

BILLY JOE DAUGHERTY

Killing the Giant of Ministry Debt

*How God enabled one Church to come out
of a \$3.3 million debt to buy land and build
facilities worth \$16 million on a cash basis.*

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by
Billy Joe Daugherty

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Foreword

I asked the Lord why I should write about killing the giant of ministry debt. From January, 1986, through March, 1989, Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, bought 31 acres of land and built debt free 125,000 square feet of building with cash—over \$11 million. By late 1994, another 39 acres and 210,000 square feet of buildings were added debt free on a cash basis, bringing the total near \$16 million. The church borrowed no money at any time for the land or buildings.

I realized there are other churches that have done similar things, but God made me to know there are many leaders who need to know what we experienced and learned in the process of killing the giant of church debt.

The principles shared in this book are applicable to getting out of debt personally. Simply adjust your thinking to where you are. It's time to kill the giant of debt!

Billy Joe Daugherty

CHAPTER ONE

Building By the Spirit

This is the hour to build great churches, for the need is great and the possibilities are unlimited. Take the lid off your thinking and let your heart soar with the dreams and visions of God.

Before the end comes, Jesus declared, **"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"** (Matthew 24:14). This means a great revival and harvest will come to the earth before the end.

We are in the end-time harvest now. It is the hour of revival. God has a way to position us to be ready for the revival. Positioning is vital to any endeavor, calling, or work. God positioned Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and then step right into the position of his prime minister. Joshua was positioned in a strategic place of authority under Moses. At God's direction, Joshua stepped into leadership after Moses' death.

The churches that position themselves for revival will be the ones to ride the wave of blessing coming to the earth. They will also be able to withstand the terrific counterattack of the enemy. In this hour we must prepare ourselves for what is just breaking upon the earth. It will intensify right up until Jesus comes.

Being out of debt is a key positioning move in this hour. Debt brings bondage. It is a limiting factor when it comes to moving with the Spirit of God. Legally, spiritually and ethically, a person is obligated to meet commitments that have been made. You can't skip out on them or you are in big trouble. However, if you are out of debt, there is freedom. You can go and do whatever is in your heart if there is nothing to hold you back.

A number of people who have desired to go on the mission field have been held back because of excessive debts. Many churches desiring to reach out in evangelism have been limited by their debt service. This is an hour to be free—ready to go or do whatever the Holy Spirit directs.

The Holy Spirit is the guide for every believer. Only by leaning on the Spirit's direction can you build debt free and stay free of debt. Everything we share is related to the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's Word.

Without a connection to Jesus personally, this material would have little meaning. It is through abiding in Jesus that revelation comes on how to build by the Spirit.

Let me give you an illustration. It was while driving down Lewis Avenue in Tulsa that God showed me in a vision the building we were to construct. I drew it on paper that day in the fall of 1982. However, we did not start on the project until 1986 and moved into it in 1989. The Holy Spirit's audio-visual method of visions and dreams gave us the master plan. Many details have also come by the quickening of the Holy Spirit. He is our Helper and Guide.

You can ask God to give you wisdom on how to get out of debt, and He will give it to you.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

James 1:5-8

***For as many as are led by the Spirit of
God, they are the sons of God.***

Romans 8:14

CHAPTER TWO

Our Motivation To Build Debt Free

The commitment to build debt free did not come easy. It took time and revelation to understand the value of "owe no man" (Romans 13:8). I had heard the scriptures several times on not borrowing, and leading Christian ministers in 1980 made a big deal of getting out of debt. However, these words seemed impossible from the standpoint of a ministry which needed several million dollars to build facilities.

Victory Christian Center was birthed on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1981, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with 1,600 attending. We began holding services in a car dealership facility situated on ten acres with 66,000 square feet of floor space. We remodeled showrooms and mechanic bays to make room for our classrooms and activity areas. Our Christian school had 735 students in 1981-82.

To secure the facility from the owner, we assumed \$3.3 million of debt. At that time of high interest rates, we were able to get our note at a rate that floated from 14 to 15 percent, which made our payments approximately \$42,000 per month. We paid that rate for three and one-half years and only reduced our principal by \$200,000. This means we paid over \$1,700,000 in that time frame and still owed \$3.1 million on the principal. At that rate we would be paying on that building for the next twenty-five to thirty years and pay over \$10 million for it.

It became clear to me why banks loan money—they make money doing it. It also became clear to me why our ministry should not borrow—we were losing money doing it. To me it was very clear. If we could pay cash on our building, we would only pay for it one time and save millions of dollars. This understanding was a prime motivation in our quality decision to go on a cash basis.

Servant to the Lender

"...The borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). I learned this truth the hard way by signing a \$3.3 million note with the bank. Once we took the posture of borrower, we entered into a partnership with our lender. The only trouble was that the bank became the boss and we became the servant. I detest the thought of it today, but back then people acted as if it was the only way to go.

There is a serious spiritual problem that results when a ministry puts itself in a position as servant to an organization that has no interest in the Kingdom of God. A lending institution is in business primarily to make money. Very few have a benevolent motivation when it comes to turning loose of their money.

While most institutions have been reluctant to foreclose on churches, the reason has been public opinion rather than support of the ministry. This means that with the shift in public opinion about churches and ministries, we can expect lending institutions to take a harder line in dealing with churches. We were surprised and disappointed when a bank foreclosed on a church in our city that had been in their new building less than five years. The church lost everything and the minister lost all of his personal property. This has happened across America.

Head or Tail?

The passage, "You'll be the head and not the tail," was one I had quoted from Deuteronomy 28. However, with more in-depth study on debt, I found that passage was referring to borrowing and lending.

God promised blessings for obedience.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.

Deuteronomy 28:1,2

It was obvious that God wanted Israel to enjoy the blessings, not only for themselves but because it was obedience to Him that would bring the blessings. In this passage, God shows how much He wants good for man. Obedience brought blessing while disobedience brought the curse.

Part of the blessing was, **"...Thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them"** (Deuteronomy 28:12,13).

God said it is a blessing not to borrow and I wholeheartedly agree. To lend must not be a sin or God would not have told Israel they would do it. However, for one Israelite to borrow from another would put one person in the position of

being under the curse. Therefore, lending was to be done to those outside the Abrahamic covenant.

You may ask how churches can lend today. It's easy and it's fun. When you have cash, put it in an interest-earning account. Treasury bills or CD's earn a little higher interest, yet enable you to turn it back to cash whenever needed. There are other investment opportunities that can provide a safe return for a ministry.

God Calls Borrowing a Curse

In Deuteronomy 28:15, the Lord told Israel that curses would come upon them if they did not obey His voice and keep His laws. One of the curses was, **"The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail"** (Deuteronomy 28:43,44).

The stranger refers to those not in the covenant—the Canaanites. God said they would begin to dominate the people of God through lending. If you owe someone, you are obligated to them. They have authority over you because you have submitted to them. The moment you borrow money from someone, they have a right to a portion of your income until the debt is paid. If you don't make the payments, they have a legal right to get their money through repossessing assets, property, or buildings for resale.

Advantages of Going On a Cash Basis

The great part of going on a cash basis is that you give God a vote on what you do. Many projects have been done by the will of man apart from the will of God. Getting a loan from a bank usually does not take great prayers, great faith, or mighty miracles! Banks give loans primarily on a client's financial position or the availability of sufficient collateral to cover a loss. The FDIC has tightened its rules for institutions making loans. We can expect more restrictions to get a loan because of the number of bad loans made in the past fifteen years. However, if your ministry meets the basic requirements for borrowing, you will get the money if the bank is in a position to loan. Let's face it. God may or may not have any part of the transaction.

Because it is possible to operate on borrowed money without God's approval, many ministries have pursued projects that God was not blessing. After the project was completed or partially completed, serious financial problems put the leadership under terrible pressure. In an atmosphere of being

out of God's will, yet obligated by the loan, many ministers have made more wrong decisions. The problems have increased, often leading to foreclosure or the minister leaving the city.

The financial provision of God is a good check on ministry projects. If God guides, He provides. God pays cash for what He does. It is inconceivable to think of God borrowing from the world system to do His work. Is our work the Lord's or our own? If God is in it, He should be given the opportunity to provide for it. If provision does not come, there may be reasons.

There are things in our lives and in churches that need to be changed. However, many people never consider that there is need for improvement. When you build on a cash basis, you realize daily how utterly dependent you are on God. Without His help, you know that you will not make it. If there is something blocking the flow of God's blessings, there is an eagerness to get it removed. However, by borrowing, there is not the same sense of dependency upon God. If something goes wrong, people seek the bank instead of going to God and searching their heart. Things that should have been changed go unnoticed for years.

