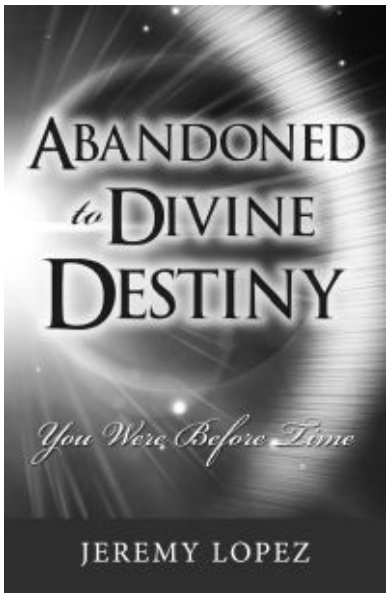
Abandoned to Divine Destiny

You Were Before Time

JEREMY LOPEZ



ABANDONED TO DIVINE DESTINY
You Were Before Time
By Dr. Jeremy Lopez

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ABANDONED TO DIVINE DESTINY

You Were Before Time

BY JEREMY LOPEZ



*"Before I formed thee in the belly **I knew thee (intimacy, union);** and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."*

- Jeremiah 1:5

Dedication



I dedicate this book to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without you, I would be nothing. But with you I can accomplish anything. You are my life and strength. Thank you for showing me what grace, mercy, and love is all about. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Like Isaiah once said, “Here I am, send me.” Use me to display your love in the earth until every nation is filled with You and only You.

This book is also dedicated to my parents, **Pastors Jim and Jeannie Lopez**. You both have been the best example of God’s love I have ever known. You have been my inspiration and anchor through the good and the bad. May the glory of God continue to shine upon you both with grace, mercy and peace all the days of your life. You both awakened to your divine destiny and fulfilled it before the Lord. I love you both very much.



I also would like to thank **David VanCronkhite** for being an amazing mentor, teacher and friend. You have taught me how to remove what religion has put on me and shown me to be the “me” that God created. You have never stopped showing me and teaching me what Agape kind of love is all about. My prayer is that the world would come to know this amazing Agape of God that has changed my life… forever.

To all those at **Identity Network.** Thank you for your hard work, dedication and support. May His grace shine upon you guys always.



Endorsements



"You are put on this earth with incredible potential and a divine destiny. This powerful, practical man shows you how to tap into powers you didn't even know you had."

BRIAN TRACY
AUTHOR, THE POWER OF SELF-CONFIDENCE



"As I started reading this manuscript I was reminded of the prophetically poignant words of Jacob Boehme, the great German mystic. "The end of all things is found in the beginning of all things. ***Abandoned to Divine Destiny*** *takes the reader on a trek through time to that beginning of all things where there is only God… and you.*

Like a spiritual surgeon Jeremy seeks to reverse the effects of religious inoculations that have prevented you from envisioning your divine destiny and experiencing the spiritual realities that surround you.

Like a spiritual director he endeavors to undo the religious programming that entangles you in a web of ecclesiastical activity that keeps you from your purpose in God.

In trinitarian pillow talk, as Robert Farrar Capon describes it, both the Word and the Spirit are whispering your name in the ear of the Father. Jeremy unveils those words spoken in the beginning of time that plans and plots out your destiny. ***Abandoned to Divine Destiny*** *reminds us that our destiny is not in our future; it is right here and right now. These prophetically penned words will encourage you and lift you up out of the smog of the religious city into that place of a pollution-free and spiritual environment where you can see your destiny and the things planned for you in the heart of the Father in the very beginning of time.*

I pray that you will read this book with faith and allow it to change you. I also pray that you will recommend it to your family and friends. This is a book written for this generation."

DON MILAM

AUTHOR DEVELOPMENT, DESTINY IMAGE PUBLISHERS
AUTHOR, THE ANCIENT LANGUAGE OF EDEN

*"**Abandoned to Divine Destiny**" is Jeremy Lopez's MUST read book. He has drawn from the wells of his prophetic anointing very insightful revelation for us today. Securing the reader in a fortress of truth. Making those who chose to walk in these spirit life principles to stand taller and speak clearer about their God chosen destiny. You will enjoy this book but even better it will make you a bigger on the inside of your personality."*

ROBERTS LIARDON
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

*"Those who know Jeremy Lopez know he knows the signs of the times and he continues to prove that he also knows what to do. This book "**Abandoned to Divine Destiny**" provides wisdom and understanding of identity, value and worth combined with prophetic insights of the days ahead. He is especially careful to show the condition of the Church that he so loves in a way that awakens all to the depth of change coming. You will be provoked, challenged and forced to engage in what God is doing in these days as you invest in "hearing" what Jeremy could report only by hearing from God."*

DAVID VANCRONKHITE

*"**Abandoned to Divine Destiny**" takes us on a journey from the beginning of our lives until an ending with God that has no end. Jeremy Lopez masterfully presents the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory of God in us and through us, and that the Seed of Everything has been in us and working for us before the foundation of the world. It is a transformational book that challenges you to rethink what you have been taught while reflecting more deeply upon the truth you have come to know. The journey though this book is prophetic, mystical, and magical, as you come to know who you really are for all eternity. I heartily recommend it."*

ROBERT RICCIARDELLI
FOUNDER - THE CONVERGING ZONE NETWORK

Chapter 1:



SPELUNKING IN THE CAVE OF REALITY

You are and always have been an eternal spirit.
Full of destiny and purpose.

- Jeremy Lopez



"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love…" Ephesians 1:4



Chapter 1

SPELUNKING IN THE CAVE OF REALITY

Just before He launched this grand adventure, a very mysterious thing took place in God. In His very center an event occurred which no other eye was ever to see, no other mind ever to conceive… the greatest mystery of all the ages.

A thousand-million portions of God burst upward in escalating light. Each of these portions of God ignited into flaming brilliance… as if to proclaim that each had been chosen – even marked off – for some special, distant, destiny.

What was this?

No one knew, for there was no one to know. And no one would know, for it was a secret that would remain hidden almost to the end. Nor could any mind, save God's, ever conceive the profundity of this vast mystery. An infinite mystery, hidden in God.

The Divine Romance, Gene Edwards

Before there was anything - before the fifteen billion historic years of the roughly sextillion particles that are in existence, before one hundred billion stars and their planetary systems, before time or space, matter and non-matter, certainly before a lonely male tree frog would conceive of belting out his mating call, before any living thing - before even nothingness, there were two things in existence.

There was God. And there was you.

This is not quite true, of course. Here I have to confess that our chat about the truth behind everything began with me using a bit of misdirection.

Of course, we must recognize that words are limiting things - we dance around their inadequacies, hedging our bets at what will and will not be said or heard. Words, best understood, are little more than houses we construct to shelter the realities that live within them. The actual experience they contain is what is significant, what is real. The words themselves are metaphors that change with each passing age and context. And yet - these houses of the holy are somehow

necessary shelters; raised, then leveled, then raised again (even on the third day), in order to give form to the formless, to express the inexpressible. We are forever indebted to these fragile incarnations called words.

And having said all of this then, allow me to clarify my earlier remarks - before there was anything - before there was even nothing - in a time predating time, and a space beyond space - when only two things existed, God and you - there were not two things at all… There was actually only One.

God.

God was all and God was only. God was completely alone - and yet God was complete.

God, in every direction.

God was everywhere, because God was everything.

And God was absolute - and God was absolutely all.

God, unlimited.

In the distant future, fiery infernos would blaze and give heat and light to planets, to Earth, and to each of its inhabitants. A newborn infant would blink in wonder at the effulgence of a neighboring star. The brilliant burning of dancing lights in the heavens would fuel a trillion actions and events. And yet, each of these find their origin in the initial burst of Flame and Fire that was here – in the being of God.

God was endless Light.

Shimmering, blistering, translucent clarity. Light as purity. Light as purpose and direction. Light as vision. Light as life. For nothing can be conceived in darkness - shadow will nurse that which already exists, it will tend to and maturate and shape, but creation alone lives in a world of trembling light.

And if you could peel the curtains back on this revelatory, churning, foaming ocean of light that was God as he existed in time immemorial, you would find yourself peering at the very heart of everything that would one day come into being. What was there? What lies at the center of the Divine creative impulse?

When the thunderclap sound that birthed everything resounded, when streaming particles of light emerged, when space and time unfurled their

conjoined selves, the billowing event of the universe expanded in one direction - Life.

