middle class believes that dreams can come true. They believe that they can have anything they want if they continue in wise choices and moral, healthy practices. They believe that it is a right that they live free and that

they keep the power they need to preserve that freedom. Primarily, the middle class supplies wars and economies. They can choose between life and death or the amounts of taxes they will pay to protect their freedom.

But the middle class also experiences limitations. There is a ceiling on the amount of money they have access to, a limitation to their power over their environment. Politics, media, and education are the realms of influence and power they turn to for help in improving their lives. Once these are exhausted, they look for solace in building something new in each of these arenas so the next generation can try for breakthrough. A new lobby, a new campaign, or a new expertise will lead us further into our success of achievement and destiny.

The majority of American believers are caught in the middle class view. We are commonly known for our efforts to manipulate our environment. It is so tempting to try to make people think like us. After all, we love people and we want the best for them. We want people to know Jesus and to have what we have. We want people to come to our church and for the quality of our lives to be made available to everyone. We want our Gospel to fill the airwaves, to be taught in every school, and to be legislated from the highest governors in the land. Perhaps the only thing that middle class believers agree upon is this vision of the Gospel as a social and political panacea. The Christian Coalition as a political movement seemed like a great idea at the time and may still to some. Many of us would love to hear Rush Limbaugh, Oprah, or Bono say “God” or “Jesus” one more time.

The wealthy live in a limitless existence where there is no want. No one keeps them from getting what they set their heart and mind upon. The wealthy are accustomed to getting their way. Whatever they ask for, they receive. This situation creates a mindset in them that few experience—a mindset of abundance. Having more than

you could ever use and living in that reality builds a sense of obligation within the life of the wealthy class. They see their role in life as one of *noblesse oblige*. This is the French term for the idea that people born into nobility or upper social classes must behave in an honorable and generous way toward those less privileged.

The wealthy mindset is one of generosity. They see the favor and privilege of their lives as a responsibility to bring nourishment and strength to the environment around them. Destiny, to the wealthy, looks like pouring their lives into the long-term benefit of the society and generation in which they live. They live to honor the momentum of their ancestors and to build on the family inheritance for their descendants. The wealthy understand that prosperity must expand if it is to last.

When we as believers begin to cultivate a wealthy class worldview, we will see what apostles and prophets see. We will see and tap into the absolutely unlimited resources of Heaven. We will also see that these resources are an inheritance, something we have access to because we have been grafted into the royal family line of God. This identity is what defines our responsibility to use these vast resources to benefit those around us. When we start to believe the limitlessness of what we have and the weight of what we are called to do with it, we will come to know and experience the reality of the promise that we will receive whatever we ask for.⁷ The supernatural will invade our lives, and we will finally lose the anxiety that has been so much a part of our culture in Christianity—anxiety that naturally results from living a life that is devoid of experiencing all the realities that fill the pages of the Bible we profess to believe and live.

Hopefully you can see that leaving our father's house and entering our new Father's House automatically takes our lives to another experience than our fathers lived. Though we appreciate and understand the legacy of those who have gone before us, we are not

longing for the days of old. We are not praying that we would return to the “Book of Acts” church. Can you imagine the leader of General Electric saying, “All right, boys, we need to return to the glorious days of the candle. Get to it. Take us back!”

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Worldview	Local	National	International

All of us have a worldview. It is the scope and span we concern ourselves with as we live our lives. The Internet and satellite television have helped to expand our consciousness of global affairs, but each class continues in their own priority when it comes to worldview.

The poverty class sees life locally. Because resources are scarce, they cannot afford to be concerned with much outside their immediate realm of responsibility. A neighborhood, a village, a town, or part of a city is the extent of concern and investment for the poverty mindset. Churches with a poverty mentality see the world in the context of their congregation, their property, their denomination, or their missions program. It is limited to what they can directly benefit or benefit from.

The middle class tends to be most concerned with their nation, because they feel most affected by the condition of the national economic and political climate. Voting, national news, and economic forecasts are concerns they most readily take responsibility to invest in. Middle class churches are the ones doing the “Get out and *vote*” campaigns and making sure that Christians know who the candidates are. The concerns for prayer are aimed at the social and political climate of the nation.

The wealthy class thinks internationally. Their lives are invested globally, and they are keenly aware of how activity in places all

over the world affects the global economy. The wealthy mindset understands the “big picture” and how a global community must succeed as well as the national and local communities.

Believers with a wealthy worldview travel. They invest their lives in a macro-influence. I think Randy Clark provides a vehicle like no other I know to give believers a wealthy worldview experience. There’s something about traveling to other nations, amassing with other believers, and seeing Heaven touch earth as you practice the ministry of miracles and healing that cultivates a limitless expectation in your life. It helps you to connect with the fact that the Gospel, the Church, and the Kingdom of God are global realities. It is a practical demonstration of the commission Christ gave us to “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*”⁸ Your worldview expands as you see that Heaven’s agenda and resources are designed for global impact and that you have been called to partner in that global picture.

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
Driving Force	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work, achievement	Financial, political, social connections

What motivates you? Why do you get up in the morning? We see a variety of motivations in the classes. Each has its own set of core values based on what propels its members through life. The driving force for each class is rooted in how they see the world they live in and how they relate to resources.

For the poverty class, the daily concern for survival creates a compass for their decisions, and because their belief in their powerlessness is so strong, these decisions usually follow the course of finding the path of least resistance in order to avoid pain. The quest for pleasure and escape begins each and every day, because life has too much pain built into it.

The value of relationships to the poor is the experience of love and social connection that they offer. Your family and good friends are your world, and typically, you are together for a good portion of your lives. Building relationships among neighbors is natural and these relationships are vital because they often provide an avenue of resources for survival. Unfortunately, however, the strain of limited resources and the drive for survival usually lead to the erosion and abuse of relationships.

Entertainment provides a fantastic method of escape from the harshness of reality in poverty. An individual's ability to entertain others with skills, humor, or music catapults them to the most desirable places in the poverty class. The value for both entertainment and entertainers keeps this group producing both.

When the driving force for believers is survival and escape from pain, they live in continual chaos. Divorces, rebellious teens, domestic violence, and financial upheavals are the culture of the home. Anxiety and fear threaten to devour anything that attempts to grow in these home environments. Churches with this driving force struggle to create an environment of growth and advancement, tending instead to build a legacy of conflict and strife. Usually the resources are the source of strife. As with many nations who spend decades in civil war, these churches are unable to recover from the last battle with the governing authorities among them. The tattered spoils of what was once a resourceful place tend to mark the remains of a church with a driving force of survival.

The ability to achieve is the driving force of the middle class, which explains why this group is often referred to as the "working class." The middle class finds value in those who are working to contribute to the betterment of society. Few things are as disgraceful or offensive to the middle class as those who do not work for a living. Working hard to make a living soars to the top of this class's value system because of their value for things, planning for the future, and

achievement. Education, personality, and even language are driven by the middle class's need to succeed by working their way up the ladder of success.

In a middle class family, the parents work to create opportunities for their children to get an education so that they can get a good-paying job. Once a child finds that career, the loop is complete. These children then work and become successful so they can send their children to a good school that will provide them with an opportunity to get a good-paying job. Love is dispensed through this system. When a child fails to complete the loop, the parents struggle to feel like good parents and the family dynamic suffers a certain confusion and sometimes division because a child has broken the cycle.

Motivated by achievement, believers in the middle class have a “works” gospel that puts them to work for God. He has provided them with a “good education” in church and now expects them to be successful workers in His Kingdom. The plans and goals of the middle class church are filled with work and achievements. The more we achieve “for God,” the more successful we are in ministry.

The middle class church seems very businesslike and empowers those who are good business people or high achievers. They usually rally around a successful achiever for leadership: “Dr. So-and-so is our leader because he has numerous credentials and endorsements by other high-achieving Christian leaders that we all know and respect.” Without trying, we end up with a gospel of conditional love. This creeps into the environment because we are so busy celebrating the achievers that we don't see how we treat those who are not “ringing the bell.” Eventually everyone understands that God loves us all, but He *really* loves those who achieve. And that message is reinforced by our entire class culture.

The wealthy have a driving force that, again, doesn't make much sense to the other classes. They get out of bed in the morning to establish and strengthen their connections with other world changers. The wealthy understand that there are a few powerful decision makers who make the global economic, social, and political climate what it is. They are very concerned that they have connections to those decision makers and work to get as close to them as they can get.

The wealthy don't spend their lives working away at a job. They are not training their children to get a job. Instead, they send their kids to schools where other powerful world changers send their children. Connections are the driving force of the wealthy class. They believe that it's not what you know, but who you know and who knows you that makes you successful.

Protecting and developing these relationships with each other helps them to know what is going on all over the world. World leaders in politics, finances, and society are choosing to spend their time with each other for a reason. Knowing that they direct the largest portion of the world's resources, they work to protect the momentum of their ruling class and its members. They understand ways that the other classes do not. They have lived lives of limitlessness and know what it takes in character and responsibility to keep freedom alive throughout their generation and into the next. The wealthy will do everything they can to teach their children how to handle, protect, and pass on the secrets of living in limitless freedom.

Believers who embrace the priority and power of connections will invest their time and energy to build relationships with other revivalists, and invest in training their children to do the same. They will make sacrifices to be where God's anointing is pouring out. They will study and experience the works and wonders of God happening all over the globe. They will not be satisfied to "work" for God, but will not stop until He pours unlimited resources

through their life to the lives of those around them. Wealthy-minded believers are melding their hearts with apostolic and prophetic leaders all over the world and directing their life's energies, resources, and time toward the success of these leaders. They know that in order for the knowledge of the glory of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, the Church must be filled to overflowing as a whole.

Those with unlimited resources are not focused on those resources as ends in themselves, but on investing them in the things that really matter—people, cultural legacies, beauty. They are seeking out “worthy” causes—things that deserve *honor*. This is why believers who carry a wealth mindset create a culture of honor. Like most things in the Christian life, honor is not an idea, but a practice, a practice of giving. Believers with a wealth mindset don't practice “random acts of kindness;” they embrace the lifestyle of benefactors. And they find a worthy cause a place to show honor, in every person they meet. This, after all, is what the cross, which released the resources of Heaven to us, teaches us to see in people.

All the poverty and middle class motives for giving can't appreciate what God did for us in sending His Son, for He didn't send Jesus out of pity or because He wanted something from us, and certainly not because we deserved it. God paid the human race the supreme honor by becoming one of us. Then He paid us an even greater honor—in His death and resurrection, He made a way for us to become one with Him. And for those of us who have received this outrageous gift from God, is it *our* supreme honor to imitate the One who has honored us by inviting people into God's generosity and giving them a taste of what we've experienced.

Bill Johnson often declares, “We owe people an encounter with God.” We owe them this *honor*. Honor is given on the basis of who people are—not what they have earned, or even what they need. Every person you encounter is one Christ has honored in His life,

death, and resurrection. The person may not know who he really is from an eternal standpoint, but we do, and when we have a wealth mindset and a heart of honor, we will treat him accordingly.

I hope you can see that a believer carrying a wealth mindset is one of the most important components in bringing Heaven to earth. This mindset not only trains us to see our immediate circumstances from a limitless perspective; it also grounds us in our connections both to the global Body of Christ and to the generations behind and before us. It enables us to jettison the constraints of our past and create an inheritance for our children so that leaving their father's house for the Father's House isn't such a huge chasm to cross.

Can you imagine how our children might live if they are trained from birth to walk in the limitless freedom of the Kingdom? Can you imagine a generation whose dream it is to benefit the world around them by learning to handle and give away the limitless, transforming resources of the Kingdom?

Genesis 12:1-3 says:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

CHAPTER 6



THE TOP PRIORITY OF LEADERSHIP

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

(1 John 4:18 NIV)

Thomas Jefferson is credited with saying, “Free people are the most difficult to lead.” It is extremely pertinent for church leaders, because free people are precisely the group they are called to lead.