Motivation To Pay Cash

It was deeply impressed upon my heart during the years of 1981 through 1984 when we were in debt that people did not get excited about paying off debt. Since we were already in a building and using it, there appeared to be no reason for people to give extra. That is, we received enough money to pay our bills, salaries and monthly mortgage payment but never did we receive enough to reduce the principal in a major way. In three and one-half years, we only reduced the mortgage about \$200,000.

I did everything I knew to do during that time to generate excitement to pay off our debt. People realized we should but there wasn't the motivation to do it. We talked about it in services and in small groups. We did the typical fund-raiser program with letters, brochures, every-member visitation and an all-church banquet. Yet there still was not the response to pay off something we were already using.

It took me a while to realize it, but I saw how major debt binds churches and ministries over many years. There is only so much time and effort that can be focused on an area until it becomes a distasteful burden on the people. Ministers will address the debt issue for a year or two as I did. However, because there is often little response, the leader resigns himself to living with the debt and paying it off on a long-term basis. The church therefore is stuck with an

ongoing financial obligation that will cost them twice or three times more than the original cost.

Think of it! A \$1 million loan at 10 percent interest amortized over twenty years will cost you over \$1.3 million in interest. What if God could help you raise \$1 million in cash to pay for construction and then have \$1.3 million to invest in soul-saving ministry over the next twenty years? The money you save on interest is like a bonus or a gift. It is additional money that you have to use on ministry.

The loan system is set up to make money. Don't ever forget it! Whatever a lending institution makes is *your expense*. They may say they want to help you, but remember, there is a cost for their help. I do believe we need banks and savings and loans as long as we, the Christians, are doing the lending. To put your money in an institution and let them pay you interest is wise and scriptural.

We discovered that people got motivated to pay cash for something that was within their reach. *There is a greater drive to get something you don't have than there is to pay for something you already possess.* People were willing to give extra and even sacrifice as long as there was a goal out before them.

We saw an awesome display of God's grace and human effort flowing together to buy our first piece of land on a cash basis. If we didn't raise the money, we didn't get the land and the people knew it. They were ready to do whatever it would take to get our own building. Staying in a crowded situation for a period of time does have its drawbacks. However, it makes everyone aware of the need for relocating or building. The job of communication is much easier if everyone can see the need, feel the need and understand why a change is necessary.

People have the money to do what needs to be done. Even in a missions outreach, there are people who have the money to make it happen. The issue is motivation. If people receive the proper communication and motivation which comes by the moving of God's Spirit, there will be a release of finances for the task.

Proper motivation begins with leaders having the right motives. God searches the hearts. He tests and tries our motives for what we do. The *why* is as important as the *what*. If God finds our hearts pure toward Him and sincere toward people, He will move heaven and earth to cause blessing to come our way. Matthew 5:8 declares, "**Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.**" If you want to see God work in your building program, then purity of heart is top priority.

People—People—People

Jesus died for people. He gave His life for people. People are the reason we minister. Whatever we do must flow out of a heart for people. To build facilities just to have them is wrong. Our goal is to lift people. Jesus is the great Savior, Lifter and Healer of broken hearts. As we share Jesus, we will see people lifted and at the same time the building will be done.

***Owe no man any thing, but to love one
another...***

Romans 13:8

CHAPTER THREE

What Is Coming Financially?

The Word of God predicts perilous times in the last days. However, there is no indication that there will be worldwide financial collapse before the rapture of the Church. Obviously, there will be areas of the world hit by financial difficulties due to natural disasters, fluctuating economic conditions and political upheaval.

In my opinion, the church that will survive and impact a city must position itself to weather any storm. We want to be a part of the endtime revival, and we want Victory Christian Center to be a center of revival influencing every nation of the world. To be in that posture requires financial freedom.

We must be in a position to do whatever God says in the days ahead. There is a phrase, "Debt rules." If that is true, how can we be in control if we are in debt?

Oklahoma was hit in the mid 80s by a declining oil and gas industry. Major banks in Oklahoma City and Tulsa closed, and hundreds of people and corporations were affected. During that time we saw churches and Christian schools closed because of debt bondage. As I write this now, the papers have just reported another Christian school closing because of inability to service a large debt—FORECLOSURE.

I am not talking about something that *might* or *could* happen. I am talking about something that *is* happening right now.

What if those churches and Christian schools had paid cash? What if they had believed God and built their facilities in phases? In all probability, they would still be going today.

Think about it. If your main expense is operating costs, then you can cut back and survive in lean times. However, if there is a mortgage payment for twenty to thirty years, it doesn't change regardless of economic conditions.

Some might argue, "God will supply regardless of the economic conditions." I ask you, "Will God supply for someone who violates His Word?"

If you are determined to get out of debt, I believe there is a basis for faith and God will help you. However, if a Christian organization continues to operate in debt with no determination to get out, there is an undermining of faith.

Every ministry I know about personally or by their publications has gone through reductions or cutbacks due to cash flow at some time or another. Financial situations have come that have caused serious evaluation of ministry expenditures. Often, these times have caused people to see fat areas and overspending. The reductions then are not just related to temporary economic conditions but also to divine pruning. God expects us to be "wise stewards," not "wasteful gluttons."

***"I am the Lord your God, Who teaches
you to profit, Who leads you by the way
you should go."***

Isaiah 48:17 NKJV

CHAPTER FOUR

Reduce Expenses

It's time to cut the fat! Waste and extravagance that are unnecessary must be eliminated. If you are deep in debt, it's a joke to act like a high roller in excessive luxuries. The joke is on you. Your debt will only continue. It may increase until you deal with your lifestyle.

To be debt free requires living within your budget, or more accurately, living within the realm of your available income. Believe me, I am a faith person believing God for far more than I currently possess. We are king's kids. However, we make every effort to insure that our actions are faith and not presumption. Banks will not cash your confession. They want money in the bank to back the checks you write.

You can attack debt two primary ways. You can increase your income, and you can decrease your expenses. *We have found that our income has increased every time we have reduced our expenses.* It is quite apparent that God honors good stewardship.

The tendency in most large churches is to overstaff. Each staff person and ministry area generates expenses. When the outflow exceeds the intake, something must change. It is simple—action must be taken quick.

As a church we discovered that volunteers increased when there was a recognized, evident need for them. We also discovered that fewer people could do the same amount of work with better management and motivation.

With teenagers and food, there is a law of consumption. That is, a group of teenagers will consume almost any amount of food set before them.

So it is with employees in an organization. They will consume the hours in a day with activity. In a time of reducing expenses, leadership cannot evaluate jobs on the basis of whether or not there is lots of activity. Each position and area must be evaluated with the question: "Is this a vital, God-ordained, life-producing area required for the survival of the ministry?" Many good programs that are not God-ordained can sink a ministry or business if they are allowed to continue when revenue is not available to support them.

The issue is not whether an area is good or whether people are busy. The issue is: "What is God saying to do right now?" Some areas are for a season.

They are good for a time and then it's time to change. While there is a danger in too much change, there is a greater danger in refusing change.

The way things were done fifty years ago is not necessarily the way they have to be done now. A classic example of failure to reduce expenses is the defunct Studebaker Corporation. To go through South Bend, Indiana, and see block after block of empty five-story factory buildings is stunning.

While there were many complex problems causing the collapse of Studebaker, the bottom line is that employee wages and operational expenses eventually outdistanced the income. Instead of reducing expenses, the Studebaker management got caught in a situation of refusing to change when they should have. Obviously, they also needed change to increase income. Failure to adjust brought disaster.

Reducing Expenses Does Not Mean the End

Reducing expenses can mean a new beginning! The Father prunes us so we will bring forth more fruit. It seems painful at the moment, but the increase that results more than compensates for any reduction.

Pride and ego are the biggest hindrances to reducing expenses. Ministers and churches value public opinion. The outward appearance is vital to the flesh, but God is more concerned about our doing what is right. If you are putting up a costly front just for image sake, then you are violating God's laws of honesty. If you owe someone money, then reduce your expenses to pay them. *Integrity is more important than image.*

If your cash flow shows you will not have the money to pay all employees based on income and expenses, it is not wrong to release some employees while you can pay their severance wages. What is wrong is hiding the fact of cash flow problems to keep employees working until there is no money left to pay them. Anyone would rather be released with all their wages paid up to date rather than be notified there is no money to pay for their past two week's or month's work and then be released.

The bottom line is to reduce expenses when it is appropriate.

***The blessing of the Lord makes one
rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.***

Proverbs 10:22 NKJV

CHAPTER FIVE

Seed Faith—The Stone in Your Sling

God made it clear to us we would buy land and build with cash through seed faith. By giving to God, we would see the increase needed to meet all our needs. The laws of sowing and reaping work in finances just as they do in farming. If we would give as a seed sown into God's work, we could expect God to multiply back His harvest to us.