Through a billion years of stony silence - where all seemed to be still, and hopelessly devoid of purpose, the universe was shaped. Then at last galaxies exploded and collided and renewed themselves. Five billion years, in which Primordial stars - resembling in fraction only the originating source they had come from - were created and then died, giving their life for expansive planetary systems. Roughly five billion years ago our Milky Way defined its own borders. The Sun escaped from a cloud of gas and heat, and gathered to itself Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto - and our Earth.

Earth, situated at a pristine distance from the Sun, saw a flux of primal cells, given a unique chance within the entirety. A score of years unfolded as God's Spirit hovered over the primordial waters of this planet. Cells merged with molecules - elements and atoms - becoming creatures, shifting shape into higher and still higher forms of livingness. Then, just four million or so years ago a mixture of soil and saturation - mud - found life breathed into it, and walked on dry land. Though I will spare you great detail of how exactly all of this occurred, this wonder now walking was called humanity. It is unique among all life, anywhere.

The reason I mention any of this is simply to say: This apex of creativity was at home in the heart of God before humanity's first breath was ever drawn. Not yet written in blood and bone - yet colored as God's own essence, as spirit, it existed. That is how I can say, with great fear and trembling - there were two things, yet truly one thing, … There was God, and there was you - you were there, enfolded in the heart of One so purely Love that both 'Father' and 'Mother' fail to adequately encompass this womb of nurture.

What, I wonder, is encoded on the core of this Divine artistic source?

You, it would seem, are the creative heart of God. Divine Life's ultimate end and immense beginning is housed as *You*.

Today we exist as flesh and blood beings. We seem to be skeletons underneath it all, bones like piano keys playing the music of our lives. And this is a truth about us – God in eternal past was so full of life and vitality that he just had to let it out and show it off. God manifested creation from invisible to visible, intangible to tangible – and God names it Good. *(See Genesis 1)*. Matter

matters, and our embodiment is important.

Even so, our existence as flesh and blood beings is a *relative* truth, subject to our continuous emanation from our Source. The full truth is that we are spirit. Essence of God's essence. Life of God's life. The originating source of the universe is what lies cloaked inside our skin and as our skin. And this changes everything.

As we awaken to the fact that we were inside of God before there was anything, just as a child lies inside her mother's womb - our lives are transformed. We are invigorated with a sense of purpose. How could we not be? How could a being that is as ancient as God is not have a purpose? How could Life, which is as inseparable from God as our fingers are to our hand, not be laden with meaning?

In fact - Life can't. It must have a destiny. What is its destiny - its ultimate end? Simply put, the resolution of your being is to discover itself there, in God - as you were, as you always are, and always will be. Your end is your beginning.

In God.



Chapter 2:



ADAMS AND MOLECULES

No matter where you go and what you do, you will never escape being your Father's child.'

- Jeremy Lopez



"**For we are but of yesterday**, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."
Job 8:9



Chapter 2

ADAMS AND MOLECULES

When He created all the beauty that we see
I know He had in mind a better life for you & me
But as we grow stronger, all people hunger
Just for the right to be free
Let's give Adam & Eve another chance
To bring their children back together
Let's give Adam & Eve another chance
To show us how to love one another

Gary Puckett & the Union Gap



I can remember giggling in sixth grade about Adam and Eve. In particular what seemed so funny was a little phrase from the ancient book of Genesis: *"And Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore so and so…" Knowing* powerful enough to produce conception? That's fairly immaculate if you ask me!

I always wondered why they didn't just use a different word. Of course as the years went on I realized that such a knowing wasn't unique to Adam. The whole Old Testament is littered with this word. In Genesis alone: Seth *knew* his wife and then they had a baby. Noah *knew* his wife and they had several kids. Abraham had to *know* Sarah for quite a few years, but eventually they had a son (with some remarkable help). Jacob *knew* Leah and they had a litter of children. On and on it goes. Of course it doesn't mean intellectual learning. In case you haven't guessed yet, it's not that kind of knowing! The word "know" in these accounts is the Hebrew word "**Yada**." *Yada* is an intimate experience. In fact, the imagery housed within the word is so powerful that it implies such a fullness of intimacy that life issues out of it. It is an implied closeness where two lives immerse into one, with *three* being the result. It indicates closeness to the point of becoming pregnant from the union.

Fascinatingly, but not surprisingly, this word is also used outside of sexual union. In one place God uses it to say something to his prophet Jeremiah. The words are familiar - "Before I formed you, I *knew* [yada] you…" (Jeremiah 1:4). God is saying something terribly important here, not only to Jeremiah, but also to us. We read this passage and think, "Isn't that nice - God Almighty was spending time thinking about Jeremiah. He must have been coming up with

some interesting visualizations - had an epiphany or two about this prophet; really allowed his Mind to run free." But this isn't what is being said. God didn't think thoughts about Jeremiah, he *knew* him. God loved Jeremiah so intimately that this union birthed something completely new. It had to. The universe became pregnant with a life conceived in love. Jeremiah, and all of God's dealings with him, was the outcome not of kindly thoughts, but of deep, experiential, passionate knowing while Jeremiah was still in his mother's womb -- yet unformed.

Consider the implications for your own life. Before you were born, you existed to God. He experienced you fully, intimately and ardently encountered you, and in this experience - with your essential being - impregnated time and space, drawing you out into existence here and now. You were lowered into the earthly realm, put in your mother's womb, and prepared for such a time as this. You were ordained, sanctified, and called to interact with gifts, talents and abilities in the material world. Your life today, your mission, and the destiny you inhabit are all originating from the place of God's knowing you - before you were you…

Yada - God knew.

This all seems strange doesn't it? How can God know me before there's a *me* to know? And if that weren't bad enough, it's one thing for God to know me - but that only makes one of us! There are times I barely know myself.

There's a story about the famous Jewish rabbi Akiva, who went out walking through the Galilean wilderness one night. Lost in thought, he stumbled toward a Roman garrison, and found himself at the gates.

A voice boomed from the walls, "Who are you and where are you going?!" Akiva looked up like a man in a daze. "What did you say to me?" He asked.

Again the voice resounded, "Who are you? Where are you going?"

Akiva shook his head, looked up and replied "How much are you getting paid?"

The guard told him his weekly wage, to which Akiva said, "I'll double your pay if you will come to my home and ask me this question every time I walk out the door."

What this story illustrates is that there was no more important question than who we are and where we are going. Akiva knew this. But - there is no need to wonder. I encounter people all the time who are stuck in such a state of listlessness. They, like Akiva, are asking the question - but lack the answer. If they could only see that everything necessary for the living of life lies inside them. They are capable of the life they have. God's DNA is inside of us. When we come out of our mother's womb, our lives are informed by an eternal wisdom. We are, from the moment of conception, heirs to far more intelligence than we might imagine. Like the starving man with a million dollars in gold bullion buried in his backyard, we are already rich in God but we don't know it. We simply need to do a little digging.

The startling truth is that when a woman is pregnant, the child being formed is without exception the extension of God's deep knowing - every child is quite literally a child of promise, having the very DNA of God himself upon them. God places a spirit inside of the child - and as the baby begins to grow their spirit already knows the destiny and plans of God. It is as though a homing device is implanted deep within - it knows where to go. Your spirit - the God-breathed, God-impregnated, God-illumined portion of your being - has everything required for living.

So why do we feel directionless, confused, and often bewilderingly purposeless? One reason is because we are immaculate multi-dimensional, sprawling creatures - forced to fit like a square peg into a round hole. The programming, or perhaps I should say "de-programming" we receive comes in form of all kinds of institutionalized jargon. We are filled with doubt, fear, and unbelief - not from the core of our being, but most often from the very places that should inspire hope and love - our institutions of faith.

In not so many words the message is clear, "You don't know what's right for your life. You need something more than what you have. Something that we, conveniently, are selling." Having heard this directive we go out looking. We look in peer groups, in churches, in school. We go off to college. We get married. We have children. We go through a string of careers – and maybe even a string of marriages. All in the hopes of filling this void that we are told, repetitively, is endemic in us.

As I have stated previously, the Christian Church today is squarely located at the heart of a whopping identity crisis. Between ever-receding congregations and

diminishing budgets, many church leaders are simply looking for some way forward - gimmicks that might fill the void and help continue the elaborate ordeal for just one more Sunday morning. Of course there are more than enough of these quick fixes to sort through. Many seem to point backwards toward the traditions of yesterday. When was the last time you frequented a Christian bookstore? Can you remember what you saw there? (Were there even books? Or mostly trinkets – what ministers of materialism in 'the Christian industry' call 'Jesus Junk' and 'holy hardware'?) One needn't take cheap shots at old friends in order to state the objective fact that a plethora of contemporary book titles are simply greatest hit lists from the past two thousand years of dogma and tradition. It constantly reminds me of bad country music, "everything is broken - give me my wife back, my job back, my car back… I wanna go back!"