Unfortunately, many church leaders have not mastered the difficulties of leading free people. In order to lead free people, we must establish both an environment for them to gain freedom and a government for them to keep that freedom. Generally, neither is what classic church environments are known for. People watching from outside do not expect to keep their freedoms once inside the “institution.” Those who do come in are usually ready to give up whatever they have to in order to get rid of their pain. When these people learn that God is a master who wants to control them, as many do, it makes me suspect that church leaders have failed to understand our own Gospel of freedom. A controlling God, who is usually represented by a controlling church leadership, is just not good news.

How can church leadership create freedom and not more rules? How can we bring out the best in human beings and keep it at the surface even as we deal with their problems and shortcomings? Can we empower others and release them to live from their best natures and from the truest reasons they are alive? Will we as Christian leaders, parents, and employers take on the responsibility to learn how to draw out the dreams and destiny in the people we lead?

Let me show you an example of what leading free people might look like (this may be familiar to you if you've read my book *Loving Our Kids On Purpose*). My daughter, Brittney, was 14 once. And like most 14-year-olds, she had a completely different idea of what getting the dishes done meant than my wife, Sheri, had. For this reason, I often heard a conversation that sounded something like this:

Sheri would say, "Britt, time to do the dishes."

And Britt would reply, "I will in just a minute."

That minute would turn into 20 and Sheri would fire off another, "Britt, it is time to get those dishes done."

Britt would volley back with, "I am doing my homework like you said!" or "I am on the phone! I'll be done in just a minute."

This was part of our evening ritual for several months. It was as if the two of them could not go on into the next day without this exchange. Numerous times, Britt made the verbal commitment to finish the dishes, only to fail and have my wife wake up to dirty dishes in the morning. There are several things that my wife does not like in this life: injustice, sushi, bugs, scary movies, and dirty dishes. She really doesn't want to *wake up* to dirty dishes!

Finally, it happened for the last time. Britt went to bed late on a Friday night and forgot to wash the dishes. Saturday morning, she and Sheri had a little conversation about that shortly after Sheri discovered them. I could hear their "little conversation" at the other end of the house. Once finished with Brittney, Sheri came to tell me what had happened. I told her that I had already heard. Meanwhile, Brittney's friend, Rebecca, came over and was visiting Britt in her room. When Sheri and I came looking for Britt to discuss the dish situation, we discovered that, unannounced, Britt and Rebecca had

left our house and gone down the street to Rebecca's house. Sheri looked at me with fire in her eyes. Suddenly, it appeared as though her head burst into flames, her skull split open, and a dragon came out of the top of her head. The dragon looked at me and said, "What are *you* going to do?"

"Me?" I replied, suppressing a smile.

"Yes!" the dragon said. "What are you going to do about *your* daughter?"

"Now you want *me* to deal with this situation? Is that what you are saying?"

"Yes!" the dragon said, breathing fire.

So I ran in and did the dishes.

Now, "doing the dishes" at our house involved moving the dishes from the sink into the dishwasher. That was all I did. It maybe took me six minutes. Maybe.

Brittney and Rebecca came back to our house all dolled up with make-up and matching ponytails. Britt asked, "Mom, Dad, can I go to the mall with Rebecca and her mom?"

I thought we would all get to see the dragon again, but instead Sheri was biting the side of her hand, a sign that I was to handle the whole intervention. I said, "Brittney, sweetie. I did the dishes for you."

She said, "Dad that is not fair! I was going to do them! *Ugh!*" Britt began to do little jumps that never actually got her feet off the

ground, but were intended to communicate that she did not like what was happening.

Rebecca watched this exchange with a confused look on her face. She finally asked Britt, “Are you in trouble? How do you even know you are in trouble? Nobody is even yelling.”

Brittney said, “He’s going to trade me chores!”

“Sweetie, which chore would you like to trade me? Would you like to do the trash shed for me or the chicken coop?”

“Ugh! Well, can I look?”

“Of course you can! Of course you can choose which one you are going to do.” And thus I empowered the child. I wanted her to feel powerful around me. Out she went.

For those who might not know, the trash shed is a Weaverville cultural experience. Garbage cans left outside would end up with dogs, cats, or raccoons in them, so you had to put the trash in an enclosed area. The door on the shed had a window in it, and once I saw the trash bags through the window, I knew it was time to go to the dump. It was a big old hassle, so I was always waiting for one of my kids to trade me chores.

Britt went and opened the door to the shed. Ten million flies came flying out around her face. “Gross!”

Rebecca nearly started running backward, yelling, “What the heck are we doing out here?”

Brittney spat a fly out and rolled her eyes. Then she headed toward the chicken pen. By the time she got there she was pretty mad, and kicked at the chickens as she entered. “Stupid chickens!” She opened the chicken coop and was completely grossed out by the stench.

Then she came back into the house and said to me, “Chicken pen.”

“Awesome, Britt! Thank you!” I replied, excited that I wouldn’t have to do that chore in my life this time. Then I asked, “Now, would you like to do that today or tomorrow after church?”

“I can do it tomorrow? Really? Can I go to the mall today with Rebecca?”

“Sure, if you want.”

“I can! Oh, Daddy! Thank you! Thank you!”

You may be thinking, “What? You let a transgressor go? You let a sinner escape the due punishment she had coming? Your child got to have freedom and privilege without first experiencing suffering that teaches a lesson? Don’t you know that there is need for the shedding of blood for the atoning of sin? How will this child ever learn her lessons?”

Hang on. The story isn’t over.

So, off they went to the mall and had a great time. The next morning we went to church and by the time we got back, it was pouring rain. Why? Because Jesus loves me! Brittney was trying to be invisible.

I said to her, “Hey Britt, sweetie! Would you like to wear my rubber boots or those pretty little slippers you have on there?”

“Your rubber boots.”

“Do you want to wear my rain jacket or that pretty sweater you have on?”

“Your rain jacket.”

“Do you want to use the pitchfork or the shovel?”

“I’ll probably need both.”

Off she went. One...two... *three* hours later, in she came, dragging that shovel and pitchfork. She had straw hanging off her sopped head. I met her at the back door and asked her what she needed.

She said, “I’m done.”

“Awesome! Thank you very much.”

“Whatever!” Off she went to take a shower.

Sometime later that week, I heard Sheri say, “Brittney, get those dishes done.”

Then I heard Brittney say, “Ugh. I will in just a minute.”

So I got up and said, “Britt, I got them for you!” Just as I got off the couch, she came *flying* through the house, yelling, “*You get away from my dishes!*”

I smiled and said, “Hey, I’m just trying to be helpful. But if you ever need me to do your work for you, I am your man.”

There is a way to lead people into freedom in such a way that personal responsibility rises to the surface. It requires us to trust people. But it never ceases to amaze me that when we trust people to rise up and see the wisdom in their choices, then we will see a greater person in our relationships. People want to be trusted and they want to be free.

Create a Safe Place

Why do you suppose free people are so difficult to lead? Well, I can tell you that the problem of leading free people is connected to a question about the universe that philosophers and theologians have worked on for centuries. It's connected to the fact that God, the leader of the universe, created us to be free. In fact, God *trusted* us with freedom. C.S. Lewis presented a concise account of the situation in *Mere Christianity*:

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.

Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk.¹

The difficulty in leading free people is *risk*—the risk that they could use their freedom the wrong way. But unlike God, many of us in the Church do not understand why the risk is worth it. The threat of misused freedom looms larger than the prize of true freedom. And because of that, we get scared. This fear can be endemic in supposedly free societies. In the United States, the supposed leader of the free world, fear is rampant. We as believers need to tap into some pretty powerful stuff if we are going to resist the fear in our culture and extend trust to God and people. We also need to pound Heaven's value for freedom into our belief system.

As Lewis pointed out, the whole value of freedom, the whole purpose for freedom, is love. When we use our freedom to love, as intended, our freedom and the freedom of those around us are protected and cultivated. As leaders we need to accomplish many things, from defining reality to reaching productive goals. But the priority of Heaven is crystal clear: "If you have not love...you're just noisy."² Leaders who extinguish love in the process of reaching goals have achieved earth's priorities, maybe. But the higher goals of Heaven require us to cultivate and preserve love, and thus freedom, for you cannot have love without freedom. God is love, and His kingdom is a kingdom of freedom. This would be why the Bible tells us, "*The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*"³ This verse is saying that when God shows up, people feel free. If that is not happening, we should wonder why. Why isn't freedom breaking out in more places? Could it be because a lot of people, including leaders, misunderstand the goal of God's leadership in our lives?

I want to propose that the goal of God's leadership in our lives, and consequently, the goal of church leaders, is to create a *safe place* for us to discover who we are and why we are here. A safe place is a place where the fear of misused freedom doesn't get to rise up and intimidate us out of risking trust and love in our relationships with one another. A safe place is what gets cultivated when freedom is

expressed through love. The essence of love is *safety* and *connection*. If people don't feel safe to be themselves and don't feel a sense of connection with people around them, then it's hard to convince them that they are in a loving place.

Now, we won't step into experiencing a safe place with God and His people as long as we fail to understand and believe that it's what God wants for us. My experience is that most people, including Christians, think God wants us to line up, stay in line, and be good. We've embraced the idea that He is patient, but still on the verge of anger. For most people, God is a scary character—unpredictable and strict. But consider what God said through the prophet Isaiah: "*The mountains and the hills will be removed, but My kindness shall never leave you, nor shall My covenant of peace with you ever be removed.*"⁴ The mountains and the hills are going to be taken away? Can you imagine watching a mountain be taken away? Can you imagine what would be required for that to happen? It would require more than a little violence, something pretty scary.

God is saying that He is not unpredictable. He wants us to be completely sure of His attitude toward us: "My kindness and My covenant of peace will never be taken away." God wants us to have a blessed assurance, a truth that positions us to look for the freedom that comes to us when Jesus shows up. This mentality, this expectation, and this security allow us to be free everywhere we go.

No matter what case you make against God, no matter what Scriptures you use to make it, no matter what you do to build a different reality—His kindness and His peace will never be taken from you. That word "peace" is literally the word *shalom*. From this word we get several powerful definitions. Here's what it says in the Strong's Hebrew Dictionary:

07965 *shaw-lome'*; safe, well, happy, friendly;
health, prosperity, peace, well.

Please notice that the first definition of *shalom* is “safe” or “safety.” Our covenant with God is a *safe place*. The power in this reality is that we as human beings blossom in safety. This is why *shalom* also means “health” and “wholeness.” The nourishing effects of His presence stimulate the deepest parts of the best in us. This is why He says that His covenant is for our welfare and not our calamity.⁵ His covenant brings peace, happiness, safety, and completeness, and it will never be taken from us. When He shows up, His presence is a safe place.

This is good news. Go ahead and smile. When the Lord shows up, His atmosphere is charged with *shalom*. He brings a safe place everywhere He goes. It never ceases to amaze me how many people want to make a case that God is scary. But they do. This is why we as leaders at Bethel have understood that one of our primary jobs is to declare God’s true nature and attitude toward us on a regular basis. Almost every time we do it, we can feel it directly confronting the wrong thinking in the room. So many times I’ve heard Bill Johnson declare to a congregation that God is in a good mood, only to hear nervous laughter break out all over the place, as if to say, “He-he. I have never thought of God like that before.” I myself have made the same statement in places where I’ve spoken. “God’s in a good mood!” I can see the confusion in some people’s eyes. It is as though they want to pick up their Old Testament and yell out, “Not in this part of the Bible He’s not.” Yes, He is! He is in a good mood, from start to finish, and you can make a case for that too.