When Noah walked out of the ark after 150 days of riding the flood waters, he looked out at a devastated earth.

Seedtime and Harvest

Everything that man had built was destroyed and many of the trees were uprooted. If you have ever seen the results of a flood, you can imagine the impact of a worldwide deluge that went higher than Mount Everest. Not only did the rain come from above, but the fountains of water deep within the earth were released (Genesis 7:11).

While giving that first offering to the Lord in thanksgiving, God gave Noah the promise he needed. **"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease"** (Genesis 8:22).

All Noah needed was *seed*!

God was saying that the natural laws that govern sowing and reaping will stay in operation.

YOU CAN START AT ZERO AND REPLENISH THE WHOLE EARTH!!! IT'S NOT HOW MUCH YOU HAVE. IF YOU HAVE A SEED, GOD WILL MULTIPLY IT WHEN YOU PLANT IT!! HALLELUJAH!

It wouldn't happen to Noah overnight, but in the process of time through continual sowing and reaping, he would see abundance once again. **SO WILL YOU!**

The harvest is directly related to the amount of seed sown. God says the harvest then can be set in motion by the sower. God gives the increase, but we must plant the seed.

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6,7

Look at God's principle in the New Testament.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 6:38

Giving is compared to sowing, and receiving is compared to reaping. God gives us a visual picture of what is happening in the spiritual realm as we give our finances into His work.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

God intends for His people to be a blessing in the earth and to be blessed. Through sowing and reaping, we bless others and in return God blesses us. As the scripture says, our giving causes thanksgiving to flow up to God. We become a channel to flow heaven's resources into the needs of others.

Through the principles of seed faith, God showed us that we could do things beyond our normal ability. In other words, we could get out of natural limitations and tap into God's unlimited, supernatural resources. We saw that our faith could be deliberately released at a point in time for the meeting of specific needs, and God would honor our faith.

The little boy with five loaves and two fishes had limited resources until he put them in the hands of Jesus. The moment Jesus blessed his offering, the multiplication began. Over 5,000 were fed, with an overflow of twelve baskets full of loaves and fishes (John 6:5-13).

The miracle power of seed faith was the divine wisdom key we needed to do what seemed to be impossible. To buy land and build Phase 1 of our building

would cost over \$11,000,000. The additional phases would cost near the same amount. In 1982 our annual income was under \$2 million. We definitely had to get out of our limited resources and into God's abundance. We started by planting seeds into other ministries, missions and the poor.

To let go of what you have is to break out of fear into faith. It is a glorious spiritual experience to give right into the face of a need that you can't meet without God's help.

It's like throwing a stone into the face of Goliath—God has to come through!

God said, "YOUR GIVING IS THE STONE IN THE SLING TO KILL THE GIANT OF DEBT."

David and Goliath

David faced a giant with five smooth stones and a slingshot. Today many are facing the giant of debt with no sense of direction in how to overcome it.

Your stones are the dollars you have in hand. Your sling is your giving to God. As you give by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, God can bring down the giant of debt through the miracle harvest return from your seed sown.

David had used his sling so many times that he was very confident in his aim. Your diligent giving to the work of God can become developed to the point you have great confidence in it.

Remember, the giant did not fall until David released what was in his hand. Yes, David made a bold confession of faith and he had spent hours in meditation on the hills tending sheep. But the key was the release of what he held.

Likewise, you can believe, pray and confess the Word. But until you release what is in your hand, you will not see the debt destroyed. The amount of money in your hand may feel small but it's enough to knock the giant down.

It's time to speak boldly and run towards your debt with the seed needed to knock out the giant facing you.

Now to 'Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

Ephesians 3'-20 N'KJV

CHAPTER SIX

The Lion, the Bear, the Giant

As young David stood before King Saul, he rehearsed his victories fighting a lion and a bear, claiming that he could now defeat the giant.

...The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine....

1 Samuel 17:37

God brought a revelation into my spirit from this scripture in late 1981 and early 1982. It began to dawn on me that our liberation from debt bondage would be a gradual process with very specific goals.

Remember, we had assumed a note of \$3.3 million in 1981 at 14 to 15 percent interest. By the end of 1981 we were out of room to grow, yet stuck with a bank mortgage on the property.

As I meditated on David's explanation to Saul, the step process came into focus. What David learned fighting the lion prepared him to fight the bear. What he learned fighting the bear prepared him for the giant. Each level required a certain expertise that lifted him to the next level.

The Lion

The Lord gave me a clear word that our lion would be an interim site we could lease until we were in a position to buy land and build.

The Bear

The bear would be to sell the car dealership that we had remodeled for our church and Christian school.

The Giant

The giant would be to buy land and build with cash. This would be no small task because of the size of our church and school.

The Thoreau Miracle

First of all, we needed an interim site for our schools and ministry before we could sell the remodeled car dealership and prepare to buy land.

A ten-year-old public school, Thoreau Junior High, had been vacated due to declining enrollment. It was in a prime location sitting on twenty acres with athletic fields, two gyms, an auditorium, cafeteria, swimming pool, science labs and classrooms for 800 students. It came into my spirit that this was our interim

site.

I made three different approaches to the Tulsa Public Schools superintendent but only got the answer they would not lease it and they wanted \$7 million to sell it. We did not want to buy it at that price and limit the ministry to that size of facility.

It came to me to go to the June, 1984, school board meeting and ask for the right to lease Thoreau Junior High. Since any citizen had the right to speak if registered on the agenda, I was able to present our case to the entire school board. The superintendent responded publicly to me in the same manner as in our personal contacts. The school system wanted to sell the facility for \$7 million and had no desire to lease it.

The newspaper and TV stations carried the story, and I felt totally rejected. The summer of 1984 was hot and dry in Tulsa. I spent lots of time after the board meeting walking and praying in the early and late hours of the day. A vacant 100-acre field adjacent to our home provided a prayer grounds in my hour of searching.

The Holy Spirit had clearly impressed me to go after the junior high as our next site, but it was obvious we were not wanted as renters.

I was stuck in the middle between God and a school board.

The next month, July, the Lord said, "Go back and make them an offer to lease the junior high again." I obeyed and showed up for the monthly meeting. Following my presentation, the superintendent very briefly said, "We have already dealt with this. Next."

Very dejected, I quietly left the board meeting in a state of disappointment and confusion. I was disappointed in my fifth rejection and confused as to why the Lord would send me back.

The next few days as I walked and prayed, it became clear we must do something. Our building had been up for sale for two years and the Spirit confirmed to me it would sell in the next school year. If we did not have adequate facilities, we would lose the school. I had no choice but to go back to the school board in August and raise our offer for the lease.

As I presented a higher offer to the school board, they took a few minutes to discuss their reasons for wanting to sell the building. To lease it to us might keep some possible buyer from making an offer. Their response was the same—NO!

Going home after that meeting was tough. Each rejection was carried by the television stations and newspaper. It was one of the lowest points in my life

and ministry. It appeared that we were trapped into a debt situation from which we could not get out. It was a real lion we were facing. The devil was seeking to devour our ministry.

For all practical purposes, it appeared that the Thoreau Junior High door was closed. I tried to relax and rest in Jesus. I found peace in my relationship with Him and rolled the care of our situation on His shoulders.

On Labor Day weekend, Sharon and I decided to go out of town with the family for a couple of days before school started on Tuesday. Just as I was stepping into the van, the idea struck me to make one more offer to the school system and give it to the chairman of the board, who had a construction office down the street. We simply raised our offer slightly and left it in God's hands.

Returning home Saturday afternoon, I heard from our administrator, Mark Turner, that the offer was agreeable to the superintendent and he indicated the board would accept it at their Tuesday night meeting if we could deliver \$120,000 covering the first two and last two months of rent.

On Sunday I made the surprise announcement and our people gave just at \$60,000 to secure the building. That afternoon we received a call from a lady who had visited the church for the first time. She wrote one check to cover the remainder of the costs!

On Tuesday, the hard, cold board members I had faced in June, July and August were shaking my hand and slapping me on the back like I was an old friend. Anyway, we signed the contract and we moved our entire ministry on Saturday. By Monday, we were conducting school in Thoreau Junior High for the glory of God.

We had killed the lion. It took seven attempts, but Jesus prevailed. Don't give up in the face of a battle. What you learn fighting the lion will prepare you for the bear.

God Uses the Richest Man in America

Our bear was selling the remodeled car dealership we had been using for the church and school. We had virtually destroyed the building for use as a car dealership, yet on the exterior it still had that appearance, thus making it very unattractive to churches.

The fact is, we had no dealerships or churches even contact us about buying the facility in two years. We started trying to sell the site in 1982, but no one was interested in it.

After we leased Thoreau Junior High in September of 1984, we were making payments on two buildings and hurting financially.