In a sense this is how we have lost our most vital connection to the singularity - our point of origin in the heart of God, before the foundations of the world were laid. We are so wrapped up in attaining what we had yesterday that we have forgotten what has been eternally ours.

The search continues as scholars and pastors comb through the pages of the New Testament for the alleged secret messages of Jesus or his apostles for today. Fundamentalist would-be-Pauline-styled church planters aim to replicate the first century model of faith communities. Beyond this there are others who do the exact opposite, undertaking what would have been anathema to Paul of Tarsus, and take on the Jewish calendar of observances, feasts, and laws. I have even heard some who want to re-establish Eden-on-Earth, proclaiming refuge cities where giant carrots grow "just like the days before the Flood! Isn't it great!?!?"

We live in the traditions of man and the Scriptures as if they were dusty old museums. And even worse we've made them into a mausoleum, disregarding the words of Jesus recorded in John 5:39-40: *"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life!"*

We fail to inhabit the stream of living water issuing from the throne of God. We set up little fiefdoms of insider information focusing on the historic person of Jesus, but miss the Christ - the Son of the Most High God in whom the fullness of heaven dwells bodily. We create archeological digs, book tours to the sand-swept "Holy Land," make pilgrimages to ancient relics, and fire our imaginations by watching Charlton Heston wear a glued-on beard as Moses - but

we fail to allow the fire of the Holy Spirit to sweep our hearts and heat our own human Spirit. And while I firmly believe in the sanctified human mind as a powerful tool in the hands of our creator - we run the risk time and time again, as we cock our eyes over our shoulders to the temporal past, of losing the vision of our eternal destiny, becoming dry, washed up old wine skins.

Of course, it is overwhelmingly easy to put our faith in the time-tested practices of the past. But, it is in this posture that we begin to slip into the tempting possibility that God's best already landed - that our identity doesn't matter, that there will never be another Peter or Paul or Mary (the folk group or the first-century followers of Jesus!), that the apostolic age has come and gone, that God's gifts were for a different dispensation. The truth is - you are partially correct. There will never be another Paul (or Peter or Mary for that matter). There isn't supposed to be. God does not want another apostolic age - he wants this age. Your divine destiny, birthed in Spirit before time immemorial, has been hovering, circulating, waiting for such a moment as this. Now is the time, this is the age, this is the dispensation. There has never been a plan B in God's vocabulary - second fiddle doesn't exist in Him. You are His eternal plan A.

But of course - now I'm getting ahead of myself. There are still other reasons beyond sorting through the dregs of history for our loss of over-all empowered identity. Spiritual prognostication is also rampant within and without the Church. In fact, the highest paid salaries in Christendom today are not to pastors but rather to trend-watching consultants whose crystal ball predictions of what will be popular next are taken as Gospel. Countless communities of faith are desperately scrapping what once worked for what they imagine will next work. Sadly the results of this often culminate in the spiritual equivalent of cotton candy served up to starving souls. What is needed are not a wide array of new flavors, but of true depth, spiritual meat - and the realities of God's Eternal Purpose - God's deep desire for the unleashed destiny to take up residency in our hearts.

Just as neurotically, when we are not fixating on what is just over the horizon, we are placing all our eggs in the basket of God's glorious second coming. Countless Christians are bundled, jumbled, and wrapped up in figuring out the day and the time. Believers are desperate to know when we will get out of this mess and on our way to *heaven*, which is apparently a.) Not here in this place in this moment, and b.) Where the real action is, when the good stuff gets

going, when the better wine finds its way to the table.

Entire movements camp out, set up billboards, pitch tents and pray for rain, watching the Eastern sky for Jesus to reclaim his own. The world news tonight becomes like a ticker tape parade of signs of times that – when parsed through popular teachers' ever-shifting interpretive grids – give an exact address where we can find the antichrist, what his name is, and when the tribulation of the saints will come about.

Dear friend, it is time to stop waiting. Set aside the billboards. Toss away the checklists of signs and circumstances. Tomorrow isn't the point. God has not made you for one day or some day. He has prepared you for now. You were marked aside in heavenly places, given a tremblingly awesome destiny, and preserved for the moment when God's life would impregnate your human life with his presence. You were created for *now*.

Wake up!

You've been de-programmed! That's right… I said *DE-programmed*. Your original script isn't from an institution or a social construct. You weren't made to pine after the past or waste away waiting for the future. Your destiny was implanted in you before the foundations of the world were laid. In the swirling sea that is the originating source of the universe, your purpose – the details and destinies of your life – were wrought. God knew you, and made you pregnant with purpose - before you were ever in your mother's womb. You have your origins in that *before* place. The advent of the universe has been drawing near to your incarnation in flesh and flood. You have your origins in God.

In the time before time God decided that portions of himself were to have a glorious destiny. They were marked out - carved out - of the All-ness of God. These portions were a part of God - and have never been separate from God. Those portions existed in the heart of God, awaiting their purpose. There, in the eternal origins of this universe, in God, *you are*… wrapped in endless light, birthed in absolute clarity, perfect, pure, and as holy as God… because you are in him… before… before anything and everything - except for God and you.



Chapter 3:



SHADOWS AND LIGHT

All you ever will need in this life is already inside of you. You have a treasure in your earthen vessel.

- Jeremy Lopez



"… the spirit shall **return** unto God who gave it." - Ecclesiastes 12:7



Chapter 3

SHADOWS AND LIGHT

Look around you - right now. Go ahead and just glance about - I'll do the exact same, if it makes you feel more comfortable knowing that someone else is doing it too. What do you see? Right now I'm looking at my writing desk. Beyond that is a Christmas tree filled with what seems to be a thousand twinkling lights. Next to that is a chair, with a lamp nearby resting on an end table. If I look past those objects I'll notice a doorway leading outdoors. *What in the world is this all about?* You might be wondering.

Well - here's a secret: All of that - every shred of my world and the one that you're looking at - is a world of symbols, and mirrors, and images, and signs and shadows. It's not what is real. Oh, that isn't to say it's not really there. It is. Believe me. Try slamming your fingers in the door ahead of you or kicking the leg of the table in front of you and you will soon know just how *really there* it is. But in relationship to the Reality of God, it's just a shadow of what is True, a reflection of the imprecate order.

Consider that tree I mentioned a moment ago. Here in modern world of science, a tree is thought of to be a swarm of atomic particles and electrons and protons. But the Real Tree is God. Jesus said, *"I am the vine… and you are the branches… he who eats of me will have eternal life."* That sounds an awful lot like the Tree of Life in the garden of Eden, doesn't it? It is more than a coincidence. God himself is the Tree of Life, rightly understood. The real Tree is found in the Godhead. Our trees, here in this temporal realm, are merely hints at the reality of God's life. They are pictures of God, patterned after the "Tree-ness" of Christ!

Before the foundations of the world were laid, everything that we see today was present in some form - but not as shadows - as the *reality*. The Godhead in relational triunity – as Father, Son, and Spirit – were the real flora and fauna, water and flowing, food and sustenance, life and light. Prior to the emergent nested creativity that was the manifestation of the visible universe, the reality of everything was tied up in the very being of God's person. Creation itself today is merely littered with pictures, like little directionals pointing us towards the truth. You and I, and everything we see today, are but shadows of the ultimate reality found in the Person of God Himself.

The Scripture tells us that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word was God.” It continues by saying, *“The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by him and all things were made for him – without him was not anything made that was made. In the Word was the light” (see John 1:1,3)* – and here we need to allow ourselves to be interrupted, because when the text says that The Word was Light, it’s still locating itself, in - or from - the beginning, there before the foundations of the world. Scientists tell us that the light of the galaxy that we see lighting up the night skies now is the same light that was present at the inception of our reality. So too does the Light of the World travel from within the primordial depths of God!

The very beginning of creation was Christ– all things were made by for in and through him! *(See Paul’s letter to the Colossians, particularly 1:16)* All things are made by God, and all things are made *for* God. Before there was anything - when God our Abba (Jesus’ endearing term for God-as-parent, an astonishing and until then unprecedented naming of God as our intimate progenative source) set about creating, he didn’t use a sculpting tool kit or a set of wrenches and hammer. He created all things with his Son, Christ. And notice here what John 1 says –

“In him was the life, and the life was the light of all mankind.”