This truth would seem to be a no-brainer since Jesus came and introduced a New Covenant. It’s been a couple thousand years. We should be getting this by now. God is very familiar with His original design for us to need a safe place. The Garden of Eden was such a place. We are designed to need freedom. We are at our best when we are safe, when we are happy, when we feel whole, and when we have peace. If our peace or safety is disrupted, then our physical

body begins a process of shutting down our best and preparing us to show our worst. It works something like this:

God put this little gland inside our brain called the amygdala. It is an almond-shaped mass of nuclei located deep within the temporal lobes of the brain. This gland is important for determining emotional responses, especially those associated with fear. When somebody does something threatening or unexpected in your environment, when somebody is not safe, your amygdala kicks on and begins to flood your body with these messages: *react*, *defend*, *disappear*, *fight*, or *flee*. These are some of the responses in which we show our worst. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to discover that people who are scared are not at their creative best. If you've ever been near a person who is drowning and scared that he or she is going to die, then you know it would be a good idea to keep your distance. Throw a rope or extend a pole, but do not let that person get a hold of you or you will become a buoy. Oh sure, the person will apologize later, if you lived. But scared people are not thinking about the team, family, church, or anyone else beside themselves. Fear is a dangerous element for humans to navigate through. Most do not manage it well.

As you can see, when we do not feel safe, it's likely that we will become dangerous ourselves by allowing fear to start directing our behavior. And just imagine what happens when the *leader* in an environment is directed by fear. A majority of leaders, not just Christian leaders, are pretty uptight. The same goes for far too many parents. When they need to go somewhere with their kids, many parents are uptight from the moment they say, "It's time to leave!" If you are a pastor preparing for Sunday morning, it's a pretty good chance you are uptight. If there is something important going on, and the outcome matters to you, there is a good chance you are going to bring *uptight* with you. It's quite common.

Of course, another word for *uptight* (or stress, or anxiety) is *fear*. And here's the thing—when we are afraid on the inside, there is more than a good chance we are getting that fear on those outside of us. As people, whether we are believers or not, we are creative and spiritual in nature. We are spiritual conductors, and we create an atmosphere, a reality, a *spirit*, if you will, around us. But we can only reproduce on the outside that which is on the inside. If our thoughts and affections are wrapped up with a spirit of fear, while we may think we are smoothly hiding it, we cannot mask the anxiety we allow to live in our lives.

Unfortunately, too many people become accustomed to living in an environment where the people in charge are uptight. Most of us are trained early in life that people who are in charge aren't safe and can hurt us. Sometimes we learn that powerful people *will* hurt us. From our earliest childhood experiences to our most recent run-in with an authority figure, we build a concept about what to expect from God, the ultimate authority figure. If what we have learned is fear, imagine what our amygdalas are doing the entire time we are in the presence of powerful people. What is this doing to our potential in God? How will we ever become whole, free, or healthy living under those conditions?

The answer is simply that we won't. But the good news is that the conditions are changing. Heaven, the kingdom of love and freedom, is invading earth, and love is directly confronting the fear that has governed us. Fear and love are enemies. These two spirits will not hold the same place together. Love and fear are like light and dark...fresh water and salt water...blessing and cursing. And one of them has to win. Love casts out the fear.⁶ Love not only casts out the fear; it brings security and safety and *shalom*. This is the fruit that I am seeing in an apostolic environment. Fear is leaving people's lives. Freedom is growing in worship and in our relationships with one another as people are starting to get it: He is a safe place.

As I indicated in the first chapter, creating a safe place is the essential condition for a revival culture. The fact that miracles, signs, and wonders not only have happened in our midst but have continued to happen for years now points to the fact that something has been established—a wineskin of healthy people and relationships that manifest and carry the *shalom* of Heaven. And as I explained in the second chapter, there is an order for leadership, a structure, that sustains the flow of heavenly reality, of grace, in people's lives and facilitates the core values and truths that an apostolic leadership holds dear. It is not a small thing that our leader is regularly declaring the goodness of God over us. If leaders believe that God is good and in a good mood, then the people will follow and learn this to be true for themselves.

If leaders understand that their top priority is making the house of God a safe place, then, as people encounter the safe place of God's covenant in their lives and their potential, anointings, and creativity start to rise to the surface, there will be room to manifest those things in the church. If leaders can create an environment where people can feel loved, safe, and free to be themselves, then we will start to change the world with the Kingdom of Heaven. Then we will be at our best. Then we will be confronting the principalities and powers that have ruled the planet.

Honor and Conflict

Honor is one of the most vital core values for creating a safe place where people can be free. Honor protects the value that people have for those who are different than they are. This core value is central in an apostolic culture because, as we saw in Chapter 2, the fivefold pattern of ministry is built around understanding, valuing, and making room for the different graces that rest upon and flow through different people. Free people cannot live together without honor, and conversely, honor can only be used successfully amongst powerful people who have a true sense of their personal responsibility in preserving the freedom around them. We must be able to be ourselves in this life and community together.

As you are probably aware, high levels of freedom can generate conflict, usually because we experience others who are living in ways that flood our amygdalas. Without a core value of honor, we find that our discomfort around those who choose to live in ways that we would not leads us to shut down their freedom. It is typical, for example, when a teenager begins to explore his or her freedom, that his or her parents become afraid. The fear stems from the fact that the child is choosing options that the parents either wouldn't ever or wouldn't again choose for themselves. The wrestling match is over how different the child can be so as to individuate from the parents and how much the parents can keep the child looking like them. The further the child moves from how the parents live, the more likely the parents are to step in and shut down the child's choices. The result is conflict. But when the teenager and the parents both practice honor, which contains within it love and trust, fear is not allowed to rule their decisions and freedom can be preserved.

Obviously, when I speak of different ways to live, I am not saying that immorality or violating our relationship with God are viable

options for any of us. But many Christians disagree about how to live. When people begin to walk in freedom, they will say and do things that demonstrate to all who are near that conformity is not a priority. This clashes with much of our Christian culture experience. Again, I am not building a case for people to be rude, uncaring, or obnoxious, but I am trying to point out that free people are not terribly interested in putting on a façade for anyone.

From the way we dress to the style of music we listen to, to whether we drink alcohol or not, to whether we speak English or Christianese, to whether the gifts of the Spirit are in operation today or not, the reality is that freedom is going to bring our differences to the surface and cause friction within a community. When the people around us are no longer protecting our paradigms, our amygdalas get jacked up. This is how we often end up showing others our worst.

As you can see, the culture of honor both facilitates a safe place and in turn, creates a place of great conflict. The question is whether we will learn to use honor to navigate through the conflict when it arises. Conflict is not inherently evil. As a matter of fact, when conflict goes away, *life* most likely left with it. Sometimes we hope that peace means the absence of conflict, but true peace is always the result of victory. I cannot think of a victory that did not first begin with a struggle.

CHAPTER 7



KINGDOM CONFRONTATION

It's harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with iron bars.

(Proverbs 18:19 NLT)

There will be no culture of honor without the active use of effective confrontation. The skill of combining these two relational elements—honor and confrontation—is the key to sustaining an environment of grace. Please lock onto this chapter. It will help you immensely to bring about what I believe is your hope.

Paul wrote to the Galatians extensively about the fact that we are a people who are called to walk in freedom and love through the internal government of the Spirit of God. Once again, this idea is not new; it just seems that we, like the Galatians, have a difficult time catching onto it. We covered some of what Paul wrote in discussing why we are unpunishable, and this belief is foundational for walking out Kingdom confrontation. For our present purposes, let's review Paul's description of us as a mature heir:

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you

*are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then
an heir of God through Christ.*¹

We are no longer slaves but sons! Our context for life has moved from needing a guardian and steward (external controls) to that of being powerful, free sons of the living God.² And far more is required to operate in the freedom of being a powerful, rich person than in the limitations of a slave.

Remember the film *The Matrix*? In his first encounter with Morpheus, Neo hears, “You are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, born inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind.” He then offers Neo freedom from this prison—the red pill. But when Neo wakes up in the “real world,” he finds himself on an operating table with all kinds of things sticking out of him. Morpheus explains that they are rebuilding his muscles, which he has never used before. This is a dramatic but clear picture of what it’s like for us, who were born “in bondage under the elements of the world,” to enter the life of freedom.

As slaves, we followed the path of least resistance and weren’t required to take full responsibility for our thinking and behavior. We never developed the moral muscles to handle unlimited options. But in the “real world” of the Kingdom, sons and daughters of God are not only expected to be free, but also to understand why they are free and exercise that freedom toward its purpose—love. As Paul goes on to say:

*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only
do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh,
but through love serve one another....I say then:
Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust
of the flesh.*³

Our success in using our freedom to love comes down to *walking by the Spirit*. For this reason, if we as leaders are going to build people who can handle freedom, then our leadership methods must mature to address the *spirit* of a man and not simply his *behavior*.

Paul goes on to say: “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself less you also be tempted.*”⁴ He is giving instruction for what to do when any of us happen to cross paths with someone who has fallen into a hole. In the previous chapter, Paul has described those who are led by the Spirit and express His character (fruit) in their lives. Here he addresses “you who are spiritual”—those who know and display the love and character of God—and declares that we are to handle such situations in “a spirit of gentleness”—one of the fruits of the Spirit.

We are also to be very mindful of the cost of judging other people. As Jesus taught, the same judgment that we have issued on somebody else’s sin will be measured and used on us.⁵ Judging others paints a big target on our faces and affords our enemy a turn at us.

“A spirit of gentleness” is an important phrase. It specifically describes the heart attitude of the one doing the confrontation. Gentleness is the perfect term to describe the attitude we must have with those who have made mistakes or failed somehow. Gentleness does not mean nice, and it doesn’t mean polite. The heart of gentleness is the belief that “I do not need to control you.” Imagine approaching a deer in an effort to pet it. If that deer for a moment thinks you will capture it, that thing is gone. Those of us who know the heart of God must carry the reality that we will not attempt to control the person who is in trouble into every confrontation. This is the first and most important skill to develop. It is also the most difficult.

Mastery of gentleness begins in our belief system. Do we believe that we can control others? Let's review the simple way to test it out. What happens to you when other people do not let you control them? Do you become angry? Do you interpret it as dishonor? Do you find a way to justify punishing them? A yes to any of these questions exposes that you still believe the lie that you can and should control people. Kingdom confrontation requires that you repent of this and begin to allow others to control themselves.

I had a secret expectation that revival would eliminate all the problems in my environment, and eventually this snuck up on me. One day I felt this wave of unbelief come over me because of the people problems surrounding me—adultery, child abuse, addictions, lying, and more. I thought to myself, “If God is really here and His Kingdom is coming, then why are so many people still messing up their lives?” That question caused me to think about the Kingdom of God like I never had before. Is Heaven a place where God controls all the choices? What about the Garden? That place had choices.

I realized then that Heaven has poor choices in it. There have to be poor choices in Heaven, because it's a free place. Lucifer found a poor choice. I have since heard Bill Johnson say many times, “Grace in a culture gives the sin that resides in people's hearts an opportunity to manifest.” When we live in a place of love and acceptance, and are applying God's unconditional love to people's lives 100 percent of the time, the sin that lies dormant in people's lives, or the sin that people have been struggling with or hiding, will come out and end up on the floor.

I believe we can learn a lesson about the culture of grace by looking at the evolution of pig farming. Pigs are famous for their mess and stench. For centuries, pig farms were the most disgusting environments imaginable. Because pigs have no natural way of cooling themselves, farmers provided a mud hole for their pigs to keep them from overheating. These mud holes, where pigs wallowed

for a good portion of the day, eventually filled with urine and feces because the pigs couldn't seem to find a toilet. If you've ever been around a pigpen, you know the powerful stench that permeates the area, spreading as far as the wind will carry it. Filth, disease, bacteria, and infection are plentifully found in these places.

But in recent times, someone decided to separate pigs from their mess. Instead of making the mess an accepted part of what it means to raise pigs, today's farmers build facilities designed to protect the pigs from all that is disgusting. Instead of using mud to cool the pigs, they use water. The floors and living areas of the pigs have drains and rinse systems that carry the waste away from the pigs. Pigs can now live in clean environments and be every bit as sanitary as household pets. This was unimaginable just a short time ago, and it still hasn't become universal; many pig farmers still use the old methods because the new systems are so expensive.