In November, 1984, the word came that Sam Walton was putting in a new kind of store called Sam's Wholesale Club and wanted our site. They paid us what we owed on the building, plus over \$200,000 and we walked out of debt in January, 1985.

The bear could have drug us to the ground had the sale not come within four months after we entered the other lease. We only had one offer after almost three years, but it was just what we needed.

To our surprise, the Wal-Mart Corporation took bulldozers and tore everything down and ripped up all the parking. They built a new facility with a new paved lot. In essence, they paid us cash just for the land. To this day I marvel at God's ability to touch the richest man in America just when we needed it to pay what we were asking for ten acres of land—\$3.3 million.

God owns all the silver and gold. He turns the heart of the king whichever direction He desires (Proverbs 21:1).

The provision came unexpectedly from an organization with which we had no personal contact. I learned from it not to get my eyes on any person, group, or thing to supply our need. God alone is our source. If we look to anyone or anything to be our provider, we will be disappointed.

Now It's the Giant

In 1982, I was driving down Lewis Avenue in front of Oral Roberts University when I saw a vision to my right in a huge open field. I saw the outline of a large, beautiful white building. Instantly I knew it was to be our church. Pulling in to the Mabee Center parking area, I sketched out the basic drawing of the facility.

After discovering that O.R.U. owned the land, I went to Brother Roberts to inquire of its availability. He shared with me how important land was and that O.R.U. did not want to sell the land.

Boy, was I glad I didn't say anything of my vision! Afterwards, I wondered why I had seen it so clearly only to be flatly turned down. It appeared God didn't intend for us to be doing anything about it, except to pray and believe.

Timing is the key in following God. By January of 1985, we were in an interim site, completely out of debt, ready to buy land and build our own facility.

In November of 1984, Brother Roberts and Evelyn asked me where we were going to build our church. I said, "We feel we are to be close to O.R.U."

Brother Roberts began to talk to me about the land just across from O.R.U. He said, "I wouldn't sell it to you, but I might lease it."

In December, 1984, the University gave us a lease proposal but it was a struggle to think of building on leased land. I held the contract until March, 1985, when the Lord spoke to me, "Sign the lease and I will work."

The lease secured the front 15 acres for us with an option on the back 16 acres at a future date. Since we had been working for months on plans, it was fairly simple to have a general drawing of the building printed and into the hands of our people within a week.

Folks were excited just to be moving ahead with our plans. Yet in three weeks I received a call from Brother Roberts asking to meet about our land situation. As we talked, he related how troubled he had been over a different lease situation the University had entered with a company to build a hotel. He said, "It would be terrible for your church and the University to get at odds with each other. We need to get out of the lease."

My heart leaped because we had already announced it and people were giving towards it. Then he said, "Because I gave you my word and you announced it to your people, the only thing to do is to offer to sell you the 31 acres."

It sounded good, but I was waiting to hear the sales price because we had researched land prices in that area, and we knew they were high.

He spoke, "We will sell it to you for \$5 million cash. You can't borrow because we cannot afford to have a bank holding a note on land that close to us. They could put undesirable businesses on it if they ever had control of it."

I was stunned. To come up with \$5 million cash at one time— immediately—was beyond my comprehension. It was a fair price but far beyond our ability.

Brother Roberts related that the University had no desire to sell the land. However, he felt obligated to offer us the land at a fair market price because of his integrity. Praise God, for it was the Lord's doing.

I asked for a few days to pray over this offer. As I talked to the Lord, He spoke to me to go after the front 15 acres on Lewis Avenue and ask for an option on the back acres. He told me to offer \$3.5 million on the front acres with a start date of June 2, 1985, and a closing date of January 2, 1986. This would be exactly seven months to either make the purchase or the deal would be off.

As I shared it with Brother Roberts, explaining that our whole annual church budget was less than \$3.5 million, it became clear to all of us that it would be a miracle for us to get it. We are grateful for the opportunity Brother Roberts gave us to go after the miracle.

\$3.5 Million Cash in Seven Months

This was clearly our giant. We had never faced anything this big— it was Goliath to us. If we could not pay cash, we would continue to live in bondage to the Philistine system of debt. If we could pay cash and buy the land, we would defeat debt and walk in freedom.

The battle line was clearly drawn. We understood the stakes. We accepted the challenge and set ourselves to go after the goal God had arranged for us.

Over the past two years, we had been talking about our need to build and people had begun to give into a land and building fund. After our announcement to build on the leased situation, additional funds came in bringing the total to \$700,000.

Those first two weeks of June, 1985, I thought and prayed on how we could ever reach the goal of \$3.5 million cash in seven months on top of all the regular ministry expenses. In that time God spoke in me that if we would plant \$700,000 by faith over the next seven months, we would receive our harvest of \$3.5 million.

We would plant \$100,000 each month for the next seven months into missions, the poor and other ministries. As we let go of what was in our hands, God would let go of what was in His hands. Seed faith believes the harvest will be a multiplication of the seed planted. We believed God would return back to us the provision we needed if we would provide for meeting the needs of others.

The Sunday I announced we would give away \$700,000 in the same time frame we were believing for \$3.5 million, everyone sat stunned. It was as if people could not compute in their minds what we were saying. As I explained that our need was so much greater than what we had that it would do more good to give than to hoard our resources, then they began to rejoice as faith rose in the hearts of our congregation members.

Those seven months were very special because we were tried in the furnace of faith. There was an inner confidence that came once we began to give in relation to our needs. Inside of me, I knew we would make it. Yet, I realized we had to hear from God and obey His directions. It could only happen through strict obedience.

The Countdown

In December we were still over \$1 million away from the goal. One day I remarked, "We've done all there is to do." Inside me I heard these words, "No, you haven't." After asking the Lord what else we could do, several creative ideas came to us. One was to go on television on the final night, Thursday, January 2.

Going into that night, we were over \$300,000 from the goal. It was an

exciting six hours of singing, testimonies, preaching and challenge from 6:00 p.m. till midnight. We had to leave the studio at fifteen minutes till 12:00 to meet the O.R.U. administrator and sign a check. As we left the studio, we still did not know if we had made it. Sharon and I stopped at a service station at five minutes till midnight to call our accountant at the TV station. He said, "We made it.

You can write the check."

That night we wrote a check for three million five hundred thousand and no/100 dollars with a 49 cent Bic pen. We had only gone over our goal by \$1,000. It felt like we were a football team driving the length of the field in the final seconds for the winning touchdown. It appeared that we were stopped at the goal line, but somehow we lunged forward at the final buzzer just enough to get the ball into the end zone —TOUCHDOWN!!

Something happened in us as a result of this miracle. We knew the giant of debt could be defeated. We realized the greatness of our awesome God. We also knew this exercise of our faith was preparation for other giants we would face. God planned for us to use this faith to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the world.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Hebrews 10:35^6

CHAPTER SEVEN

God Is Bigger Than the Economy

The year we started buying land was the beginning of the nosedive of the Tulsa, Oklahoma, economy. The oil and gas industry hit bottom. During our time of building, the stock market took one of its worst falls since the beginning of the Great Depression. The prices of homes in Tulsa dropped in some cases 30 to 50 percent in the three-year period in which we did our primary buying of land and building. A number of major companies either closed plants, laid off large numbers of workers, or relocated. In 1988, one of the men who moved to Tulsa from the Boston area was told by his associates that the entire area of Oklahoma was an economic graveyard.

In the natural, these folks were telling the truth. Hard times hit Tulsa in 1986 and lasted into 1989. But God is not limited to natural circumstances. He is the God of the supernatural. Jesus turns graveyards into resurrection centers!!! Hallelujah!

You cannot complain or badmouth the conditions around you. It paralyzes your faith to continually magnify the problems against you. I relate the situation today to help you understand what God can do in adverse economic conditions. During our time of believing for miracles, we kept declaring that God is not bound by circumstances.

The Lord brought water out of a rock in the desert. He fed over a million people daily for forty years in a land that grew no crops. God set a table in the wilderness to defy nature itself. He is the God of nature. God created the world, and He has power to override its natural conditions to reverse any circumstance.

God commanded ravens to feed Elijah by the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:4). When the brook dried up, He commanded a widow to sustain him (v. 9). The economic conditions in Israel were horrible as a result of the drought and famine. Yet, in the middle of it, God had a way to supply His man for the job he was to do.

Don't ever forget it....

**God Has a Way To Meet the Need of Anyone
Doing His Will**

He will command your provision to come. This idea of *command* is awesome. God speaks to birds and people, and they bring the finances you need. They are under divine command.

Your provision is as sure as the sunrise. God will move whatever needs to be moved to get His blessing to your life. Your hope is not built on the shifting sands of a turbulent economy. You are banking on solid gold financial security that is out of this world with supply available in this world.