How can the Life of Jesus be the light of humanity, when we don’t even exist in the manifest world at this point? Humanity doesn’t even exist yet in the natural! We will never fully comprehend such things until we are outside of time’s tyranny - however, we can be assured of something - wherever Jesus Christ is, he is always the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End (not to mention all the points in between). He is eternally standing as the sovereign creator shaping creation - and wherever he is, there you are also, for your point of origin (as we have already stated) is not from your mother’s womb, it is in the heart of God before the heavens were carved out.

Before we move one inch ahead I would like to stop and ask you something: What do you think of yourself? Are you dissatisfied with what is in front of you? Do you find yourself too fat? Too thin? Too talkative? Maybe not talkative enough? Do you wish you had more sense of style? A greater depth of education? A little more substance? Allow me to direct your gaze away from the mirror and to a vision of you seated with Christ - with the entire Godhead - before the foundations of the universe. You are located squarely in the bosom of

eternal God in whom there can be no shadow, nor dimness, nor dullness, nor any other adjective you might care to deride yourself with. In fact, there in God, you are so beautiful and holy and pure that you are glowing. Not with a light that is your own - God is your light, radiating from within and without. You, from that point forward, are nothing less than chosen, cared for, beloved, honored, blessed, and infinitely more than just ok. That is who you always are because that is where you always are. Like a cup dropped into the ocean, you in God and God's Spirit is in you.

There we are, with God, wrapped up and tied up in Christ, who is the beginning and end of all things – the Alpha and Omega. We are hidden, tucked away, with Christ in God, *(See Colossians 3:3).* Even when creation is being birthed (notice I didn't say was being birthed, because everything is now in eternity – see my book The Power of the Eternal Now for much more on this) we are there. If that is true - and I assure you that it is – then the subtle reality is that you were present at the moment of creation, in God - right along with God. All things were made by and for and through Christ, everything we ever see. When you can grasp this (and feel free to take a lifetime for it to fully resonate!), a certain alchemy of vision and identification takes place where you begin to utter the deepest biblical mysteries that others stumble over, secrets that are hidden in plain sight:

- I no longer live as an independent self, but it is Christ who lives, in and as me *(See Galatians 2:20).*
- Life is no longer a divided field of opposites – this tree and that lake, this African-American and that Hispanic person, this gay person and that straight person – but Christ is *all* reality, poured through from beginning to end *(See Colossians 3:11).*

No wonder Paul the apostle calls us co-creators with God *(see 1 Corinthians 3:9).*

Second Corinthians 3:18 says *"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."* In the Aramaic language common at the time when Jesus and his earliest apprentices were writing, the word 'glory' means 'light.' Another way of rendering this passage, then, is: "We all with open faces, beholding as in a glass the light of the Lord are

changed in the same image from glory to glory" – or from light to light – even as the sacred breath of God is added to our breath, and the illumination of Holy Spirit kindles our fires. We're all beholding the light of the Lord. What is the light of the Lord? Scripture says it's "the light of humanity" – we're changed into God's very image, glory to glory.

The Western church has tended to deny our progression in Spirit from glory to glory, focusing instead on our foibles and sin, dooming as too corrupt to grow in the things of God except by a grueling process that borrows (but has little in common with) the biblical name "sanctification." The East Orthodox Church, by contrast, has emphasized how we are reflections of the light and life of God; the process of sanctification is thus named for the Eastern Church 'deification' or 'divinization.' We are fragmented and in need of the gift of wholeness, yes – amnesiac and in need of reliable memory. But God gives us this gift – freely, and not stingily, from a loving Mother's or Father's heart. We are the light of God, and we are nourished by this light.

As the fourth-century eastern Christian poet Ephrem the Syrian proclaimed, in his communion table prayer:

Christ's body has been newly mingled with our bodies,
His Blood too has been poured out into our veins,
His voice is in our ears,
His brightness in our eyes.
In His compassion the whole of Him has been mingled in with the whole of us.

In the light of life, there is no separation between us and God. As Augustine said 1700 years ago when welcoming new people into the family of faith in North Africa, *"You are Christ's body and members, it is your own mystery that lies here upon the table of the Lord, and it is your own mystery you receive… it is what you are yourselves."*

You and I are the bearers of the Light of God. Just as the early church father Pelagius stated - *"The eyes of an infant are alight with the light of God. We can see it in one another's eyes. We are the bearers of Light."*

It's a principle of science that you might recall from school: Matter is light slowed down, yet everything in creation is still light. Even scientists say that we are light – slowed down. Because the trillions of light particles have slowed down, have taken a break from zooming around at break neck speed - you see

yourself in the mirror. But, if you took the matter of the entire manifest world, and what we are as human beings – if you began to speed us up, we'd return to our original form – light. Jesus knew what he was talking about! He said *"You're the light of humanity, a city put upon a hill that can't be shaken."* Why? Jesus is saying to us – in our origin, we're not matter; "the origin in which I created you is Light."

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men" - John 1:4

Who are you really? You're light!

Who am I? I'm light! So when I go through hard times in my life, trials and tribulations, and I think I just can't win for anything; when things are going haywire – I have to 'awakest thou who sleeps and slumbers' to say "Wait a minute! I have always been spirit, and I always will be spirit. I am light, I am always light, even though I am slowed down in this natural realm of matter – I am the light of God. I am a light, and God takes de-light in me – he takes the light in me! He will give us the lights, or desires, of our hearts – God says "You're light!" You have to awaken yourself to this simple reality.

Stop right now - go look in a mirror and join me in saying the terrifying reality that God would have us know: *"I'm the light of Christ. I reflect His glory. I am being transformed into His image. When you have seen me - you've seen Christ!"*

So what are you? Oh sure, you could say that you're just matter. You could go on thinking that you are a collection of neutrons and electrons, skin and bones. But in your true original form as you were in God – you were light. The sons of God were pure light in God before the foundation of the earth. Jesus said "I am the light of the world," and he *also* said "you are the light of the world." The darkness cannot comprehend it because they're looking through a glass darkly. Darkness can't recognize this. 'Darkness' means ignorance. There are those in ignorance. How many times in our life are we ignorant? We're trying to see but we can't – or maybe we don't even know that we're ignorant! We're covered up by darkness. Why? Because we don't see ourselves in our original, true state in God – which is light!

Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren – the only *begotten* son, but we're the other offspring! This is why we are called sons of God. There are many sons unto glory coming after him. "Let me awake you to realize that you are also the

light of my Father." We come after him, as light. Allow me to ask a simple question - is a human son any less human than his parent? Would a human ever produce a grasshopper? No. The child of a human is a human. And the offspring of divine life is divine. Sons and daughters of God are crafted out of the same stuff as God - Light. The Light of God is the very radiance that you and I have as the center of our own being.

In Romans 8:18 Paul says: *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory (or light) which shall be revealed in us."* Not *given* to us, but *revealed in us*! There's a light that we already are, on the inside – it's covered and smothered by the accumulated hurts and insecurities. We drift off towards living in the past or worrying about what is to come, but God says don't worry about it – even our sufferings don't compare to the light that we are right now, that's on the verge of being revealed. Prepare for a light awakening. It's about to be unveiled inside of you!

In fact, the earnest expectation of creation awaits the manifestation of the sons of God.

The sons of God – who have always been with God and always will be – their full state will at last become apparent: Pure light! Can you hear that? Is it getting through?

That's why John the Gospel writer finds Jesus saying *"And now, oh Father, glorify me with your own glory which I had with you before the world was made."*

This is incredible. Read it again! Can you do anything less than pour over it another time? Remember John 1:2 says *"in him was life, and that life was the light of men?"* So what is the light of Jesus? The light of men, before the foundation of the earth! Yet John 17:5 says *"Glorify me with yourself, with the glory (light) I had with you <u>before</u> the world began!"* In other words Jesus is asking *"Give me the light I had before the world began – the sons and daughters of God!"* Not only are you yearning to find your revelation as the manifest light of God, not only is all of creation groaning anxiously awaiting your unveiling - but Christ Himself is pleading with the Father that your true nature - wrought before the foundations of the world - will be uncovered.

One of the most powerful passages in all of Scripture is found within the first stanza in the creation poem. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and*

earth; and the earth was without form and void; darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, and God said "Let there be light" – and there was light!"