The Father paid the highest price to make a new system of dealing with our messes available to us. If mankind can figure out a way to raise clean pigs and be willing to pay the price, then certainly the expense of the blood of Jesus can accomplish the desire of our Father's heart for us. Jesus declared, "*You are...clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*"⁶ We are clean!

Therefore, we had better have a mechanism in our Christian culture that deals effectively with the sin when it comes out right in front of us. For whatever reason, we've come to expect that church is a place where there isn't going to be any sin. It is just not true. If we don't know how to deal with sin, then we don't know how to deal with people. We inevitably create a culture of law in order to keep people from sinning. The message of this culture is, "Contain your sin within yourself. Don't show it to me; I can't handle it."

Remember, this was the Pharisees' line. They were famous for being afraid of sin, largely due to the fact that the only remedy for sin in

their day was various degrees of punishments. The fear of punishment ruled their hearts, relationships, and culture. Jesus, on the other hand, had a group of unlikely companions. They were the thieves, tax collectors, and the hookers of the day. Compared to the other religious leaders at the time, He was like “Jesus of Vegas.” He was not in the least afraid of messes people made in their lives, and of letting them happen around Him. Even the people who spent three years walking personally with Jesus were still making messes the night of His crucifixion. But ultimately, His love and the way He led people empowered them to rise above their mistakes and issues.

If we are going to cultivate a grace culture, we need to have effective ways of dealing with other people’s problems. We need environments that move the waste away from people instead of making it a part of who they are. Our methods must move the waste away, however, without reinforcing the expectation that other people control us and we control others. As I’ve pointed out earlier, no one can control us. We have our hands full trying to control ourselves. Therefore, we also need to have empowering ways of managing *ourselves* in the presence of other people’s problems. Our power and peace are rooted in being able to maintain our freedom around each other through self-control. Without a priority of self-control, we live in constant reaction to one another, which creates a culture of blame and irresponsibility. “Your stuff triggers my stuff, and I don’t know what to do when you do that. Stop it! Now I am going to blame you for what I do. If you don’t do that, I won’t have to do this.”

People will get their power back most quickly in a culture with powerful leaders who lead in freedom and honor. Such a culture has a high value for confrontation, a value that derives from the understanding that not cleaning up messes creates a toxic environment for everyone. However, I want to describe what confrontation is and what it isn’t, because there is confusion on that point and this confusion has created plenty of messes in addition to

the messes the mishandled confrontation was meant to address. I am going to show you places in the Bible where it works beautifully. I pray that you receive an impartation of truth in your thinking about how to approach the issue of sin in the lives of those around you and how to manage yourself in relationships.

Goals of Confrontation

First, let's identify the goals of confrontation. These must be in your heart and motivate you as you go into a confrontation. Confrontation is about bringing something to the light. When I come to you, in a *spirit of gentleness*, I have come to turn the lights on for you to have an opportunity to see. Again, *gentleness* means that *I do not need to control you*. This confrontation is not an attempt to force your hand or make you do something. It is a loving effort to show you, face-to-face, what you might not see or know about what you are doing or how you are affecting the world around you. Gentleness is going to help the anxiety remain low and the love increase through the whole process.

Traditionally, confrontation and conflict are synonymous. These words trigger thoughts of struggle and injury. Too often, those injured are people who care about each other. The culprit in these struggles is control. The wrong goals will produce an undesired outcome. Therefore, it is important to identify and understand the correct goals of confrontation:

- To introduce consequences into a situation in order to teach and strengthen.
- To bring to the surface what people forget about themselves after they have failed.
- To send an invitation to strengthen a relational bond with someone.
- To apply pressure strategically in order to expose areas needing strength and grace.

Let me explain how *to introduce consequences in order to teach and strengthen*. Once again, this goal cannot be met until I have dealt with my belief that I can control others. I must have no intention to

get this person to do something. Instead, this process will help the person see the mess he or she has made and see a helpful ally at his or her side.

Second, I must understand that there is a difference between a *consequence* and a *punishment* and be careful to present the former.

Many of us are confused on this point because we have heard punishment called discipline. We all know that discipline is a good thing—the Bible clearly points out that love and discipline are connected.⁷ Unfortunately, our so-called discipline looks and feels like punishment. It helps us to mask our fear and justify our need for control. There is no power given to the one receiving such discipline. The one administering the discipline requires complete compliance from the one being disciplined, and therein lies the difference between discipline that is actually punishment and discipline through consequences. Consequences are different from punishment because power is given to the one who has made the mess.

The process of Kingdom confrontation is a process of empowerment, not domination. When a person fails and generates a consequence for that failure in his or her life, the confrontation leads and empowers the person to clean up the mess. One of our sayings at Bethel is, “Feel free to make as big a mess as you are ready to clean up.” This is not a flippant broadcast of irresponsibility. It is simply a message to everyone that personal responsibility is required in this environment. No one will be stuck with your mess, and no one will be able to clean up a mess you have made as well as you can.

At Bethel, our interventions are built upon an expectation that people, motivated by respect for relationships, will respond by taking ownership for their choices and the consequences that come from them. This response is only possible when people know they are free. They are free to blow the whole thing off. Only then can

they choose to clean up their mess. Only then can they choose to honor and respect their community and relationships.

If we steal this option from them because we want to control the outcome, then we disempower them and create powerless, irresponsible victims. Powerless victims never own anything and do not change their circumstances. Therefore, our confrontations must carry the goal of empowerment from the start. Our process of confrontation will point to the consequences of their choices and offer strength and wisdom instead of control and punishment.

In the first chapter of this book I told the story of a couple of our ministry students who became pregnant during the summer break between First and Second Year. As you remember, I presented the process we went through with them as an example of how we do most confrontations in our culture. Our team and I had great respect and honor for those two students. Our priority was to protect our relationship with them while we showed them something they did not see: the problem and its consequences. Throughout the confrontation we were pursuing and protecting the above goals. We knew that the confrontation was going to bring them tremendous insight, wisdom, and understanding as we assisted them with solving the problem and cleaning up their mess. We also empowered them in a way that brought hope and joy, which strengthened them both in the midst of the cleanup and on the other side of it.

Our process with this couple also helped to reveal and confirm their true identities as a son and daughter of the King of Kings, thereby achieving the next goal of confrontation: *to bring to the surface what people forget about themselves after they have failed*. In a culture of rules, not only do people expect punishment when they fail; they are overwhelmed by the power of shame. According to the size of their mistake or their sensitivity to failure, shame takes root in the hearts and minds of those who fail. Now, shame isn't just a feeling; it is a *spirit*. It is a spirit that attacks the identity of individuals. This

spirit lies to people and leads them to believe that their poor behavior is really flowing from who they are: “You didn’t fail; you are a failure. You didn’t make a mistake; you are a mistake!”

Our two students are amazing people. They made a huge mistake and they are still amazing people. The people we wanted to show up in our confrontation were the best people they have inside them. Shame had determined to cover those people up and sought to destroy them. Our job was to bring their very best to the surface, and then present them with the reality of the situation, knowing that their best will make the best decisions and turn tragedy into triumph. Because we started with this goal, it only made sense to allow those people to show up and to trust them. If we had had a need to punish them, we would have ended up partnering with shame and requiring them to assume a powerless position that allowed us to control them and make them fulfill our wishes.

The greatness that resides at the core of every believer must come forth if we are to truly represent our Father in Heaven. Putting on the cloak of shame and guilt is not only unbecoming for us as His sons and daughters; it is a trap of powerlessness. Reaching in and grabbing our people by their true identities is an act of love that will live on far longer than the sting of failure and consequences. People can see and think when their identity is clear of fear and shame. Again and again, we have seen the greatness in those who have made mistakes take charge and work evil into good. And right along with this, we see our covenant relationships strengthened and deepened.

This is our next goal in confrontation, to extend *an invitation to strengthen a relational bond with someone*. We must see the process of bringing an issue to the light as an invitation to practice our covenant relationships. It may appear that our priority is settling a matter or changing behavior. But in reality, Kingdom confrontation is a test of the covenant between two or more people, and that

relationship is always the true priority. When we hold other people accountable for how they are impacting us, or the community around them, we expose the levels of trust we have with those individuals.

When we test the connection between us through confrontation, we learn the true strength of our covenant with another person.

Too often, we find weak, frail connections when we confront. Sometimes it is shocking how little value people have for their relationships with us. Other times it simply validates what we thought and hoped was there.

Trust is the key to a successful confrontation. Without it, we will discover our limitations quickly. If and when we find a confrontation not going well, the first thing to check is the trust level. When trust is low, anxiety is usually high. When anxiety rises, our priority in the encounter shifts to self-preservation, usually by means of seeking to control each other. If we have someone in front of us who believes that he has to protect himself from us, then we will not be talking to his greatness, but instead to his great survival tactics. To have trust, the person we confront must believe that we are for him or her, and will protect his or her best interests throughout the confrontation.

Our two students were absolute strangers to me when we met that day. Prior to our conversation in my office, I had never spoken to either of them. Those two were gambling all their chips coming into the office of a total stranger—a stranger who had the power to punish them, no less. Aware of their extremely vulnerable position, I thanked them for trusting me. Shame, anxiety, and the expectation of punishment were all elements working against us from the start. I asked their school leaders to attend the meeting with us so that I could “borrow” the trust that the couple had already built with

them. I knew I needed to establish trust before I could apply any pressure to them in hopes of finding the source of the problem.

Our final goal is to *apply pressure strategically in order to expose areas needing strength and grace*. We need to find the “broken spots” and work to begin healing them. My best analogy for “applying pressure” comes from my early adult years working in a tire store. One of my duties was to pull logging truck tires apart. I would jack up the truck, take off the wheel, take the sledge and break the bead away from the ring, slide the tire off the wheel, and pull the flap and the deflated inner tube out. I would then connect the air hose to the stem of the inner tube and fill it with air—far more air than the tube could contain while inside the tire. When the tube was stretched to capacity, I would take it over to a tank full of water and begin to submerge portions of the tube under the water. As I held sections of the tube under the water, I rolled the tube under my hands and hunted for something: bubbles. I was trying to find the “broken spot” where the air was leaking out. As soon as I located where the bubbles were coming from, I marked it and began to repair the flat tire.

This process only worked if I filled the inner tube with enough internal pressure. The “broken spot” on the tube never revealed itself if I did not apply the right pressure. External pressure will never expose someone’s “broken spot.” Yelling at it, threatening to cut it into little pieces, coaxing it, or interrogating it are never going to help me find the spot that needs healing. This work is accomplished from the inside out.

Confrontation is a process of applying pressure to another person’s life, on purpose, to expose the broken spots. We need to find these places if we ever hope to change the destructive loops in which people often live. We can’t make different decisions and create a different result until we know what is wrong.

Isaiah 1:18 says, “*Come now let us reason together. Though your sins be like scarlet...*” Though your sins are blatantly all over the place, God says, “We can do something about that.” There is hope. More importantly, God says, “*Come, let us reason together.*” The very heartbeat, nature, and desire of God are that we *come*. In these words “*reason together,*” the Lord invites us to mutually look at something to correct it. “Come, let’s look at this thing together to bring correction. Do you see what I see? I hope you do, because until you do, what I say won’t make any sense to you. If you don’t see what I am looking at, all My advice won’t make a lick of sense to you. Do you see what I see? Can you hear Me?”

God does not need to control us, and is He not afraid of our “broken spots.” He knows that the only way we can truly change is when we are free to change.

Creating Internal Pressure

The power of confrontation comes from the inside out. It is not a sales job or a manipulative ploy to get someone to do something. It cannot be! It has to be genuinely motivated from the inside if it has a prayer of lasting. A common mistake we make is leading someone to say something magical like “I’m sorry.” If you’ve ever tried to get two siblings to clean up a mess they made with each other by ordering, “Say you are sorry,” then you know it doesn’t work. They will say whatever it takes to get out of trouble and move on; you can see in their eyes and hear in their voices that they are far from reconciled through such an exercise. The solutions to relational disconnection and injury come from the heart. Getting at the heart requires a process that creates internal pressure.