What we do cannot be dictated by the conditions around us. If we wait until everything looks and feels right, we may never do anything. Or it could be the opposite in that we act because everything appears fine. Our direction for ministry and building must come from the Lord. He alone can sustain us through difficult times.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is not based on observation but upon revelation. The senses must bow to the Spirit.

Provision is always available. It is always there in the place you are called. The key to unlock the provision is God's wisdom. The wisdom of God to us was seed faith. When we gave money, we set in motion the laws of prosperity for our ministry to receive all it needed.

God's economy operates on spiritual laws related to faith, hope, love, joy and peace. Sowing and reaping are Kingdom principles that release God's wealth.

More Land...

When the land purchase miracle happened, we were filled with joy. God had brought us through an extremely tough time to receive a great victory.

The need to build was immediate, but we held off a few months to catch our breath. In August, 1986, we were ready to get started in building when an opportunity from the Lord came our way.

The nine acres next to our land became available for \$1 million. We knew the land was needed for our current needs as well as future expansion. The creative idea came to buy the land in three segments from the back to the front. Each three-acre parcel was paid for in accordance to its value with the last road frontage parcel being the highest priced. The owner agreed to do the deal at no interest, with the exercise of each option giving us an option on the next parcel.

This type of purchase enabled us to break a \$1 million land purchase into three separate payments with three months between each payment. Our people

celebrated each purchase as a major victory. It took us longer to get started building, but we had more room for the dream God put in our hearts.

Building As You Go!

Finally, in early 1987, we started on the building. I'm sure others have felt this way, but to me, it sure was a slow process. First, all the underground plumbing work. Then a huge concrete slab foundation. What an exciting day it was when the steel arrived and began to be erected. Finally, interior walls, ceilings and doors.

To build as you go requires constant communication with the congregation and partners as well as close monitoring and control of expenditures.

We took each segment of our construction as a piece of the vision to share with our congregation. In other words, we announced the cost of laying the foundation. Once that money was raised, we celebrated a victory because that part of the building was paid for. We did the same thing with the steel and then various parts of the interior, exterior and rooms.

I began to write an encouraging, faith-building letter each month to put the Word of God in our people. We included updates on where we were in the building process with an envelope enclosed if people wanted to respond.

Our heart is on ministry. We are called to meet the needs of people. Our letters are written with the needs of people in mind first and foremost. The communication of progress and costs of upcoming portions of the vision are given to help keep our team of people in unified prayer and focus. As God speaks to people, they will do what needs to be done in prayer and giving.

We let our people know in services the upcoming building segments and where we were in having the funds to pay for it. For instance, on Sunday morning an announcement would be made such as, "We are going for the steel to erect the new building. It will be arriving in forty-five days. We have \$123,000 of the \$600,000 needed. Whatever you can do to help in the building fund will be appreciated."

By being open with our communication, folks always knew right where we were in the process. They would pray, agree, work and give to get the resources for each segment of the project. When we announced the steel was all in place and paid for, there was a celebration just like we had finished the whole thing.

This happened several times throughout the building process. We found that dividing the huge project into smaller segments and celebrating victory at the completion of each area was a momentum builder.

Each victory built faith for the next battle. As people saw God provide to

meet deadlines and pay bills, they began to learn how to walk in faith with us. Every day we were in faith for one section or another. Unity in the body was vital to our success. The constant communication in church services, weekly bulletins and monthly letters kept people together in their prayers for victory.

It's People

Buildings are for people. Without people, brick and mortar are only monuments. We build to provide places for reaching, training and sending people. Reaching this world for Jesus Christ is our number one task. Soulwinning is the Church's main purpose in the earth. Just as Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, so we are here on earth for the same purpose.

We should build for the purpose of winning more people to Christ.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 NKJV). God spared nothing to make salvation available to whoever wanted forgiveness. He gave His very best to redeem humanity.

Buildings can never save people—only Jesus Christ can do that. The focus of any ministry must be upon the King of kings and the Lord of lords. If buildings ever become more important than people or Jesus, the blessing of God will be removed.

Buildings are to serve Jesus by providing a place to help people find salvation and learn how to live in God's Kingdom. We should never allow the lack of building space to keep us from reaching out to more and more folks. God affirmed to me that He would supply all the building space we needed if we kept reaching out to people.

Our focus has been on building functional buildings with a multipurpose use. It always seemed odd to me that huge sums of money were spent on buildings used for three to five hours per week. Why not design a facility for seven-day-a-week use? Our church facility was designed to also function as a school during the week days.

Classrooms for Sunday school and children's Sunday programs can be easily converted on Monday to a school setting for students. The large auditorium area was designed with four full-length basketball courts side by side. The two center courts were done with wooden floors. One outside court was carpeted to be used as a chapel area, and the other outside court is painted concrete for a cafeteria at lunch time. All of these areas can be cleared and used for indoor sports or chairs can be set on them to accommodate 2,500 people in a

church service. We are blessed to also have the 10,500-seat O.R.U. Mabee Center for Sunday services. Curtains are used to reduce it into smaller meeting areas.

The time may come with increased enrollment and attendance that separate buildings will be required. However, initially it has been less expensive to pay maintenance workers and use volunteers to move chairs, tables and athletic equipment in our multi-use buildings.

Killing the giant of debt means using wisdom in the planning stages of building:

- Multi-purpose
- Functional

These are key words in designing facilities for which you can pay cash. Most people don't go into debt building what they need. Usually, it is building for the future that gets folks in over their heads. At times churches get in deep water building facilities that have beauty and extravagance ahead of function. Shortsighted groups have also increased their debt burden by constructing facilities that have only one use for one or two days of the week.

Please remember, this book is written from a ministry that has bought land and buildings, built and remodeled on a totally debt-free, cash basis. This book is also written to and for people who want to go the same way in their construction process. Obviously, there are other ways to achieve the same goal. This is just one church's way of doing it.

It is important that you hear what I am saying. Too many times people have read accounts or heard testimonies and condemnation or comparison would discourage them. You must follow the leading of God's Spirit for you and His leading for the ministry of which you are a part.

Building as you go requires a relationship with a construction supervisor or contractor who is flexible. Construction is based on funds available. To do this takes efficient cash flow planning from a ministry standpoint. The construction costs must be accurately predicted and charted on a schedule. The bottom line of all of it is that miracles must come from God.

This type of approach is not for the fainthearted or doubters. You must know that God has spoken, and therefore He will perform His Word. Week after week we stood face to face with financial needs greater than normal income. We were absolutely dependent on God to come through with His provision day by day.

It is a faith walk to build debt free. You are on the water—out of the boat.

You have left the crowd that stands inside the security of a few boards, and now you are walking where the waves roll all around you. Keeping your eyes on Jesus is the key. He will uphold you and keep you from sinking. Even if you should start to sink like Peter, if you call on Jesus, He will rescue you.

In-House Construction

For Victory it was easier to use an in-house construction management approach rather than a general contractor. Since we anticipated some fluctuations in our building process, it seemed to be a difficult task for a company geared to keeping a time-tight schedule.

We selected an excellent architect in Ed Bates. He had worked with Frank Wallace designing the buildings on the Oral Roberts University campus. The first design work he did for us was on a set-fee basis. Then as the project began to develop, we went to an hourly contractual type of relationship as various needs for his services arose.

Our key player was a staff member who had construction experience, Mark Turner. The project engineer, Don Lloyd of Wallace & Bates, worked closely with Mark. Our on-site construction supervisor was Dave Burlin, and the financial director was Mike McCutchin.

These men formed a team that planned and directed the construction. The reason for mentioning this arrangement is that we believe it was a vital part of building debt free. The building process of ordering materials and releasing the labor was always under our control. We could speed up or slow down. If a general contractor had been in charge, it would have been difficult on that company as well as the church.

A Marathon

Our goal was to win a long distance race rather than run a short sprint. We knew going in that building on a cash basis might take a little longer, but it would be paid for when it was done. In essence, adding a few months on the construction side was nothing in comparison with cutting off twenty or thirty years of payments.

We started in the spring of 1987 with foundation work. Then the steel arrived, and there was somewhat of a form of a building that filled the skyline. As interior work became the main focus in 1988, it seemed the whole process was dragging. The earlier work had a strong, visual impact on all our congregation. But very few could see the progress being made on the inside.

The idea came to take a video camera and lights inside to capture on tape

the work being accomplished. It helped our people get a better understanding of where their extra building fund money was going as we showed video clips in Sunday services.

The congregation was encouraged, yet there was still a long ways to go to reach completion. The building was 125,000 square feet of various types of space. At times it seemed that the best route would be to give up, go borrow the money and speed up the process. More than once I had to cast down those imaginations and just hold steady.