Make this about you. Allow this passage to be more than merely what happened and let it wash over you in such a way as you recognize it to be your experience. In other words, when you came into your mother's womb and broke forth into the earth realm, you were like the earth itself – formless and void. Darkness – ignorance – was on the face of your deep! You were an undeveloped infant. The Bible says the deep of God cries out to the deep of us; our deep is calling out to the depths of God. And while that is going on in the inner recesses of our being, man's traditions, religiosity, the malfunctions and dysfunctions of our various lines of development all conspire to tune out that depth call. And yet! The Holy Spirit is still right here, moving on the face of your waters – trying to revive you and awaken you to say, *"you are light – you have always been light and you always will be light. You've been with God before the foundation of the earth, and you'll always be with God – even after the end of the age."*

The Holy Spirit is *always* hovering over the face of your waters. Did you know that Jesus said *"Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water."* Not that you're ***given*** rivers of living water – it's just out of your belly! Which gives us the interpretation that the rivers have always been there inside you! Once again, that which was real and true in God and in us *before* creation is simply being made manifest in time and space. When the Holy Spirit enlightens you, he begins to awaken the tremors of your soul, saying, *"I've always been hovering over those rivers inside of you. I've always been hovering over the waters of your soul. I just needed you to awaken to the fact that these rivers are ancient, these rivers run deep – they're from before the foundations of the world. When you were without form and void, my job is to hover over the deep over your waters – there will come a season of time when you will give in to the voice of God and be awakened. I'll begin to release those rivers of water inside of you. I've been waiting for your manifestation as a son of God – that's what creation is groaning for."*

Earlier I mentioned that too many wonderful saints of God spend their time pining away for the Second Coming. But there is something to look forward to. When Christ comes back, he says he's returning to be glorified in his saints. What does 'glorified' mean in Greek? It means "lighted or lit." And actually it's

even grander than that. The word attaches to it the implication of fullness. It is not merely being lit up like a flickering candle - may it never be! It is to be made a light, like the 4th of July fireworks over New York Harbor. Full! Brilliant! The brightest lights you can imagine. He's coming back to be lighted, to be ignited, to explode in the shining of his saints. When Christ comes back one of the results of this is that he will be lit inside of his saints. Why is that? Because he's the light, and we're the reflections. You can't tell us apart. We're coming back into the *koininia* before the foundations of the world.

The Gospel of Thomas is not the in Bible, but it's very interesting to read. I tell people all the time – you've got the book of Enoch, which is not even in the Bible, but yet the book of Jude (which may not have made it into your recent reading, but believe me - it is actually in the canon of Scripture) refers to a passage that is written in the book of Enoch. Now if the Holy Spirit inspires every word of the Bible, then this means that the verse written in Enoch too is Spirit-inspired, correct? God is still speaking through that source. Please don't take it for absolute truth, but use them as resources. Use the periphery books, the apocryphal texts, to illuminate and expand the Scripture that was deemed worthy of inclusion by the orthodox and believing community. Many of the books that didn't make the final cut weren't bad or harmful - but rather didn't have the same universal appeal that the rest did. The editors were setting many of them aside and saying - this is for a specific group concerning particular topics - best leave that for the ancillary reading list. The gospel of Thomas is one such work. And it is with this little known text that I would like to conclude - because it says everything I am attempting to communicate here.

In the gospel, Jesus says *"If anyone asks you where you come from, say to them 'We come from the light, and it is from this light that we do all things, and to this light that we shall return.'"* Isn't that marvelous how it lines up with the entirety of Scriptural revelation? But that is not my point. My point is simple and simply this - You were in God before there was anything, and there in God your beauty, chosenness, purity, holiness, and lightness of being were as marvelous as God's own. And when God set about creating - He wrapped all of creation in a shroud of shadow, symbols and signs - hinting at the reality underneath… You are that reality. The Light of God you contain as your spirit, in the essence of your being, is the fabric of creation. You are the glory of God.



Chapter 4:



A BRIDE PREPARED

Through the fall of Adam,
humanity fell asleep.
It's time to awaken to divine destiny.

- Jeremy Lopez



"For whom **God did foreknow (knew before),** he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Romans 8:29



Chapter 4

A BRIDE PREPARED

If you were to peel apart the veil of the eternals - there, before the foundations of the world, what would you find? First you would find God. God as the very fabric of reality that we now experience sowed into countless shadows, symbols and signs. You would see God as light, and life, and you might spot something that is murky whose depths you cannot plumb, whose shape you cannot make out for it is ever exceeding and receding from the borders you had come to expect - you would see something very much like the Sea in God. But it would not be water - not an element as we think of it today - it would be the real Sea - of which our oceans are merely a dim picture reminding us of the Real and the True. What else might you find if your eyes could penetrate the vast Allness of God as He existed before there was anything? You might also see something soaring, majestic, and utterly free - something that looks very much like an eagle in flight. The reason you would see this is because that when God set about creating, He did not create out of emptiness, but rather out of the fullness of His being. All things that exist today first had their home in God, before the foundations of the world. What else might you encounter? I hope that by now you can answer this without hesitancy - you would find… You! Pure and luminous and holy and containing all the life of God Himself. There were no deformities, no malfunctions, no blemishes as He marked you off in love. But here is another truth - there was not only one you, there were millions - billions - trillions of little *you's*. Not exactly you, for each portion was fashioned uniquely and contained a specific destiny and lofty purpose.

But like you.

An endless expanse of holy ones - marked off, set apart, chosen, distinct and yet identical in the fact that they too draw as their essence Divine livingness.

Now, blur your eyes together. Let them drift across the limitless ocean of lights who are God's sons and daughters - what do you see?

Yes - that's right. A form is taking shape. There is something emerging from the throng, made up of all those incredible, perfect, and marked off portions of God. What is it?

A woman.

Beautifully adorned. Brilliantly luminous. She is the sum total of you and all those who are like you, beings of light and life - God's Life.

Who she? Who is this fabulous creature at the heart of God?

What if I told you that God has been preparing a body for His Son to become one with, to know intimately and deeply?

He's been preparing a body, and God began to take this body, lower it into the earth realm, called the Bride of the Body of Christ – and began to impregnate it with purpose, calling forth that body that has been anointed by the Savior, into the earth realm; God is calling forth a place where Christ can come and rest his head.

When God took human form in time and space, Jesus said *"Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head…" "… A body hast thou prepared for me"* – a ***body*** is what Christ has called for, what he's raised up in the earth realm, that he can put his authority upon, his dominion upon, and be the head of the Body. So God has already initiated a Body that has been prepared for him before the foundation of the earth.

She is to be the very embodiment of Christ. When you see Her you have seen God. She carries his purpose. She fulfills his heart's desire - no, she EXCEEDS his heart's desire.

Now, here I would like to ask a bizarre set questions.

What is a roof for?

or

What is a vase for?

or

What is God for?

This may seem obvious -- but a roof is *for* the house. It's useless without a building beneath it. Have you ever seen a roof without a structure attached? Obviously not -- I'm trying to imagine any conceivable circumstance where this would be possible… No, I have concluded this is ridiculous. This is because we know that a roof is only good for a house.

A vase is for containing something. It is useless unless it is holding flowers or liquid or another object. Of course we may be antique collectors and hoard vessels… but this is really not what a vase is for, is it? A vase's purpose is containing something… this is what a vase is for.

Have you ever wondered what God is for? What is God's purpose? As a roof is for a house, as a vase is for containing something; what is God *for*?

The Spirit and the living Word of God, reveals to us that everything in the entire universe and, indeed, God Himself, is for this beautiful woman who I have just described. She is the Bride of Christ -- and in all her forms she is the Church. God is for the Church.

Ephesians 3:9-11 *[and to bring to light for everyone what is the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things so that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was all in accordance with the eternal purpose that He purposed in Jesus Christ…]* reveals the truth that the church, the Bride of Christ, is according to the eternal purpose of God which was purposed in Christ. The Church is related to God's eternal purpose. It was not a byproduct or an afterthought, but was linked to God's plan from eternity past.

There in the bosom of God -- with a trillion shimmering shining lights blurring into one form and fixture we see the initial impulses of the Most High's heartbeat.