There is a brilliant example of this in the book of Job. Job had a tough time in his life. His well-meaning friends came along and did their best to create pressure on Job from the outside. Each friend had a point of view delivered in the package of a lecture. Their painful guesses as to what might be the problem only added to the powerlessness and grief of Job’s plight. Though his friends did their best to aid him, they only made things worse with each passing dialogue.

Finally, in chapter 38, the Lord of all showed up. If anyone had a prophetic insight or word of knowledge about what the exact problem was, it was God himself. Certainly, if someone could get this right, it would be the All-Knowing One. But the One who knows all things did something very different:

*Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind,
and said: “Who is this who darkens counsel by
words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself*

like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.”⁸

God began His intervention in the situation by rebuking the mob of guessers. “*Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*” In essence, God showed up and said, “Shut up! All of you just be quiet!” He followed this up with the secret of creating internal pressure: “*I will question you, and you shall answer Me.*” Absolute genius! The process of asking great questions begins the internal combustion machine in humans.

It is a process that avoids triggering the natural defenses we employ against people trying to control us. People can feel the trap of leading questions designed to control them. Most of us have experiences with authority figures wanting us to answer their questions “correctly.” This process of confrontation creates fear and eliminates what can happen when people feel safe.

Great questions start the internal journey that leads people into an encounter with Truth. God warns Job that this process will try him to his core: “*Prepare yourself like a man!*” Coming from the King of Glory, this comment would cause anyone to lose all control of his or her bodily functions. But this is the process of Kingdom confrontation.

My wife and I went to the rodeo a while back with some friends. We had the best seats in the arena. It’s cool having some wealthy friends. We sat next to the announcer’s booth. I was able to look over the rail and see the bull riders right there below me. I watched as one of these cowboys was stretching out. He put his leg up on the fence like a ballerina or gymnast would do. His boot was above his head. It was then that I realized those guys were athletes. I guess I had never thought about it before. They were preparing themselves like men. Because you know what was about to happen. Whoa! They were about to enter the whirlwind.

God said, “Here we go! Prepare yourself like a man. I am going to ask you the questions and you are going to answer me. There is good stuff in you, Job, and I am going to call it out of you.” That is how God handles somebody He loves. This is the kind of confrontation that brings freedom. God applied pressure, but He did it in the spirit of gentleness, in that, through His questions, He clearly communicated the message that He did not need to control Job. He protected the opportunity for Job to discover what was truly going on inside him by inviting him to engage his will in the process.

Over and over we see Jesus demonstrate this process. He asked a man who was so obviously blind that his first name was Blind—Blind Bartimaeus—“*What do you want Me to do for you?*”⁹ And of course, Blind Bartimaeus answered, “*I want to regain my sight!*” Why did the Lord ask such an obvious question? Or why, when He approached the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, who had been waiting there for 18 years hoping to catch the angel stirring the water, did He ask, “*Do you wish to get well?*”¹⁰ Why did the Man whose healing ministry had a 100-percent success rate stop and ask questions that have seemingly obvious answers?

Herein lies the power of internal pressure. Jesus knew and practiced that man was born to be free. If we do not have the power to choose, then we will never be responsible for the choice. God plays by His own rules and design—He *honors* the way He made us. In His presence is freedom—freedom to think, decide, and own our lives.

Jesus stopped and asked these men these questions because there is a *line*. There is a line of demarcation, and it represents where one life stops and another life starts. If we believe that we can control others or that we should to demonstrate our great love, then there is no line. Your life belongs to me when I want something from you. But if I am to honor your life and self-control, then there must be a line where I stop and you start. The practice of healthy boundaries

between people is a topic that has been well discussed in other books, so I will not launch into it here. But I do want to emphasize the crucial place boundaries serve in empowering people during a confrontation.

Great questions serve a number of great benefits in a successful confrontation, including the goals I've already discussed:

1. They stimulate thinking within the individual with the problem.
2. They allow the person an opportunity to do most of the thinking about the problem from the inside out.
3. They help the person tap into his or her greatness and put it on display during the confrontation.
4. They remind the person of things they tend to forget about themselves in failure.
5. They demonstrate the covenant relationship between the two parties.
6. They allow the one doing the confrontation to remain an ally.

Who Is “Confrontable”?

In Genesis 18 there is a great story about two friends. It is the story about Abraham and God. It is an absolutely amazing example to me that God is a real person. He is not some cosmic perfection that has zero need or tolerance for me. He is not the “Big Boss upstairs” who gets His way or somebody’s got to die. Watch this:

Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”¹¹

God was on His way to destroy Sodom. But first He was going to check in with His friend Abraham, who might have something to say about it all. God told him that the outcry against Sodom was great and that He must do something about it. Abraham was stunned! His response?

And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”

Abraham then proceeded to ask more questions:

“Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”¹²

God stood there, being confronted by Abraham, and responded, “Yeah, you are right. I would spare the city for fifty righteous men.” This is profound! God is confrontable! It is unusual, because we’ve come to know “leadership” as unfrontable. We classically interpret confrontation of leadership as dishonor.

At God’s response, Abraham continued. Like an auctioneer, Abraham whittled down the size of the group it would take for God to have mercy on the city, “Okay, 40...30...20...10?” He threw in a couple of questions, and clarified that he did not mean any disrespect along the way. In the end, “*The Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.*”¹³

Abraham trusted God, and God trusted Abraham. If God made Himself open to confrontation by a man, it begs the question: who is above confrontation? A safe environment is filled with powerful, free people or it is soon to be an unsafe place controlled by those who think they have all the power.

The Key Ingredient Is Trust

If you know that I have great value for you, then you can invite my input. If you trust that I have your best interest at heart, then we will be able to build a deeper covenant relationship through confrontation. If you get a whiff that I don't respect or value you, you will protect yourself from my help. The classic problem of adolescent/parent dynamics is that, as the child becomes a young man or young woman, he or she can feel the disrespect the parent has for his or her ability to think and make decisions. Because the adolescent doesn't feel trusted, he or she resists confrontation.

The nature of confrontation is truth. The purpose of creating external pressure is to find the truth, not to get a confession. People who cannot trust will not show the truth of what is going on inside them to anyone. They feel safer keeping the "broken spot" concealed. It takes a safe place to expose a vulnerable place, an area that needs healing. For this reason, it matters less that the confronter believes that he or she holds great authority and should be trusted than it matters whether the one who is scared believes he or she is cared for and protected.

In essence, a confrontation is an examination. It is a procedure that trusts another to look at some part of your life that you may not know about or understand. It is both vulnerable and necessary if we expect to build healthy lives and live in peace. It reminds me of turning 40. That was the year I had my first *real* physical examination. My doctor asked me to disrobe and lean over the table. I had known this was going to happen; I just couldn't find a way to pretend that it wasn't really going to be like I had heard. The rubber glove and goop on the tray next to me gave it away. This was going to be invasive! Sure enough, the invasion came and went. I could hardly look my doctor in the eye. Nervous laughter was

overtaking me as I tried to play it off. I said, “Should we tell my wife what just happened?”

My doctor laughed right along with me and then *she* said, “Your prostate is smooth. That’s a good thing. See you in a year or so.”

King David put it this way:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me,
and know my anxieties; and see if there is any
wicked way in me, and lead me in the way
everlasting.*¹⁴

Jesus is the Great Confronter. It is no coincidence that He was neither afraid in the presence of people’s mistakes nor afraid to confront those people with a loving invasion of the truth. Whether it was His disciples, the rich young ruler, or the woman at the well, He was able to help people identify what was going on below the surface better than anyone. And at the same time, little children came running up to Him as a “safe place.” Kids are natural at identifying people who are safe. One of the keys to Jesus’ mastery of confrontation is that His interactions with people were motivated by compassion. I remember Bill Johnson saying, “If it doesn’t hurt you to confront another person, you probably have a wrong attitude.”

Confrontation and empowerment go hand in hand in a culture of honor, and mercy, compassion, and courage are the qualities necessary for maintaining a healthy flow of these two elements in your environment. Successful confrontation builds relationships and strengthens covenant bonds. It is an art built on certain skills, but more importantly, it is a lifestyle that flows from your beliefs and core values. The more you establish Heaven’s goals for confrontation in your thinking, the more you will be positioned to release Heaven into your confrontations.

CHAPTER 8



REVOLUTION TO REFORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of
the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

(Habakkuk 2:14)

There was a time in our nation's history when it was considered normal and acceptable to own other human beings. We adopted and passed down a cultural view and practice that slavery was "necessary" for our commerce and households to function. We enslaved, sold, oppressed, and punished people like animals because it was "normal."

The most difficult aspect of this tragedy was that it is *biblical*. Both the Old and New Testaments apparently condone and show God's blessing on slave owners. The apostle Paul instructed slaves to submit to their masters.¹ He didn't even hint at it being a huge injustice and an offense to Heaven's paradigm. Jesus did not instruct His disciples to "set My people free" and wage a campaign against slavery.

Or did He? He introduced His ministry by stating that He had been anointed "*to proclaim liberty to the captives.*"² He later commissioned all who would follow Him to imitate His example. This leaves each generation of believers with the question of how to do that. How can we violate our own Scriptures, and especially our traditions, to find a higher place of honor and freedom for people? It usually takes a war. As the history of our nation proves, sometimes it takes a civil war.

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrestled with this question in her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She said:

I wrote what I did because as a woman, as a mother I was oppressed and brokenhearted, with the sorrows and injustice I saw, because as a Christian I felt the dishonor to Christianity—because as a lover of my country I trembled at the coming day of wrath.³

Many historians consider *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a significant influence in the events leading to the Civil War, which ended in the abolition of slavery in America. When Abraham Lincoln finally met Harriet, he said to her, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!”⁴ But Stowe’s brother and fellow abolitionist, Henry Ward Beecher, gave another man credit for the overthrow of slavery. When Beecher was asked after the Civil War, “Who abolished slavery?” he answered, “Reverend John Rankin and his sons did it.”⁵

‘John Rankin was born in Jefferson County, Tennessee, and raised in a strict Calvinist home. In 1800, Rankin’s eighth year of life, his view of the world and his religious faith were deeply affected by two things—the revivals of the Second Great Awakening that were sweeping through the Appalachian region, and the largest organized (though unsuccessful) slave rebellion in U.S. history up to that point, led by an enslaved man, Gabriel Prosser, who was executed along with 27 of his conspirators. Ann Hagedorn writes:

For Rankin, the events of his eighth year resonated deeply. In his memory, the story of a man losing his life in pursuit of freedom would always blend together with the many nights of manifestation in the woodlands of East Tennessee. There would come a time when enough years had passed that Rankin could look back and know that the passions of the summer

of 1800 had inspired his own private awakening.⁶

Convinced as he was that the thrust of the Gospel was to eradicate oppression, and slavery in particular, from the world, Rankin wrestled deeply with the portions of Scripture that seemed to condone slavery—Scriptures that were taught from many a pulpit in his day. Ultimately he resolved this conflict by determining that the balance of the Word taught that God never intended mankind to be enslaved, and that it was the duty of every righteous man and woman to seek God’s highest purposes for humankind. In an address to a delegation of anti-slavery societies he said:

The Scriptures represent all men as having sprung from one common parent—all as “made of one blood”...Consequently all are created equally free. Whatever rights the first man had, all his children must have. God created no slaves. He gave to all men the same original rights.