October, 1988—10 Percent Reduction

In September of 1988, it dawned on me that our building program on Phase 1 would take us two more years if we continued at the same pace as we had been for the past year and a half. We were notified by the Tulsa Public Schools that the building we were leasing, Thoreau Junior High, had sold and the owners wanted the building by December 1. That gave us just over sixty days to get the new building ready for occupancy.

With the information of our need to be out of the public school and into the new building in such a short time, we were pressed to make a decision. It came crystal clear and strong in my spirit that we must reduce our expenses and go for it. We reduced our staff and operations expenses between 40 and 50 percent on October 1. Amazingly, we kept each facet of the ministry in operation. Volunteers stepped forward to carry on the ministry and see the work done.

It appeared that volunteers were held back during the days we hired someone to do each job. However, once the need was made known, people felt free to come and help do whatever needed to be done. Instead of a downturn, we took an upswing from that date in October.

The offerings jumped up an average of 20 percent per week in those first three months of October, November and December. The morale of our people was up. We did not experience the difficulties that vain imaginations try to predict you will have if you reduce.

As a young boy I hunted with my father in the creek bottoms of Southwest Arkansas. Whenever we came to a creek of water that we couldn't step over, we would back up and take a running jump to get over it. The steps backward didn't stop our progress, but they gave us the space we needed to leap forward. It's the same way with reducing expenses.

***...Those who seek the Lord shall not
lack any good thing.***

Psalm 34:10 NKJV

CHAPTER EIGHT

Pacing the Work

Time is on your side in building with cash. If you don't get in a hurry, you can do it. Most churches have self-imposed pressure time frames. The deadline is in the mind more than in reality. The more time available, the more you can space out the payments. If real deadlines come, they can work for you instead of against you— people will be genuinely motivated because there is an obvious need. This is what happened to us in the fall of 1988.

I've heard it said, "We had to borrow because work was going so slow and we needed the larger facility." Ask yourself, "Why do we need it right now?" It's possible that multi-services packed into an auditorium for a few extra months could be a blessing.

Pacing the work simply means scheduling work on the building in relationship to cash availability. If cash is low, then slow down the work. When more cash is available, then pick up the pace. You may adjust from month to month, week to week, or even day to day.

The main reason I feel that leaders won't pace the work is embarrassment. They feel pressure because the building is unfinished and folks are asking questions. Let them ask their questions and make their comments. You know where you are and what you are doing.

I remember the peace I felt in deciding to pace our work. It was exactly opposite of what I had anticipated. There was a sense of integrity about our decision. We were being honest with the congregation, the workers and suppliers. We were committing to pay current bills before we obligated ourselves any further. We were pacing ourselves to finish on a debt-free basis.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time....

Ecclesiastes 3:1,11

Remember, God's time may be different than what you had in mind. We initially planned to start building in 1986 after we accumulated \$1 million in our building fund. It had come clear in my spirit that we needed the \$1 million cash on hand to start because of the major bills that would come in immediately for

the foundation and steel.

Surprise!

One month after we broke ground, we got word that the nine acres next to us was for sale. The owner had to get rid of it quick to use the money in other business ventures. I met with him for two to three months, and we finally bought the adjacent piece for \$1 million. We knew we needed more land from the start, not only for parking but also for the building.

As a result of the negotiations that fall, we held up on our building process until it was resolved. I'm glad we did too because we moved our building plans to situate a portion of the building on the additional land. It made the entire project better because we waited.

The key point I make to you is that we were willing to adjust our preconceived time schedule in order to fit the need that arose. Yes, people did wonder that fall of 1986 why no work was happening at the land site, but we knew God was working something out that we had no previous idea would come to us.

As a result of this divine delay, we didn't get started on site work until spring, 1987. We prayed for God's guidance on when to order steel in relation to our ability to pay. The steel company agreed to ship our steel in staggered groups. In other words, the first steel we needed arrived in June, but the last of it didn't come until late August. As a result, our payments were also spaced over three months. It may seem insignificant but when you are building with cash, there must be a pacing of ordering materials as well as the labor to construct the facility.

We anticipated that we would be in the new facility by September, 1988. However, we didn't move in until February, 1989. Those six extra months did not hurt us one bit. Of course, people wondered why we weren't in the building at the time we thought we would make it. We related what had happened. The money had not come in as quickly as we anticipated so the work could not be released to complete the facility. We had done what we could with the resources available. After people realized that we were serious about staying debt free, it had a positive impact on our people. Giving increased from that point to help us finish.

Two Goals

We continually reminded ourselves of both goals before us. One goal was to build a facility and the other goal was to build it debt free. It is comparable to

sailing a boat through a narrow channel like the Panama Canal. There are two walls on either side that you cannot hit. One wall motivates you to build, the other motivates you to pace your building.

Personal Debt—Result of Not Pacing

Most people get into a bad debt situation not because they have to but because they get in a hurry. There is a drive to get things and get them *now*. Folks are impatient so they buy cars, houses and appliances that they cannot currently afford. If you are in debt bondage, consider selling a few things and pace yourself in purchasing future items. Buy what you can afford.

We've counseled young couples to realize it took their parents twenty to thirty years to accumulate what they have. Don't expect to be there overnight. **Riches gained in haste will be lost** (Proverbs 28:20).

The driving obsession to accumulate things is not of God. If you must wait a while, you will appreciate God even more for things you know He has provided. It is sometimes difficult to keep the attitude of gratitude to God when you know that the bank provided it. However, when it comes by cash, you know God alone did it.

Pace yourself. Put a budget together. Monitor your progress.

Compare the day-to-day actual situation with your budget. Keep an eye on your cash flow. Make sure you continually update your cash flow projections so you know what your projected income and expenses will be weeks and months ahead.

Having a six-month and one-year cash flow projection is vital. If cash increases, you have already planned what you will do. If there is a decrease, you should have a plan of how you will adjust your expenditures. You can make it through tight times if you recognize the situation quickly and respond appropriately. The key is having good information and listening to the Holy Spirit's directions—IT IS EXCITING!

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him, And
He shall direct your paths.***

Proverbs 35-6 NKJV

CHAPTER NINE

Close Calls

There are many narrow channels in building debt free. On one side is your need for more space that is pressing you to build. On the other side is availability of finances (cash) to pay for the building work. We have faced many "tight spots." It is easy to see why more people have not tried to build with cash.

One of the toughest spots for us came in February of 1988 as we had to stop all of our building work for a month. We had some low attendances in the winter due to some wintery days and low offerings to go with it. We realized that we could not keep the same work pace and pay the accelerating bills. The tough decision was to put a hold on construction.

We foresaw the tight time coming and put a hold on the work. This kept us from extra bills that would have been added to ones already due. As a result, we came through our tight spot paying every bill and started construction again in March.

In June, 1988, we hit a week where lots of bills came due. Our goal throughout the project was to spread the bills out as evenly as possible in order to match our income with expenses. However, this particular week in June was one that bills went higher than income. On a Wednesday we needed over \$60,000 by Friday. I was pressured thinking that we should go to the bank and borrow the money. It seemed we had no possible way of making it. Thoughts of giving up on going debt free were hitting my mind like machine-gun bullets. I could see no way out. Our pressure was one of integrity. We did not want to be unable to pay our bills. Contractors were counting on us to do what we had promised because they had fulfilled their end of the deal. My thoughts were, "What good is it to not borrow money if you can't pay people? It would be better to borrow and pay." I had decided on Tuesday to go sign a note at the bank that afternoon. We still didn't need the money until Thursday and Friday, but there seemed to be no way. However, at noon on Tuesday I went to a luncheon in which Oral Roberts spoke on not giving up. It was the shot of faith I needed to believe God would make a way. He did! By Friday at 5:00, all the money had come.

The pressure to give up was so strong in my mind that it is important to tell

you about it. Sometimes victories are related in such a way that listeners are never made aware of a battle. The story of debt freedom sounds good, but it is little help to people in the future when they face tremendous pressure and feel like something is wrong. Listen, there was a battle in my mind day and night to keep myself focused on God's command to us and upon God's promise to provide.

God Has Another Idea

"Through wisdom a house is built..." (Proverbs 24:3 NKJV). One of the great keys we learned in the process was that victory comes by getting God's wisdom. It is not enough just to sit, believe and confess in every situation. There are times you must *do something*. **"...Faith without works is dead..."** (James 2:26). Another way of saying "works" is "corresponding actions." There is an action that corresponds with our faith that must be set in motion.

The action God gave us that week in June was to call our entire membership to ask them to pray with us for the need to be met. We used many of our leaders to relate where we were financially and to let folks know they could bring in a gift if they wanted to. People were happy to be called and felt a part of the miracle.

\$50,000—February, 1989

The same situation happened again in February, 1989. In the fall of 1988, we accumulated about \$200,000 in reserves during our Word Explosion week of meetings. It wasn't a lot, but it felt good to have extra money in the bank in the face of all the work yet to be done in finishing Phase 1. However, by January as work accelerated, all the reserves were spent and we were back to believing God each day for the bills that were coming due.