God's plan from the beginning is that He would dwell in a shared experience of those who are called according to His purpose, who gather around Him, who are in love with Him, who allow Him to deeply and intimately know Him. It is with this corporate Man that He will share His Life with and indeed expand the Divine Fellowship to. The Church is to be the collective container to carry God. This vessel, perfectly united to God, becomes the supreme expression of His Divine Nature to visible and invisible realms. God planned to have a corporate Body which He could invest His Life within; a God container holding all of Him and expressing Him fully. God's plan is centered on this woman -- His Bride. The church, in his heart from eternity past and that he will secure for himself in eternity future -- is God's deep desire. The collection of the saints of Light is God's ultimate intention which He planned and loved from before all things. The church -- the Bride of God -- is central to God's eternal purpose.

We, all of us as the collection of sons and daughters of God, the very Bride of Christ, were wrapped up in God; in our appointed time, God sent us down into the earth realm to accomplish the divine mission. From Genesis to Revelation, we begin to see: God is a God of pattern, a God of order, and a God who finishes what God starts. Everything in God has a pattern, a cycle, an order. God is working towards something -- He is rolling ahead with great purpose.

Purpose defines what something or someone is for. A roof's purpose is to shelter a house. It is wasted for anything else. A vase's purpose is to be a vessel. It too is spoiled for anything other than what it is for. A *man*, who has a purpose, if it be consuming enough, will be driven by that purpose. All of this man's activities, all of his actions and motivations are towards one end. He is a man who is for his purpose. He will, with restless movement, pursue his goal until it be completed. God's purpose is realized in the church; therefore God is for the church. He is consumed with that purpose. All of God's activities from the beginning have been driven by His purpose, the church.

Everything God has undertaken has been towards the church. Creation was for the church. The invisible creation was for the church; the heavens are for the church, angels are for the church. The visible creation, with all of its manifold diversity; humankind and how it was fearfully and wonderfully made, all of this is for the church. The patriarchs and all the prophets; all of God's dealings with Israel was for the church. The incarnation of Christ, His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, have all been for the church. The gifts of the Spirit and the graces of ministry are for the church. Christ's return is not only for the judgment of the world but most of all is for the claiming of His Bride; His return is for the church. Shockingly, even how God processes Himself into experience is for the Church. The Father is for the church. The Son is for the church. And, the Spirit is for the church. This is unbelievable but, it is very true! We are left standing speechless. What can we say except that *"If,"* even "*God is for us… then who can be against us?"*

The Bride is the center of God's divine plan and He has orchestrated all things for the glorious completion of this plan. We must see the church. We must see what God sees. We must know why this is so important to Him and why it is so precious to Him. We must have a vision of the church.

There she is. And I know that I have said an awful lot about her. Perhaps much is lost in that old word "Church." But what I mean is just very simple. She

is *you* -- you in the very heart of God from before the foundations of the world were laid, you along with all the other chosen, pure, holy, marked off, called, destined, and appointed portions of God's life. That's what the church is. And those beautiful portions have been scattered into the bodies of men and women everywhere. Look -- look outside, they are all around you. Look into the eyes of a stranger and see your Savior.

See God.

See His Bride.

See the very thing that God is for…

God is good for nothing other than us… we're it -- that's His final word on the matter.



Chapter 5:



GOD HAS SPOKEN! (AND LATELY TO ME)

It is not in the stars
to hold our destiny but in ourselves.

~ *William Shakespeare*



"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and **curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.**" Psalms 139:14-15



Chapter 5

GOD HAS SPOKEN! (AND LATELY TO ME)

Allow me to backtrack a bit… Thus far we have taken some dizzying leaps of word and wisdom. We have trodden on the high peaks of the eternals. And perhaps, after some light air we need to sink our feet into some firmer foundations. One thing that we modern mystics are often charged with is blatant disregard for the fundamentals of Scripture. However, that is precisely what I think we should talk about next. If you know one thing about me -- know this: there has never been a man who has a higher view of God's Word than I do. Without it -- we would have no clue who we were, how we got here or where we are going.

I would like to talk about how we hear God's voice, both through direct revelation and through the revelation of His Word. In some ways I would like to use a very realtime and present concern to illustrate our utter dependence on God's grace and his witness in our lives.

I am asked every year, 'what is the Lord saying for this year?' For so many years, I found myself searching, asking the Lord what He had for His people for that year. I found myself, because of my raising and my environment, always including more of an 'army' and 'militant' attitude when bringing forth the word of the Lord. Now you have to remember, whenever you prophesy from the Lord, it will come through an imperfect vessel. So when we hear the voice of the Lord, it has to come through our experiences, our thoughts, our mindsets and our theology and doctrines. Can you image, all that 'clutter' that we store up in our minds, the prophetic word has to come through all of that before it comes out of our mouths to deliver to the person we are prophesying to. This is why it is so very important that we decrease so Christ can increase in us. It is so vitally important to make sure we do not 'worship' our doctrines, beliefs or traditions. In other words, when the Lord speaks to us, we should never allow how we believe get in the way of delivering the message He has for His people. We will discuss this further later on in the book, but it is sufficient to say, anytime that we seek to become a vessel for God's purpose and passion, we must truly adhere not only to inspiration, but also submit to the witness of Scripture and the witness of history, while at the same time holding them loosely and without

rigidity. God wishes to do a new thing, but not one that contradicts his revealed character, person, and principles from the past.

I have come to the conclusion through much prayer and searching out the scriptures that the prophetic is one of the tools that God has chosen to speak His love to humanity and show them what grace and mercy truly was. I have written extensively on this subject: how we can engage the prophetic, and how we can understand its relevance in our lives. That having been said, there is a stream of so-called ‘prophetic’ people that is in total opposition to the message of Christ and the heart of the New Testament. Please understand, I respect and love these people. Many of them are friends that I think the world of but we must stand up for Jesus first before flesh every time, that he might have preeminence. I am a firm believer to spread God’s love and grace only towards people because I believe you will know which ones are His (Christ) disciples by the love we have one towards another. The trend I have observed creates a feeling of grief in my spirit. On and on we are asked to read about how we are an army… army… army.

Now let us go to the word of God to see what the Lord says about the word ‘army’ according to the New Testament. In the New Testament we read the ‘army’ only 4 times. Three times referring to the scripture in the Old Testament and the fourth time it is recorded in the book of Revelation concerning the army of the white horse rider. The militant edge to the Old Testament, full of generals and weapons and warriors is nowhere to be found. In fact, God takes a decidedly different tactic in his fresh revelation of Himself beginning in our book of Matthew.

I have always found it interesting that the first act of God in the flesh on earth, to inaugurate his ministry, is the Baptism of John. What does that baptism represent? Repentance. God Incarnate is saying something I believe. He’s repenting. I know this sounds shocking. But what is happening is he, who knew no sin, is taking the blame. He is taking responsibility for a series of miscommunications. It’s as though he is acknowledging that the relationship, full of certain ways of understanding each other, had gotten off to a rocky start. And now, in the form of Jesus, he is setting that right. He’s turning (that’s what repentance means). The ways of communicating himself before are no longer sufficient -- they will no longer do. A new language is needed to reveal himself.

Now when we look in the New Testament, we do read the word ‘love’ over

400 times! Yes, 400 times! That is the new language. Perhaps it is not so new. Perhaps we simply misheard God in ages past. We, as CS Lewis said, heard him as though through a lisp. At any rate he has taken the blame and corrected it in Jesus. Now the language of militarism is to be replaced by none other than King Jesus, whose banner is love. Do I believe we are an army? Absolutely but we also must look at our Example, our true Mentor, our Leader, Savior and Lord of our lives. That perfect person is Jesus!

While hearing these 'prophetic words' from some of these people, it seems to empower us with a sense of anger towards sinners, our country, our leaders and those who do not see things 'our' way and who do not follow our beliefs. Let me ask you a question: is being an army to 'fight' or being a servant the greatest in the kingdom of God? Let's look to the New Testament. Let's see what God in the flesh says about this.

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

If we look at the life of Jesus, do we see a fighter or a lover? Do we see someone who bashed the policy makers, the leaders, and stirred up the people to think that God is getting ready to judge or did we see Jesus who RESPECTED the (clearly vile) leader of the day? Yes, we witness a suffering servant who said, *'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.'* His message wasn't to detract from the kings of this earth, because his kingdom wasn't of this earth. In fact, the only people Jesus had a problem with were those of the RELIGIOUS SYSTEM. Jesus, in all of His teachings, focused more on the individual dealing with their own sin, pulling the plank out of their own eye, judgment beginning in the house (you) of the Lord, Judging not of others, etc. In other words, Jesus never focused on damning those who were in the wrong or who were coming against Him. The bible says, *'A soft answer turns away wrath.'* It does not say, *'stir up trouble by making people mad so you will think you are being persecuted for the Gospel's sake.'* Yet, if we simply were to listen to our own self-centered instincts, and not the whole revelation of God's word, that's exactly what we might conclude.