...Let the church universal as the army of the living God, come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty; let her voice be heard as the voice of many waters, proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound—and the poisonous fountains of death shall be dried up, the rivers of anguish shall cease to flow, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Union in this great work will prepare the church for the rising of millennial glory, when liberty shall be universal, and the song of redeeming love shall ascend from every tongue.⁷

The passion birthed in Rankin's heart as a young boy ultimately led him to brave dangers of all kinds, from angry, rotten-egg slinging mobs to slanderous newspapers and direct physical attacks on himself, his family, and his property. He was not only fearless and unstoppable in preaching the message of freedom, but also in living it. He and his family continuously spent their time and resources to help runaway slaves to freedom—their house and name were among the most well known on the Underground Railroad—and to support other abolitionists in their efforts to do the same. As Henry Ward Beecher, who observed Rankin's heroism firsthand, testified, this one man's message and example were so powerful and far-reaching that the dismantling of an entire system of oppression, a system that many, even those who decried it, had believed was impossible to remove, has been laid to his credit.

The life of John Rankin is evidence that when Heaven touches earth in revival, it creates something inside a person—a vision of how God made the world to be and a cry to take part in the restoration of all things, until a day “when liberty shall be universal.” Encountering the living God and receiving a fresh revelation of His heart both give us a greater hunger for freedom in our own lives and require us to “set the captives free.” This appetite drives us past the cultural norms and fuels us with supernatural courage to spurn the persecution that comes from those maintaining the status quo. Revival ignites life in people to press against the limitations and boundaries of society. It calls to the deepest parts of mankind and screams “Freedom!” so loudly that the same cry comes out of our mouths. *Revival* launches *revolution* and revolutions initiate *reformation*.

This is where we stand as a movement in our generation. We are in the throes of a reformation. No longer will we tolerate the status quo of an externally governed existence. No longer will we accept training in powerlessness. No longer will we live as servants and slaves. The religious motivation of the pending wrath of God and

the ideals of a small life are no longer options for us. We are sons and daughters of the Most High. We are in training for reigning as never before. We now expect to be powerful, living an abundant life in Christ until the kingdoms of this earth become the Kingdom of our God.

I have the privilege of leading the Bethel School of Transformation. This school provides people with a behind-the-scenes peek at the culture of freedom we are building at Bethel. Since we began offering the school in 2005, we've had more than a hundred churches take this four-day adventure of training in what we are doing here. Without exception, there has been a senior leader in every single school who asks, "How in the world are we ever going to do this in our church?" I want to say that you are not alone if you have that question.

I want to share a testimony about a man, a good friend of mine, who had that same question. Steve Doerter, a pastor in North Carolina, got involved in the Bethel culture a couple of years ago. He began to listen to the podcasts, came to some conferences, and began to bring the things he was learning to his congregation and its other leaders. These things represented some significant changes for these people. The church historically was Baptist, had become non-denominational, and under Steve's leadership was pursuing more freedom and power than they ever had before. However, they had not yet come to know what he had experienced at Bethel, and thus were finding it difficult to be on the same page with him.

He asked himself, *How am I going to get this thing moving?* Eventually he decided to expose his leaders to what he was pursuing by bringing them to Bethel's Leader's Advance conference. The Leader's Advance is an invitation-only conference for those leaders who are in relationship with other leaders in our network. It is a powerful time for everyone who attends.

One night at the Advance, my wife Sheri and I were sitting at dinner with Steve, his wife, Joyce, and his leadership board. They were a friendly enough group, but they obviously did not understand much of what was going on around them. One of the things that goes on at the Leader's Advance is that our School of Supernatural Ministry students wait on the tables. These students are constantly "under the influence" of the Holy Spirit, and on this particular night, our table waiters became increasingly "drunk." They were happy—super happy. Finally, Steve's leaders asked, "What is wrong with those people?"

I replied, "They're just happy, and they're drunk."

"They're drunk?" they asked.

I went on to explain, "See, there is this guy and his name is Georgian Banov. He is upstairs in another dining room praying for people, and I would imagine that the whole upstairs is drunk by now.

You should go up there and check it out! You should just go look at it—get close enough to see it."

They said, "Well, we'd like to do that. We'd like to go see what this is." And off they went.

The next report I got was that they eventually had their own pile—their own pile of former Baptist elders. The next time I saw these distinguished people, their hair was all messed up and one had his pant leg tucked into his shoe. It was then I could see that Steve was gaining momentum with his team of leaders.

Since their team came to that conference, there have been several significant miracles in their church. Cancerous tumors disappeared

in a woman's body. Financial miracles, inner healings, and deliverances are now a common part of this church's day-to-day experiences. But one miracle caught my attention.

There was a little 3-year-old boy named Pablo who was diagnosed with a developmental disorder that falls within the spectrum of autism. He was so agitated that his mother could not hold him, kiss him, or be affectionate with him at all. He squirmed out of her arms or anyone's and ran away from them as fast as he could. He could only say one-word sentences at a time. He was unable to say his name or age, and had no concept of colors or shapes. He was highly sensitive to the texture of food—so much so that he would spit out any new food introduced and thus could only eat one texture of food at a time. No one could take him out of the house, not even to go shopping, because of the scene he would cause. When he got disturbed or anxious, he started pounding his head on the floor or on the wall. He was oblivious to people around him and completely trapped in his own little world. He had never slept a whole night in his life; he was commonly up at two or three in the morning and awake for the rest of the night. You can imagine how worn out his parents were after three years of unsettled sleep. He had a brother who was totally scared of him. Great disruption had come to this family because of their son's condition.

Pastor Steve got up one Sunday morning to deliver the message. As he reached the podium, the Lord called an "audible" at the podium. So he changed the message and entitled his new sermon, "God Is Good, and I Highly Recommend Him." He began to talk about the goodness of God, the faithfulness of God, and God's heart toward people. It wasn't too long before he was sharing testimonies and stirring the faith in the room. At the end of the message, they began praying for those who wanted what had just been prophesied in the testimonies. Pablo's mom came up and several leaders laid hands on her in proxy for him. They began to command healing and the

release of miracles, the release of Heaven, into the situation at her home.

Pablo's mom believed the prayers and headed home after the service. She arrived late that evening and woke up in the morning, failing to realize that, for the first time in three years, everyone had slept through the night! She woke up and thought, "Something is changing." She walked up to her son and asked, "What is your name?"

He replied, "Pablo."

She asked, "How old are you?"

"Three."

The people who had stayed with him while she was gone began to report to her that changes like that had been going on since the previous day—the miracles began as soon as she received prayer. Months later, Pablo is still sleeping through the night. He's not hitting his head against things anymore. He now says his name, his age, and can interact with 80 percent of the questions that someone asks him. The specialists who worked with him expected that he would only ever be able to communicate with one-word sentences and sign language. He is now speaking in complete sentences. He knows the difference between four colors and knows the names of the rest of them. He knows the difference between a circle and a square and a rhombus. (I don't even know what a rhombus is!) He can count up to 20. He's starting to sing songs. He's starting to play with other children for short periods of time. Mom took him to McDonald's for lunch without incident. They're able to hold him and hug him and kiss him and be affectionate with him.

The therapist who had been coming to the family's home and working with Pablo cried as she told this mother what she was witnessing happen to him. She could not comprehend the drastic improvement in him in only three short weeks. But the kicker for this mom, the reason that she wrote it all down, was that the principal of the school Pablo attends came out and met her at her car one day in tears. She said, "This is nothing short of a miracle that has happened in our city."

Revolutionaries

I want to show you why Heaven is invading earth. A revolution is happening, and you are a witness to it. In fact, if you have made it this far in this book, then you are most likely a participant in it. You are a revolutionary! Your involvement as a revolutionary is going to lead us to our next great reformation in the Church. We are in the midst of a great transformation. Heaven is infiltrating the Body of Christ and stirring up the passion and the hearts of those who have come to expect more.

Every year at our Leader's Advances we ask, "Who is here for your first Advance?" Half the room raises their hand. We are stunned each time. How does it happen that half the room is new every time? The list gets longer and longer and longer, and the room gets smaller and smaller and smaller. There is a momentum developing, where more and more people are hearing about Heaven leaking through. Everywhere members of our team go to minister, people tell us, "Heaven is leaking through, and our own city is starting to hear about it."

There is something powerful happening all over the globe and all of a sudden we're not feeling quite so unique anymore. Churches all over the world are experiencing the same things we are. The testimonies of Heaven's invasion are more and more common. But the encouraging part is that these stories are not just coming from Africa, Asia, and South America. These stories are coming from local churches all over the United States. We are starting to feel like part of a momentum, part of a movement, part of a transformation.

Before I throw the word "revolutionary" around too much more, let me give you a definition straight from the dictionary:

Revolution: forcible, pervasive, and often violent change of a social or political order by a sizable segment of a country's population (*Encarta Encyclopedia*).

This definition is begging to be associated with Matthew 11:12: "... *the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.*" As the Kingdom advances in revival, it is bringing about a forcible overthrow of a government in the Church, the forcible challenge of a social order that so many of us have been confined to throughout our church experience. There is a way of doing things that has constrained Heaven from blasting the earth. But an increasing number of people from all over the earth have said, "Enough! We've had enough of this!" And it has begun a revolution. We have begun a revolution that is leading to a reformation, and a reformation is simply this:

Reformation: 1. to improve (a law or institution) by correcting abuses (*Farlex Dictionary*).

Institutions develop because the way of doing things becomes so comfortable, so predictable, so routine, that we no longer have to think, we no longer have to risk, and we no longer have to believe. It's all simply a matter of rote behavior, and we are carried through our Christian life because it is the way we've always done it. A reformation is something that comes and asks, "Why are you doing what you do? Do you realize that what you are doing is not working? Everything you've established in your traditions needs to change. Now, what are you going to do?" The answer is that we're going to have to create something we've never seen before. And when reformation is complete, it brings transformation:

Transformation: A thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance (Encyclopedia.com).

Our transformation demonstrates to the world that it's something brand new, something that no one has ever seen before. We are living in a time, in a day, and in a government that allows us to change. We now are living in a posture and in a relationship with our city that looks completely different than in the past. However, I need to be honest about one necessary element in this transformation that can be a deal-breaker for a lot of people. It's common for people to say, "We want to change. We want things to be different. We went to a conference and things are going to be different now. We bought the whole video set, and now, buddy, things are going to be different around here." Except there's this piece they miss. They have a whole herd of sacred cows in their world that do not want to budge.

I had a brochure stuck in the screen door at my house recently. It was from a church in our neighborhood. It said, "Not Like Every Other Church" across the top. I opened it up because I hoped it was true. On the front of the brochure was a picture of the pastor and his wife, "Mr. and Mrs. Ed Jones." Below those photos were pictures of several other couples, "Mr. and Mrs. Tom Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Ozzie Wald, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Chin, Mr. and Mrs. etc...." As I read this, I thought. *There are two people in each of these pictures, and only one name. Where did she go? She's just gone. You know what? This isn't any different. In fact, this is the same old malarkey. The closer a woman gets to that church, the more she disappears. That is a scary place if you're a woman.*

The Church is one of the last institutions in our society that practices sexism freely and "biblically." For some reason, it is still tolerated to dishonor or disempower our women. The brochure was a lie. That church wasn't unlike most churches. Dang! It isn't hard to say that everything's different—"We're not doing it like every other church, the way our granddaddy did it." Yeah, but it looks a lot the same and it feels about the same. The same anxiety and control are still here. And we end up sounding like one of those silly

politicians—you know, the ones who are going to bring about “change” and immediately institute a lot of “same”? Revolutionaries know that transformation comes when we are finally willing to have a “sacred cow barbecue.”

Governmental Shifts

In [Chapter 2](#) I introduced some of the governmental shifts that are necessary for Heaven to flow to the earth. Transformation has been successful at Bethel to the degree that we have implemented that new set of core values and paradigms. The government that is typically in place in our churches and has been for centuries is what I referred to as a pastoral government, with a pastoral directive, with these players featured at the helm: pastors, administrators, teachers, and even evangelists. Once again, the priorities of this government are where the problems start:

Current Government: Current Priorities:

Pastors—People

Administrators—Things

Teachers—Doctrine

Evangelists—Salvation Message

The first priority in a pastoral government is *people*. How safe, comfortable, and happy are the people in our church environment? We need to know this, because we know these people have choices, and if they aren't happy in that environment, they will go someplace else. We can pretend like we don't care, but this governing system cares about "butts in the seat."