On this particular Wednesday, we needed \$50,000 by Friday. From the natural, there seemed to be no way. We averaged about \$7,000 to \$15,000 in a Wednesday night offering and usually had \$5,000 to \$10,000 come in the mail on Thursday and Friday.

I was in an O.R.U. Regents meeting much of the day on Wednesday. When I got home, there was a note to call Benson Idahosa on the phone in a local hotel. I called and he said he would be in the service that night. I asked if he had a word for our body and he said, "Yes, and I have a word for you right now." It came from 2 Kings 3:16-18:

...Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches.

For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain;

yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord....

A spirit of faith rose up in me as I meditated on God's Word, "That valley shall be filled with water." We had made ditches. That is, we had stepped out and created a situation that needed a miracle of God. Our ditches were the materials and construction we had put into the building. We hadn't gone beyond ourselves, but we were stretching our ability and faith to the maximum. The water we needed was the money to meet every need that week. God said, "**This is but a light thing.**" Hallelujah!

I thought on the words, '**Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain.**' There would be no explosion or bombastic event that would signal our funds were coming. They would just simply come.

At the evening service, I shared on communion and then turned it to Benson. He talked about twenty minutes. He challenged the people to give and called folks to do it that night. It happened so easily. We made it with the giving that night and the next two days. Praise God!

Timing Miracles

Through close monitoring of our work schedules, contracts and bills, we were able to project our approximate expenses in upcoming weeks. The last week of February, 1989, we projected a need of some \$206,000 beyond our normal expenses. It seemed insurmountable. God used delays in the contractor's work and his billing to cause almost \$150,000 of that \$206,000 to be billed in later weeks. Time and time again, we watched the Lord work miracles in the billing process to enable us to meet our obligations.

Favor With Contractors

In building debt free, there are ways to meet your cash requirements that come from the favor of God.

For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

Psalms 5:12

Favor with God and man is wonderful! We have it by walking in obedience to Jesus Christ. Favor causes people to do special things that benefit your life or your cause. God gave us favor with contractors.

Most of the contractors spaced out their billing for 30, 45, 60 and some 90 days. Instead of the usual 15-day or immediate payment arrangement, we had

additional time given at no interest. The contractors knew they would be paid and therefore could plan their own work in relation to the payment schedule. On the other hand, each additional week gave us several thousand more dollars from our offerings.

We had four weeks at the very end of the project when many bills came due. God gave us special favor. Contractors carried us an additional three to ten days on their payment schedule. For instance, we ended one week in March, 1989, with bills due on a Friday that totaled \$24,000. We were able to pay the full amount by Monday and keep current.

One Check Can Make the Difference

The first week of April, we faced needs over \$200,000. There were average offerings on Sunday, but we needed double the amount that came in. We prayed for a great miracle. In times like this, many ideas come on how the needs *could* be met. The way God answered was special for many reasons.

A couple in our church owned land near the airport. The property had been devalued because of its proximity to the runways. However, the day came that the airport needed the land for expansion. The couple was offered a ridiculously low price for the land. They brought the situation to the courts for a fair settlement. The miracle happened, and they were paid for the land. On Wednesday of this particular week, we received a \$50,000 check in the mail as a tithe of the settlement—God provided right on time!!!

Most of our close calls were met by a large group of people each giving small gifts. The big gifts have been few, but there is a tendency to recall them because they are unusual. However, 90 percent of our income has come by the faithful, small gifts of tithers. We have focused our faith on the regular giving and then the big gifts have come as a wonderful surprise. We do expect more to come because people who give to Victory have a great harvest coming their way.

Speed It Up

Due to the need to be out of Thoreau Junior High, we moved into the building in February, 1989, before it was fully completed. It was difficult to operate without all the facilities finished, but it was exciting to finally be in our own building.

We had almost 800 students in our school, yet there was no cafeteria, playgrounds, science labs, library, computer labs, or gym floor in those first months. We had classrooms and willing hearts. Though it was tough, we made the best of it.

Every week we were releasing our faith for some part of the facility to be completed. We celebrated when the cafeteria and kitchen were completed. Then the gym floors, labs, playgrounds, library, chapel and athletic fields. It took two more years to complete all the specialty areas just mentioned.

We definitely wanted and needed them earlier, but the giving toward the building fund slowed down after we moved into it. People seemed to think we were done since we had moved inside. It took a major communication effort to help our congregation and partners realize how much there was yet to complete.

On the positive, we all had much greater appreciation for every improvement made. When we finally got chairs for the chapel area, it was a day to rejoice. Tables in the cafeteria and playground equipment gave us a reason to rejoice. Each one was a faith project and therefore a cause for celebration when we completed it.

***Let everything that has breath praise
the Lord***

Psalm 10:6 NKJV

CHAPTER TEN

Evangelization: The Primary Thrust of Debt Freedom

In the fall of 1991, the word of the Lord came to me to conduct eighteen crusades in St. Petersburg, Russia. These crusades, lasting four days each, were held once a month in an indoor sports arena. When this miraculous door opened and God gave Victory the assignment to do it, we were in a position to run with the vision. There were no mortgages, debts, or financial bondages holding us back. We presented it to our congregation and partners. There was a tremendous response from the people giving to help bring thousands of people to Christ. The very first crusade there were 25,584 recorded decisions for Jesus. Each of the people attending the meetings received a Bible and a *This New Life* book explaining the Christian life. The second crusade, over three times that many walked forward, giving their lives to Jesus. Month after month the crusades opened the hearts of thousands of precious Russian people.

This is what building debt free is all about. It is being in a position to go after the lost in any way God directs at any time. Dollars that would have gone to a bank to pay interest went to the mission field to help people go to heaven. *Think about it!*

The pain and effort of believing God to demonstrate that He is God is worth it. You will hear dozens of reasons why it is better just to go ahead and borrow the money. Each person and church must make their own decision based on God's direction to them.

We can personally say that the joy of paying for a building one time and using the extra funds for evangelism is terrific. Heaven is rejoicing over those who found Jesus and are still finding Him today through the varied soulwinning thrusts the church is supporting.

It is a sad day when the number one job of the church, soulwinning, is put on hold for several years until a church gets out of debt. *A key to building debt free is to give into missions, other ministries and the poor in order to reach hurting people*, not only after the building is completed but during the building process.

If a project is a vision from God, He will not stop evangelism in order to

complete it. The issue is whether it is a God idea or a man idea. *God provides for His ideas and directions.* This is the bottom line. Every minister, church and ministry should seek God until they know with a certainty of God's direction. Then you will have the faith to believe God for His provision.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God

(Romans 10:17). Most of the time we think that means that faith comes by reading the Bible or hearing a preacher preach. Let me ask you some questions:

- Who preached to Noah or Abraham?
- What Bible did they read?
- How did they get faith if no one preached to them and they didn't read the Bible?

The answer to these questions is simple. Noah and Abraham heard from God. There are many people who listen to sermons and read the Bible, yet have little faith in God. The issue is listening and hearing from God Himself. He definitely speaks through ministers and through His Word. He also speaks to people on roads like Saul who became Paul (Acts 9). He speaks to fishermen turned preachers on rooftops, like Peter in Joppa (Acts 10).

God has not lost His voice. He still speaks today. The issue is, "Are you listening?" *This is a key ingredient to building debt free.*

Let's review:

- Our purpose for building debt free is to have more funds available for evangelism.
- Giving seed-faith gifts into missions, evangelism and the poor should not stop during the building process.
- God provides for His ideas and directions.
- What has God spoken to build?

Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

Killing the Giant of Ministry Debt John 4:35 NKJV

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Mark 16:15 NKJV

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Expanding Upon a Debt-Free Foundation Another Building—102,000 Square Feet for \$1.5 Million

In August of 1992, we were facing a very difficult situation at Victory. Our schools, VCS and VBI, were growing to the point that we were out of space. It was obvious that the Victory Bible Institute for adults needed to move out of the new building to make room for the Christian school to provide for the children. We had only been in the facility three and one-half years, and we were out of space.

As I prayed that day in August, a flash of revelation came to my spirit. I had been working at my desk when the Holy Spirit said to stop and wait upon the Lord in prayer. Within a few minutes, a clear direction came to go offer to buy the former Oral Roberts Evangelistic Building (OREA) that was then owned by another company.

The owner had just decided to sell it but had not listed it on the open market or put up "For Sale" signs. He had a business opportunity that required a certain amount of cash in the next few weeks. He was looking for a quick sale at a reduced price. The real estate in the area at that time had hit a low for a number of reasons. The building happened to be within a mile of our new building with the Mabee Center sitting halfway between the two facilities.