In the book of Matthew we see an interesting picture that informs the whole issue in question.

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

(Matthew 22:34)

So, I ask you, what did the prophets look towards and could not wait to come to planet earth? Love, love and love! God's amazing Son coming to earth would change the way we live, treat people and PROPHESY! We are called to respect those in authority over us (according to the New Testament). We are called to 'love our enemies.' We are called to, *'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'* (Matthew 5:44)

This actually is reminiscent of the Psalm 23, which, even records, *'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.'*

When we look at Jesus, He overturned tables IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD not in the Sanhedren (the equivalent to our oval office), not in the local town hall because they passed a new law that He did not agree with… No! He overturned the tables in the 'temple.' What does the temple represent? 1 Corinthians 3:16 says: *'Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* Once again, He focused on the inward and not the outward. Jesus understood and he operated in such a way as to say real change is always aimed at the heart. Why do some of these prophets focus on outwardly? Because it feels better if we blame others and not look in ourselves.

We first have to settle in our minds that we follow the whole council of God, BUT as prophets, we walk under a NEW COVENANT AND NEW COVENANT **ONLY**. There is a big difference between Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets. New Testament prophecy is ONLY in the guidelines of 'edification, exhortation, and comfort.' New testament prophets can and will move into the realm of instruction, rebuke and direction as well BUT IT HAS TO PASS THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS AND GRACE FIRST BEFORE IT IS DELIVERED TO THE PEOPLE.

Even though some of these modern day prophets are proclaiming the wrath

of God upon our nation, leaders, people, laws, etc, I would point out that it is not in accordance with any of the words of Jesus. Jesus has become our example! He is not only our example, but is the very life that we are invited to live by. He is the WAY TO THE FATHER. Which means, to get to the Father, we must be like him and go through his person. So to go to the Father, we must go THROUGH THE SON. Did you get what I just said? Go 'THROUGH' the Son. What is 'through' Him mean? It means, *'speak like I speak, walk like I walk, love like I love, be like I am in the earth.'*

> *'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.' (1 John 4:17).*

What? As He was on the earth, is EXACTLY HOW YOU AND I ARE TO BE, WALK AND TALK? Yes! He loved the sinners, welcomed them in to eat with Him, loved the tax collector (which was considered bad in those days), told a woman CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF ADULTERY AND DRAGGED INTO THE STREET, WHO HAD NO TIME TO FEEL BAD OR REPENT OF HER SIN, simply told her, *'I AM <u>NOT</u> YOUR ACCUSER'* and then said, *'Go and sin no more.'* **WOW!** This is illuminating.

Now I'd like to ask this: which one is harder to do?

1. Deny ourselves, discipline our flesh, pull the plank out of our own eye, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

OR

1. Judge others, threaten people with God's wrath coming, focus on destroying the powers that be over us in this nation, and bash those in sin to repent before God or else?

The answer is of course the first statement. Why? Because everyone knows it is so much harder to look into the mirror and fight with ourselves to walk with integrity and excellence, pull out the plank in our own eye that stops us from love those who have hurt us, etc.

The New Testament says, *'It is the lovingkindness of God that draws men to repentance.'* This sums everything up… love.

No matter what you do or say, if it is not with a heart of deep, passionate love to people, it is and will always be just a clanging cymbal and be non-productive. Let's not feed into those giving God a bad name. Let's not feed into those who do not come in the name of, **'FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD… '**

If we do not love people, we do not know God. The person who loves not people but bashes people, judges people, is not born of God. This is what it means to rely on the WHOLE revelation of God, and not only the things we find lodged in our conditioned minds.

During the great pioneer expansion of the early 1800s a group of would-be settlers decided they would pull up stakes in New York and embark for the unknown west. But, being seasoned by stories of previous failures and foibles, they committed to a radical but ultimately wise course of action. Before their actual trip they isolated themselves for a month on an island off the eastern seaboard, taking with them all of the supplies they had assumed necessary at the time. At the end of that month they made a shocking discovery… they weren't nearly as prepared as they had previously thought! Many things that had not seemed essential, and therefore were not taken with them, suddenly were revealed to be indispensable to the expedition. Other items which the pioneers considered to be important turned out to be almost useless. They had discovered a crucial lesson… *idealism is the best friend of inexperience.* In other words, actually walking through a thing will change and shape our views far better than theorizing over them without having practical understanding. Having finished with the grand experiment, these particular discerning men and women left for the prairies of the new frontier well equipped and ready to walk into their destiny.

This story reminds me of the life in the Spirit. As you well know, theories abound out there about how to live an abundant life. Self-help sections in bookstores overflow, and talk shows fill our channels with the latest tips on weight loss, relationship advice, career planning and more. And when you get into the 'religious marketplace,' the proliferation of opinions grows exponentially! Church fads come and go, with obscure biblical prayers and far-off promises of 'revival' ringing in our ears. The 'New Age' world isn't much better, with expensive gurus and new 'universal principles for enlightenment' seemingly being discovered daily. Everyone has an opinion, but who has an *experience*? Who has done the simple, but profound, work of discovering their

divine destiny?

As we go along in life, being aided by what Richard Rohr calls the two great paths to genuine spiritual growth - great love and great suffering - we discover that our theories about God and the practical working out of faith-full living desperately need to be informed by our progressive experience. If we are advancing with the Spirit of God, we will not remain static. How could we? Where genuine divinity is present there is life, and life more abundant! We will actually find ourselves turning over new ground as the Holy Spirit tends the garden of our lives. The capable hands of Spirit uproot many of our pleasant-sounding but ultimately ineffective preconceptions.

I say all of this as a way of introducing what I believe to be a desperate need among believers - of all credos - today. We must rediscover the sacred scriptures as God's Word for our lives. Within my own faith tradition, Christianity, the Bible represents something that many of us began this journey without. Introduced to it as a child, I thought of it as a tool to be used or disregarded as I felt at that moment. I was flippant with it. I was arrogant. Candidly this perspective led many of us, including myself, to do what is only natural when we allow our fleeting circumstances to dictate our behavior… we did the easy thing… we ceased utilizing that tool altogether. From time to time I would pick back up the Word and enjoy it immensely, only to stuff it into a dusty bookcase when it no longer became convenient or offered enjoyable feelings any more.

A funny thing happened, though, as I advanced further along in this experimental journey of living enraptured in the very center of God's presence, *(see my book The Power of the Eternal Now for a brief-yet-powerful guide to walking moment by moment in the I AM of divinity),* I am finding that God as revealed in sacred Scripture is indispensable to each and every one of us. The lack of its presence in our lives will leave us, over time, anemic and dry. In theory we may disagree with this posture. We may not like it and not want to admit such a thing. But, careful examination of our experiences will prove this to be true and certain.

How can we discern what the divine pattern is? How can we be certain that this or that is God's authentic speaking in our lives? Thankfully, the Spirit doesn't leave us defenseless. God has given us divine words found in the Divine Word of the Bible. I think of the great Keswick minister from the 1800's who said, *"God has spoken in ages past and lately to me"* - the Spirit does this

through Scripture.

When we talk about the Word of God we should know what we mean. I routinely hear what I call “political language” given to the Word of God. Some people use it for personal gain, as if it were a manual for how to get ahead. Some use it as a promise book, not unlike some use the newspaper Horoscope. Others use it as a joke, something to poke fun at. Still more see it as a dry or dusty academic journal, one that only the well educated can use. But rightly understood, it is God’s language. Not the Greek language or the Hebrew language or any particular translator’s linguistic spin… it is God’s very special way of speaking. The Word of God is a real mystery; it is God’s language and you have to have Spirit-breathed abilities to receive God’s language. You and I must have an entirely other-worldly (even heavenly) capability, requiring an inner awakening to our divine birthright, and a learning of an entirely other language from the ABC’s of heaven. People can read every last page of the Bible and learn it inside and out, and not know a single syllable of God’s Word. You may read this book we call Holy Bible, and never hear God speaking at all. To hear God’s language, to receive His Word requires a Divine Intervention. It is a language that no one knows; you will not find it in any books or taught in any classrooms. Humans cannot learn this in their natural abilities and have a difficult time understanding it; in fact, they will not ever, naturally speaking. Before talking to any audience, Ed Miller, a respected Bible teacher, habitually reminds people that if they are to receive anything of value from his speaking, a message, or a Bible study, that they recognize and acknowledge their total and utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to them through the Scripture. It takes God to reveal God.