The next priority is our *things*. In a pastoral government, there are many teachings about stewardship and taking care of our money, our parking lot, our building, and our stuff. These are the driving forces of how we do church.

The next priority, *doctrine*, leads us to focus on right and wrong, truth and error. This attitude develops: "What is right or true is everything we teach, and what is wrong is taught by everybody else in town who disagrees with us." We end up trying to teach people to

defend themselves against other Christians, to defend their lives as believers, and to defend their choice of and participation in this particular church.

The *gospel of salvation* is the final priority. Getting people saved is generally the only supernatural activity in the pastoral environment. And without the presence of the supernatural, we end up teaching converts, “You were a sinner, you prayed a prayer, and now God’s grace is applied to your life. Your sins are forgiven, but you’re still a sinner and we’re watching you.”

The core values of this environment flow from its leadership anointing and structure. For example, here’s a core value that has been propagated liberally among the congregations of our nation: “God is always right, so be like Him. Be one of the most difficult people on the planet to talk to. We have taught you the truth, and don’t you dare consider anything except what we taught you because you might be deceived. Someone might introduce you to the idea that the supernatural is a part of the Kingdom of Heaven. The ‘supernatural’ is always suspect and it is full of deceptions. Only the devil has supernatural power on the earth.”

Such core values create an environment centered upon the things that can be proved and controlled. This church environment is pervasive throughout the land, and I’m sure all of you reading a book like this are trying to make a break. If you are in a pastoral government, you’re going to have some problems trying to introduce contrary core values to that environment.

These priorities I’ve mentioned are not evil, any more than childhood is evil. They are an inferior Christianity, if you will. But a system that effectively prevents believers from growing up causes symptoms of disorder. People don’t grow as God designed them to in a pastoral environment because deep in its core, the pastoral government defines its people as sinners working out their

salvation. This means that we are not trustworthy and are essentially servants waiting for further instructions. Our lives are defined by a divine “to do” list. As difficult as this may be, these are some of the sacred cows that need to find the “grill.”

It’s scary to say that doctrine isn’t the most important part of our relationship with God. And even to suggest that the salvation message isn’t paramount can seem like heresy. But until we are willing to reorder our thinking, to be renewed in our minds, then yesterday will determine our tomorrow.

We must have permission in our church environments to challenge the sacred cows of our day, just as Jesus did. Remember, Jesus came and confronted the Jews, the people of His day who knew more about God than anyone. He rebuked their love affair with their own interpretation of His Kingdom. Sadly, most of them refused His invitation to the sacred cow barbecue, and we shouldn’t be surprised if something similar happens when we start doing the same thing in our generation. Once again, one of the primary things we must confront is the issue of order in the House of God, and we do that with Scripture:

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.⁸

I’m still not sure how this got passed over for so many years in our approach to governing God’s church. I am not sure how Paul could make it clearer than “first...second...third.” Where did that go?

How did a pastoral environment become the supreme level in the church? “Pastor” is not even in the list. It’s not even a close fourth. So, *all* our cows must die, especially those roaming around in plain view, or worse yet, those standing in our living room.

I remember watching a show about lions on the Discovery Channel one night. It showed footage of two lions fighting in a field, an old lion and a young lion. The young lion beat up the old one, and so the old lion was out and the young lion was in. It was sad to watch the former leader of the pride limp off into the Serengeti sunset. He was battle-worn from years of defending his position, his face covered in scars. What happened next was, I thought, both interesting and barbaric. The first thing the young lion did as the new ruler of the pride was to attack and kill all the cubs of the old lion. It was shocking to see this huge animal breaking the necks of the former leader's offspring. This action caused all of the females to go into heat so the new leader could breed an entire new bloodline—a bloodline that would carry his DNA.

I watched Bill Johnson do that. Stay with me for just a minute. When Bill landed at Bethel, it had a pastoral government, led by an evangelist. When Bill was invited to interview for the senior leader position, the board of elders said, “We think you’re the guy.”

He said, “I will come here *only* if this board is in 100-percent agreement that I come.”

They were stunned. “We’ve never had a unanimous vote of this nature,” they said to him.

He said he would not come unless it was unanimous. That was the first of many changes he would require of this government. They called him back and said, “Hey, it’s a miracle. For the first time ever, an unanimous vote!” At the time, the church had 2,000 people. In the next couple of years, Bill grew it down to about 1,000. Meanwhile, the pastoral government that had existed for some 50 years was groaning, “Aaahhhhh!” There was a new sheriff in town and a new government was being established. As a result, the priorities were going to change. These elders deserve as much credit as Bill for a successful transformation. They held on through

the *revolution* and all the casualties of war. They made it through the *reformation* of how things were going to be done around here. We live today in that *transformation*.

The new government Bill introduced was aligned with what Paul laid out, “First apostles, second prophets, third teachers...” and thereby introduced a new set of priorities into Bethel’s environment:

New Government: New Priorities:

Apostles—Heaven

Prophets—Spirit World

Teachers—Articulating the Kingdom

Workers of Miracles—Supernatural Activity of
the Believers

In this government, the priorities are about Heaven, the presence of God, and the blueprint of Heaven being reproduced on the earth. There is a new core value for the activity of the spirit world, for the saints having their eyes and ears opened by the prophet, for hearing the heartbeat of Heaven and becoming aware of the activity of the third Heaven, which supersedes the devil’s strategies. Signs, wonders, and miracles bring people into God encounters that radically change the way life is lived here on the earth. No longer is it an environment of fear and reaction, but of proactively establishing the architecture and blueprint of Heaven on the earth—of making the prayer, “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” a reality of life for believers and the community around them.

Once again, the role of the teacher in this new government is no longer to try to build a defensive network for believers against other believers, or even believers against cults. The teacher’s job is to help the people see Heaven and a supernatural God at work on the earth in the Scripture. They give people a scriptural context to understand the apostles and prophets and their core values. They teach us that

these leaders design a place where Heaven stays the priority, where anything can happen, and where it does. If the people do not understand what is happening, they will be afraid and seek a place where they are in charge again. Teachers help bring this understanding and reduce the anxiety of God's people that can prevent them from entering into all that is available in His presence.

I won't review the role of pastors in an apostolic environment, but I want to give attention to the next role Paul mentions in this particular list—the workers of miracles. I believe that “workers of miracles” is another description for the role of the evangelist in an apostolic government. I believe we have lost the connection between these two roles because, without the leadership of apostles and prophets, workers of miracles generally don't get to operate in their roles. But in an apostolic environment, the apostles and prophets pull the supernatural into the environment, and the workers of miracles run around pushing every button to see what can happen. They bring the priority of supernatural activity into the practical, daily lives of believers, as well as to the lives of all those in their community, along with a high value for protecting that activity. They create a contagion for risk-taking and living in the impossible.

As the new wineskin of apostolic leadership is established, a new wave of evangelism is going to be released through the workers of miracles. For the past century, the Church has emphasized the practice of evangelism. People like D. L. Moody, William Booth, and Charles Finney taught the Church to “win people to Christ.” This experience has brought many into the Kingdom—many believers mention it when giving their testimony of salvation. It is also something most modern Christians are trained to do in their local congregations.

But the workers of miracles are bringing a new practice of evangelism into the Church's environment. These radicals of faith

are releasing “God encounters” everywhere they go, whether it is the workplace, street corner, supermarket, restaurant, or mall. Healings, miracles, words of knowledge, prophetic ministry, and heavenly revelation are leading people to Jesus in droves. We call these people “treasure hunters” where I come from.

This revolutionary ministry called “treasure hunts” is sweeping the globe. Kevin Dedmon, author of *The Ultimate Treasure Hunt*, has trained thousands of people to do this supernatural work. Simply put, it works like this: pray together and get a “treasure list” from Heaven. This list has things like names, places, colors of clothing, specific areas of the body that have pain, diseases, situations in people’s lives, gender, and all kinds of other “clues.” The team then goes out into the community to find their “treasure.” As soon as a “treasure hunter” locates someone on the list, he or she approaches the person and shows him or her that he or she is on the “treasure list.” At this point, the “treasure hunter” asks if there is something he or she can pray about for the person. Time after time, Heaven rocks these people. God shows up in power! Signs, wonders, and miracles are the ongoing testimony of treasure hunting.

It has reached the point in our community where people are anticipating a God encounter. One team of leaders from another community came to Bethel’s Transformation School and found themselves out in our city doing a treasure hunt with one of our Second Year students from the School of Supernatural Ministry. While in a popular department store in town, they approached a man who fit one of the items on the “treasure list.” When they told him that he was on the list and therefore one of God’s treasures, he exclaimed, “I’ve heard about this. I’ve always wanted to be the treasure you guys found!”

The man excitedly received what God had for him and the team moved on to the next treasure. There were no arguments about theology, no threats of dying and going to hell. This encounter was

just a simple and powerful reminder that God is alive and loves this man. Although many people give their hearts to Jesus in these encounters, it isn't the primary goal. The priority is for believers to be conduits on the earth for Heaven to happen. We are creating opportunities for the blueprint of Heaven to be expressed.

Transforming Cities With Honor

Another priority of an apostolic mission is to leak the Kingdom into the community rather than getting the community to come to our church. This priority is motivated by honor and a wealth mindset, which lead us to look for ways to benefit those around us.

It's amazing to see what can happen when you have a thousand students descending on our community every week doing outreach and treasure hunts. But I want to tell you about a friend of mine who is seeing the blueprint unfold in his Mexican city. His name is Angel Nava. He and his wife, Esther, lead both a church and school of supernatural ministry in the southern portion of Baja California in a city called La Paz (Peace). In 2003, they met another couple who turned the Christian world they had come to know so well upside down.

Denny and Danette Taylor were sent out from Bethel to start a school of supernatural ministry in La Paz. Their first task was to find the individuals who God was inviting to become catalysts for revival in their city by embracing and replicating what we've stepped into in Redding. Through a series of events they met Angel and Esther Nava. The next several years became a testimony of how the culture of honor transforms a city.

I remember the absolute transformation that first happened in this couple, who had been pastoring a nice, quiet church for a few years prior to meeting the Taylors. When she first saw the power of God at work in a meeting with Bill Johnson and Kris Vallotton, Esther knew she had discovered the reason she was alive. Angel, on the other hand, was scared of the supernatural manifestations and wanted nothing to do with them. But the Lord slowly brought him

to a place of curiosity, and finally to the place where he recognized that Heaven was trying to invade his city.

However, with this recognition came the realization that if he turned his heart toward revival, it would cost him everything. First, he would lose his relationship with his leadership; those overseeing his church from a pastoral paradigm would remove themselves from his life if he turned toward the supernatural. He also knew that several of his closest pastor friends would leave simultaneously. Nevertheless, he and Esther purposed to do whatever they needed to do in order to welcome God and Heaven into La Paz.

Their first step was to begin supporting Denny and Danette's efforts to bring a school of supernatural ministry into their city. As they did, they immediately began to see healings and miracles. In the first year of the school, they saw a woman raised from the dead. As new and exciting as this was in their lives and ministry, Angel's heart was to see his city transformed. He devoured everything he could find from Bethel's teachers. He wanted to better understand what was needed on his end for Heaven to be welcome in Mexico. He began to realize that God was in a good mood and wanted people to know His love. He also started to believe that his great city could experience God more effectively if he helped Jesus get out of the church and into the city.

But how was he to do that? All he had known up to that point was how to go into the city and bring people back to his church. Where would he put a quarter of a million people? He needed a strategy change. He needed a way to be "leaven in the lump" of La Paz.