We made a verbal agreement within hours of our first contact. The building is situated beside the City of Faith, now CityPlex Towers, on 81st Street by O.R.U. in Tulsa. It is a beautiful fifteen-acre lot filled with large trees and a two-story facility designed to house all the offices of a ministry. It had plenty of room to build an 800-seat chapel out of the warehouse area.

The deal we offered was a forty-five day option with a nonrefundable down payment of \$50,000 and a total sales price of \$ 1.4 million. After the owner agreed to our arrangement, other higher offers began to come to him. To his credit, he honored his word. Had I not heard from God in prayer to call him that day, our opportunity would have been lost.

To buy this land and build the same facility would cost us over \$6 million. The owner was willing to give us a shot at it, because he knew our track record

of meeting deadlines on large amounts of money. This would be our biggest test —\$1.4 million in forty-five days.

The key ingredients were all in place:

First — We had heard from God.

Second — There was a definite, immediate need.

Third — To pay cash now would save millions of dollars (by not paying interest and in place of building the facility).

Fourth — The building would be used as a place for ministry and training for ministry.

These were the four key areas we communicated to our congregation. It was important for them to know these things.

To build debt free requires the right motivation in the hearts of people. They must know it is a vision of God. Then there must be a legitimate, obvious, immediate need. Some people will not give in a huge, sacrificial way if the project is for a possible need in the future.

Then people want to know that doing it now with cash is going to save major dollars. If you can show on simple charts, graphs, or in words how the ministry will save more than it will invest, you will have folks on your side. We could easily show on the purchase of the O.R.E.A. building that our ministry could save four times what we were investing if we had to build the same facility.

Finally, the most important issue that must be addressed is the impact upon lives for the Kingdom of God. How will the facility be used to reach, teach and send people? When people realize that their dollars can make a difference for eternity, they are excited about investing them.

Just because you want to build or buy debt free doesn't mean you can or will. These four basic ingredients are vital for people to do what it takes to go on a cash basis.

Hype and pressure are not the answer. They are not from God. God-inspired motivation causes people to give out of happy, willing hearts.

Remember, people get the God-inspired motivation for extraordinary giving if they know it is a God-vision, if it is desperately needed, if their giving now will save lots of dollars later, and if they know hurting humanity is going to be brought to Jesus because of it.

You cannot ignore these issues and expect exceptional miracles. It takes the supernatural hand of God to go the debt-free, cash route. Human intelligence, ability and effort alone will not get the job done.

You need Jesus!

I was amazed at the ease of reaching the goal. We made it on the very last day of the forty-five day period. Truly, it was a treasured moment. Our first 125,000 square foot building and land had cost over \$11 million. Now, in forty-five days we had 15.4 acres of land and 102,000 square feet of building for \$1.4 million. Yes, it was a building over twenty years old, but it was intact and easy to remodel and upgrade.

\$2.1 Million in 110 Days for Nineteen More Acres

The land adjacent to our property on the south and west (nine and ten acres, respectively) was about to be developed into a shopping area and apartments in the spring of 1994. One of our members knew about the deal and notified us. On a Thursday in February, I received a notice from the developer that we could purchase the land for \$2.1 million if we signed a contract by Saturday.

One of the toughest decision days of my life was that Friday. There was no question that we needed the land for future expansion. The miracle was that one of our people was in the know of the situation. If we waited the property would be developed right next to ours in ways that we could not use. In addition, the price and cost of the property would skyrocket once the new construction was completed.

My mind reeled at the thought of \$2.1 million in 110 days. But my spirit leaped with the vision of having the land for our schools and church. Without the property we would be limited as far as the future was concerned. My spirit kept saying, "How will you feel if you don't go after it?" I sensed joy in my spirit as I thought on us pursuing this miracle. As I thought on not even trying for it, my spirit was very sorrowful and heavy.

The scripture in Colossians 3:15 says, "**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts....**" That means to let God's peace or the lack of it be a guide or indicator to the directions you take. It was clear to me by Saturday morning that the peace of God was guiding us to go for it.

That three-and-one-half-month time period was supernaturally easy. We shared the vision, explained the purpose, pointed out the savings and told how the land would be used as we developed Victory. Several members of our congregation rose to the occasion and shared their hearts with us.

Again, it came down to the final night. We decided to do a TV special and share the vision on a local UHF station, Channel 47. Dr. Lester Sumrall let us buy the time from 6:00 until 11:00 p.m. Without pressuring people, we just told

our story of the church, schools, missionaries, out-reaches and vision for the future. At seven minutes till 11:00, we made the goal and shouted the victory on TV as the program came to a close.

Again, God had performed a miracle—down to the wire, at the last moment.

We now have room to expand and do what God has shown us we will do.

Surprise—Another Building!

Just days after the miracle of purchasing the nineteen acres in mid-June, 1994, Drs. T. L. and Daisy Osborn invited Sharon and me to lunch. They explained that their ministry of fifty years was changing and their need for the Osborn Building—108,000 square feet on six plus acres—was not needed as it had been before. Because of their relationship with us and involvement in our mission school, they felt to offer to give us their building.

They simply asked that we commit to redo the roofing within ninety days. That cost would be about \$450,000. In addition, they asked to move their operations in a back section of the facility in approximately 5,000 to 7,000 square feet of space.

The building has a beautiful 1,100-seat auditorium and three other meeting areas seating 200 plus. In addition, there is office space, a fellowship hall, kitchen and a large warehouse area upstairs. They wanted us to have the sanctuary chairs and equipment.

We prayed for several days and finally received the green light to go for it. The entire arrangement has worked beautifully. It took the roofing company several months to completely redo the roof. Today, our Victory Bible Institute, World Missions Training Center and offices for both of these areas are inside this facility.

Again, the remodeling and roofing projects were done on a cash basis. The extended time taken by the roofing company helped us tremendously as they also stretched out their bills.

To build the same facility today at \$60 per square foot would cost over \$6 million plus the land costs.

From January, 1986, to August, 1994, Victory has acquired seventy acres of land and 335,000 square feet of buildings. Our direct cash payments for the land and buildings have been \$16.3 million. Not one dime has been borrowed.

***May the Lord give you increase more
and more....***

Psalm 115:14 NKJV

God's Plans Are Blessed

When God guides, 'He provides.

What God directs, 'He protects.

Blessings untold, are waiting for you As God guides and directs things you do.

Trust in the Lord with your heart, D say. You'll hear His voice, This is the 'Way.

Desires from Him, they will come Your heart bears witness, this is the One.

Vision accomplished, desire achieved.

Results of a heart, willing to believe.

God's plans unfolding as a dream in the night Your acceptance guarantees His power and might.

The struggle is over, the battle is done <When you've waited in prayer, to hear from the Son. His voice is clear, the Captain has spoken.

Go forward now! The enemy's power is broken.

Rest—for you is a way of life.

Gone are the days of worry and strife.

You've come to the place of knowing His way. God's plans are blessed, for you to believe and say.

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CONCLUSION

What Now?

I've written our story because God impressed me strongly to do it. There are miracles waiting for those who will believe God and walk by faith. The best days are ahead of us. We are in the season of harvest in the earth. All hands must be on deck reporting for duty.

Jesus is coming soon. What we do in this hour will determine the destiny of many souls. We cannot be lazy or get distracted.

The main thing Is to keep the main thing The main thing!

Soulwinning, teaching, sending.

We must:

- Reach the lost,
- Equip the saved, and
- Send the prepared.

I predict that churches across America that flow in God's Spirit in line with His Word will be filled to capacity. Everywhere people will be building for God's Kingdom. My challenge to you is to let God be God and take you on His path of divine provision.

He is El Shaddai—the God Who is more than enough! Jehovah Jireh—the abundant Provider!

Killing the Giant of Ministry Debt GET READY FOR MIRACLES!

***Delight yourself, also in the Lord, and
He shall give you the desires of your
heart.***

Psalm 37:4 NKJV



Billy Joe Daugherty is the founder and pastor of Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He and his wife, Sharon, established the church in 1981, with a vision for worship, the Word, prayer, fellowship and evangelism. It operates Victory Christian School, Victory Bible Institute and Victory World Missions Training Center. With an international vision for reaching the world for Jesus Christ, Victory Christian Center has established churches and Bible schools in Russia, Albania, Mexico, Czech Republic and other nations.

Monthly crusades are held in government-subsidized apartment complexes in the Tulsa area, which include a

clothing ministry and free medical clinic. The Victory Bus Ministry then provides transportation to the residents for Sunday services.

Other Victory outreaches include taking the Gospel via radio and television in North America, along with shortwave radio in other nations, plus the distribution of books, tapes and videos.

Billy Joe and his wife, Sharon, were married in 1973 and have four children.

Victory Christian Center