Mexico does not have a blood donor system that works. They have a government official who is responsible to receive blood donations, but no one gives blood. It is customary for Mexican citizens to have to find their own donor if they need surgery. Angel got an idea. He went into his local blood donation department and talked to the

new director about how his job was going. Aware that business was slow, Angel asked some questions about how blood donation worked in La Paz. That next week, he shared his new city transformation strategy with his congregation: “We will become the largest donors of blood in our city. Follow me.”

Angel became the leader of blood donation in his city. The members of his congregation currently donate blood three times a year. Knowing the competitive nature of churches, Angel invited other churches and pastors to take part in the blood drive. Now several churches compete to be the ones who give the most blood each year. As a result, La Paz now leads the state in blood acquisitions, and the new director of the blood bank received a government award for the spike in donations. Angel made that state official look like a genius. As a result, that man wants Angel to be successful.

It was fun for Angel to introduce his community of believers to a wealth paradigm in which they became benefactors of their city by serving it in a life-giving way. But he wanted to take it to another level. He and Esther began to do outreaches to some of the Indian villages on the mainland of Mexico. They began to teach their people to serve the poor and love those who could never do anything to return the favor.

Now, their church is not like an American church. Material resources are scarce, and people live modest lives. Angel taught his people to give and serve in ways that seemed impossible to the natural mind. They are now taking their own people to new heights of love, service, and sacrifice. They are exporting miracles, healing, and generosity to the states around them.

Staying true to form, Angel got another “God idea” to make an impact on his city. His children go to a Catholic private school in La Paz. This private school has an orphanage associated with it, and the priest of the school is also involved with this orphanage. Angel’s

conversations with the priest informed him about some of the needs of the orphans; he learned that one of their greatest needs was for new shoes.

Now, Mexican Protestants and Catholics are like cats and dogs. They do not get along. They do not fellowship together and cannot seem to find much value in each other. The Protestants are antagonistic toward the Catholics and have numerous justifications for their disdain toward them. There is an intense separation between the two camps. But when Angel returned to his congregation and shared that the Catholic orphanage needed shoes, his church decided to buy enough pairs of new shoes for all the orphans—70 pairs. They didn't buy cheap shoes, either; they bought Nikes. A local shoe store owner, who was a believer, found out about their gesture and said that he wanted in on the deal. He agreed to sell the shoes to the church at cost.

Angel's church was so excited about blessing the Catholic orphans that they took it to the next level. They invited the children to come to their church on a Sunday morning so they could present the gifts as a family. The priest and the children didn't know what Angel's church was up to, but unexpectedly the priest agreed to bring all his children to the Seeds of Life Protestant church on a Sunday morning. Such a thing had probably never happened in Mexican history!

At the service, the church took things to an even greater level of extravagance. They wanted those children to feel the honor and love God has for them. Families that Angel and Esther knew could not afford to buy bikes for their own children were pooling together money to give a bike as a gift to the orphanage. They lined chairs across the front of the church and had the children come and sit in the chairs, facing the congregation. The people came and washed the feet of the children and then presented them with their new shoes. Then, the children from Angel's church stood behind their

guests and prophesied over them. Tears flowed from everyone in the room. Angel then invited the priest to sit in a chair. He washed the feet of the priest in front of his people. The priest could not believe what he and his children were experiencing. No one would ever be the same.

The school of ministry in La Paz continues to grow and the church continues to build new structures to expand their capacity. They are building teams of healing, the prophetic, workers of miracles, and are teaching their people about Heaven and the supernatural. The students have begun to minister the supernatural to the congregation. There is no turning back! This is all quickly becoming the normal Christian life for them. Outreach to the city is flowing, and miracles are happening in everyday environments such as school, stores, and sidewalks. Heaven is invading everyday life in La Paz.

Angel and Esther continue to grow in their own faith and character. They are learning about love and intimacy for each other and their family. They are learning about cultivating freedom and honor as leaders. They are leading in creating a safe place for people who learned that life is about survival. They are challenging an impoverished culture to pull on the unlimited resources of Heaven. They are connecting the powerless with power, the hopeless with hope, and the captives with freedom. The transformation they are living in is now becoming a transforming reality to those around them. They are a catalyst for Heaven.

More recently, Angel and Esther have taken the reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics to a historic level. In October of 2008 I received this e-mail from Angel:

Just a short note to share how last night's meeting was a success. About 3,000 people gathered in the government plaza in La Paz,

most of them Catholics, but lots of Christians too. We all joined to pray for Mexico in a first time ever event. We had never had Catholics and Christians praying together in our country. By the end of the event, I raised my voice to ask forgiveness to the Catholics because we had built walls instead of building bridges. A great ovation was heard when I hugged the bishop. But it was even more powerful seeing Christians and Catholics hugging each other and expressing forgiveness and reconciliation.

One of the most powerful moments to me was at the very end of the meeting, when my wife Esther and I were walking down off the platform, I found a crowd of people waiting for me to hug me and say thanks...all of them were Catholics.

I know this is a new day...and new things are about to happen here.

Revival is here. We are making history.

Weeks after this unprecedented prayer gathering, the local priest informed Angel that his bishop was sick and in the hospital. He knew that Angel's ministry sees many people healed. He asked Angel to visit the bishop in his hospital room and release the healing power of God to him. Angel was both honored and encouraged by this trust and favor. He is in regular contact and relationship with this bishop now, and they are good friends. A fresh excitement is in the air around the healing and partnership of the Protestants and Catholics in their city.

But change doesn't come without a cost. While I was visiting the Navas the following month, Angel got a call from a group of

Protestant pastors with whom he is associated. The leader of the group said that he and several others were coming to La Paz the next week and wanted to meet with him to discuss his recent “prayer gathering” with the Catholics. This leader made it clear that they were not happy about what he had done. As a matter of fact, they were coming to have him repent for his mistake.

Angel’s public apology to the Catholics was the most humiliating and upsetting part—they want him to retract his comments and apologize to them right away. His own friends, his brothers in Christ, were upset with him for bringing healing in his community. This was going to be a confrontation, and a test of their honor for each other. After my return from La Paz, I received this e-mail from my friend:

Thursday I met the [local] pastors, as I told you I was going to do. It was very good. They came in a very good mood and spirit. They told us the things they were not in agreement with. The problem is the way they picture God and the church. The religious mindset doesn’t allow them to see God moving beyond “our churches.” I confronted their mindset and they had no answers for my questions. We got breakthrough, mainly because regardless of our differences, at the end of the meeting the relationship between them and us got strengthened.

They were able to preserve their relationships even through disagreement. This may be the next miracle we see in La Paz—Christian leaders who disagree and continue to honor and love one another. Transformation comes to a region when the leaders can manifest the priorities of Heaven, which leads the people to do the same. Angel and Esther are leading a city into a period of

transformation. They are making a powerful impression and impact on city officials, business owners, local citizens, and other church leaders. They are now joining forces with the mayor's office, the state governor, and the police. Yes, the next target for Angel is the Mexican police. *Jesus!*

Building a Vessel of Honor

Those of us who have experienced the current revival know about the miracles that are happening. We see them increase every day all over the world. Now we must build a vessel to transform our communities, our cities, and our nations. Global revival will not have lasting impact unless we see the core values of Heaven show up in our nation's governments.

I don't mean that we simply elect people who say they are believers and go to church. I mean that we build a paradigm that invites a nation to be saved in a day. We classically put into government those who will protect what is important to us. We elect leaders in this nation who will protect our economy, our safety, and our rights. The key ingredient that is missing is a government that will protect the priorities of Heaven and the presence of God in our land.

Sometimes we like to believe that we are doing that in our churches, except for one glaring reality: God's presence and power is missing from many of our churches. Therefore, we are simply creating church governments that protect our precious traditions and theologies. The supernatural is nowhere near most of the largest denominations in our land. How stupid would unbelievers have to be to partner with the Church in making the entire country as limited as most churches are?

The culture of honor is not about giving the church's leaders more control. I hope I have made it clear that it is actually about getting rid of control and cultivating self-control and freedom. The Church is to lead in bringing more freedom to the earth. Heaven is begging to invade the prison so many people live in, whether it is depression, pain, disease, or fear. Our role is to eliminate those things in our lives, homes, and church communities so we can lead

others to the peace, joy, freedom, and love we've found for ourselves.

My prayer is that this book has awakened your hope to see that honor is a powerful factor in holding on to what Heaven is pouring into our generation. Without an increase in the practice of loving, honoring relationships that emphasize unlimited freedom and opportunity for all those involved, then we will most likely watch this revival pass through our hands and have to be reinitiated by another generation. We have been privileged to live in such a beautiful moment in the history of mankind. Let's honor it!

ENDNOTES

Introduction

1. Matthew 10:41.

Chapter 1

1. 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Chapter 2

1. Corinthians 12:27-28 NASB.
2. See Mark 1:22.
3. Matthew 16:23 NIV.
4. Matthew 6:10.
5. Romans 14:17.
6. 2 Chronicles 20:20 NASB.
7. Mark 8:17 NASB.
8. See First Corinthians 4:15.

Chapter 3

1. Luke 9:55 NASB.
2. See First John 4:8,18.
3. 1 John 2:1 NASB.
4. 1 John 2:2 NASB.
5. Galatians 4:31 NASB.
6. Galatians 2:15-21.
7. Romans 7:22-24 NASB.
8. Romans 7:25 NASB.
9. Romans 6:11.
10. John 14:15 NASB.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:2-3, my paraphrase.

Chapter 4

1. Braus, Judy A. and Wood, David. *Environmental Educational in the Schools: Creating Programs that Work Peace Corps Information Collection & Exchange*. Manual M0044. (August 1993), 37.
2. Ephesians 5:8.
3. Jeremiah 17:9.
4. 2 Samuel 11:2.
5. See First Samuel 25.
6. See Matthew 10:33, Matthew 26:34-35, John 21:15-17.
7. John 8:11.
8. See Ephesians 5:8.
9. Job 38:3.
10. See Galatians 5:1 NASB.

Chapter 5

1. 1 Corinthians 6:12 NASB.
2. John 10:10 NASB.
3. Genesis 12:1-3.
4. See Galatians 3:29.
5. Hebrews 11:10.
6. Ruby K. Payne, PhD, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Highland, TX: aha! Process, Inc., 2005), 59.
7. See John 14:13.
8. Mark 16:15.

Chapter 6

1. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 47-48.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:1, my paraphrase.
3. 2 Corinthians 3:17 NIV.
4. See Isaiah 54:10.
5. See Jeremiah 29:11 NASB.
6. See First John 4:18.

Chapter 7

1. Galatians 4:1-7.
2. See Galatians 3:25-26.
3. Galatians 5:13,16.
4. Galatians 6:1.
5. See Matthew 7:1-2.
6. John 15:3.
7. See Hebrews 12:6 NASB.
8. Job 38:1-3.
9. Mark 10:51 NASB.
10. John 5:6 NASB.
11. Genesis 18:16-18.
12. Genesis 18:23-25.
13. Genesis 18:33.
14. Psalm 139:23-24.

Chapter 8

1. See Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22.
2. Luke 4:18.
3. Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 205.
4. Charles Edward Stowe, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Story of Her Life* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 203.
5. Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 274.
6. Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 22-23.
7. Hagedorn, *Beyond the River*, 106.
8. 1 Corinthians 12:28 NASB.

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RECOMMENDED READING

A Life of Miracles by Bill Johnson

Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry by Kris Vallotton

Basic Training for the Supernatural Ways of Royalty by Kris Vallotton

Developing a Supernatural Lifestyle by Kris Vallotton

Here Comes Heaven by Bill Johnson and Mike Seth

Loving Our Kids On Purpose by Danny Silk

Purity—The New Moral Revolution by Kris Vallotton

Release the Power of Jesus by Bill Johnson

Secrets to Imitating God by Bill Johnson

Strengthen Yourself in the Lord by Bill Johnson

The Happy Intercessor by Beni Johnson

The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind by Bill Johnson

The Supernatural Ways of Royalty by Kris Vallotton and Bill Johnson

The Ultimate Treasure Hunt by Kevin Dedmon

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