T. Austin Sparks, a giant of spirit in his epoch, said once, *“The Bible, if we knew it right, is not a book at all. It is a Person. It is not a collection of truth and doctrines, laws, commandments, and techniques. It is just a Person, and the Bible will miss its purpose unless it is all the time bringing us in touch with that Person-the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Far from being a dry proposition, the Word is a Person (John 1:1); Truth isn’t a fixed set of dogmatic beliefs, but a living Person (John 14:6). The incarnate, resurrected, indwelling, and cosmic Christ is bigger than any ideas about him and any religion that would think to contain him. And this Christ is the one in whom we were formed, even before the world began (Ephesians 1:4) - it is these words that reveal *The* Word - within us!

Many readers, however, think to separate the Scriptures from the Person they reveal. In a manner of speaking they want the Revealing One without the Revelation he gives or the Speaker without the words he has been speaking. But we cannot separate these two, they exist together. If Christ is the Son of God, if He is the exact representation of God (Hebrews 1:3), then the Word of God is supreme. In order to undermine the authority and centrality of the Word of God, you have to undermine the Person of Jesus Christ. This doesn't always happen in the way you might think, with anti-religious bias diminishing Christ's power and authority. No, as a story from John chapter five illustrates, it is often the religious leaders (preachers and teachers) who miss the point most obviously of all:

> *"John was a torch, blazing and bright, and you were glad enough to dance for an hour or so in his bright light. But the witness that really confirms me far exceeds John's witness. It's the work the Father gave me to complete. These very tasks, as I go about completing them, confirm that the Father, in fact, sent me. The Father who sent me, confirmed me. And you missed it. You never heard his voice, you never saw his appearance. There is nothing left in your memory of his Message because you do not take his Messenger seriously.*
>
> *"You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you'll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about me! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren't willing to receive from me the life you say you want."*
>
> ***(John 5:35-40, The Message)***

I heard a phrase once that puts it very nicely: *"The Word of God having become flesh, let us be careful not to make him merely words once more."*

The Word always goes together with the Person; they stand or fall together. Divorce the Scriptures from the living Word, and they can actually work against him!

God is personally interested in humanity. And because God is personally interested in humanity, God has given verbal communication of the Divine interest. It's a paradox, really: God is an unfathomable mystery, whose depths we cannot hope to compass. In this sense, any preacher or prophet who claims to have God figured out is kidding themselves. But in another sense, we have *revelation*, in divine words, and the Word. God isn't content to remain unfathomable mystery - you could say that God is quite chatty!

Does this really surprise us? God made humans to be communicating and verbalizing creatures. Our ability to reflect and communicate sets us apart from the rest of the created order. Scientist and poet Brian Swimme says that *"humanity is the universe becoming conscious of itself."* We are created in God's unmistakable image (Genesis 1:26); our predilections and longings reflect the Divine. If our penchant for communication is true for us-as-divine-image, it makes sense that the Creator is someone who also communicates God self in very personal and verbal ways. Francis Schaeffer says, *"God has not given us an exhaustive knowledge, but he has given us true knowledge - about himself and about the cosmos."* Jesus is the ultimate revealer of God's hidden knowledge. Through Christ alone we receive the Hidden knowledge of God. "*But we must beware lest we begin to make a distinction between the knowledge which Jesus gives and the knowledge which the Bible gives. Jesus will not allow a dichotomy here. Jesus says he is the giver of knowledge, but he always quotes the Scripture as though it were also a statement of knowledge to the individual. The Bible and the witness of Christ stand side by side. What we have here then, is a person-to person imparting of knowledge."*

The Scripture is nothing if it is not the Godhead's unique way of bringing us into the heart of the Mystery, the Divine fellowship itself. It will do us no good if it is doctrinal in nature. It is not to be a museum filled with dusty historic figures. So, we must approach it not as the tree of knowledge, which Jesus warned against, (John 5:38-40) but rather as the Tree of Life, governed by and consumed with him (Luke 24:27). From beginning to end the goal of the Scripture is to guide our spirits towards union with the Holy Spirit. How is that possible that human words do such a thing? It is impossible with humanity in emptiness… but made possible with God as we live in sync with our divine destiny! God is Spirit and only spirit can have a real relating to God. Something spiritual has to come about in linking our hearts to God's words. If we touch our spirit filled with divine life then the effect of the Word of God, which Christ has spoken, will minister to our spirit in Life. In that case the effect of God's Word will always stir our spirit and draw us into fellowship. It is being grounded in this *logos* Word that births forth a continuous *rhema* Word of moment-by-moment, conversational relating to God within. As we saturate in the written words of Scripture, the living Word of God will begin to speak forth to and through us prophetically. After all, "*the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy"* (Revelation 19:10)

In Scripture we find three things: God's Person, God's Purpose, and lastly the Principles God uses to accomplish the divine Purpose for his Person. Phew! Is that a mouthful? Right now, re-read that sentence. God's Person, God's Purpose, and God's Principles (that God uses to accomplish the divine Purpose *for* his Person) are what we see Scripture dripping with. It is through these revelations that we find ourselves more and more blended with the very Life of God.

2 Peter 1:4 says, *"He has granted us His precious and great promises, so that through them you may become partakers in the divine nature."* Can you imagine a greater statement in the world? If a scientist approached you and said, *"I've found a miracle drug that if you take routinely will influence your entire self in such a way that you will become super-human,"* wouldn't you beg for a sample? I would. But this is exactly what we have received in the form of the sacred texts.

As we read God's Word, the Scripture, and take it in context, in its entirety, we get light overflowing our experience of life and find that we are changed and renewed day by day. It really is true what the writer of Hebrews says: *"The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:7) God's word operates in us in such a way that it divides the *me* from the Lord. It penetrates me so that it reviews and reveals my motives versus God's own motives and thoughts. There are some things that seem like good ideas; they have a sound of wisdom, they feel alright and logical but when we began to search in Scripture we find that they are just really my surface ego-self, and God has an entirely different thought. We need the Scripture as God's Life for you and me today.

One scholar translates Second Timothy 3:16 in this way: *"All Scripture is God <u>breathing</u>,"* with the emphasis on the fact that the written Scriptures are presently God's breath. John Bengel, a pietistic Bible teacher, said of that passage, *"It was divinely inspired, not merely while it was written, God breathing through the writers, but also as it is being read, God breathing through the Scripture and the Scripture breathing Him."* The Word of God is something that is living and capable of generating new Life into our hungry Spirits. 1 Peter 2: 2 speaks of longing for pure spiritual milk of the Word of God just like newborn infants do… *"So that we may grow up into salvation."* There is no growth without the imbibing of God's living Word.

In the book of First Samuel chapter 13, the writer relays a story concerning the strategy of God's People's enemy, the Philistines. Rather than subdue and destroy the Hebrews, they simply took all their weapons; they stole their swords. The means by which the Philistines potentially could be defeated were taken away from Israel. By doing this they kept the Hebrews low and restrained. God's people were defeated long before a battle could take place. This is just a historical picture for the spiritual reality. The New Testament tells us exactly what the divine sword is: In Ephesians 5:17 we read *"…take the… sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God…"* and in Hebrews 4:12 *"the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword…"*

There is a powerful comparison to a choice weapon when we take the Scriptures in unison with our living spirit. Having seen this we return to the picture in First Samuel. The enemy seeks to detour the God's Purpose on the Earth, to maintain his mastery by preventing God's people from taking up the piercing Word. If the enemy can keep us from speaking Spiritual language and receiving Spiritual food, then he can continue to occupy and oppress. *"Our adversary does not wait until the hour of battle to set his forces in motion, but is always at work well ahead in anticipation for the hour. For him to do otherwise would be fatal."* (T. Austin-Sparks, *In Touch with the Throne*, chapter five). The unequipped status represents a loss of ability to claim divine territory. By preventing our absorbing of God's Word, our enemy demoralizes and destroys our rightful place as more than conquerors.

So many things come along to stall us from cracking open this book called the Bible. Some of the reasons are time constraints, lack of understanding; some are the mental arguments of modern critics, and others are so-called spiritual motives. Whatever the reason it is always the Enemy seeking to confound God's testimony and our divine destiny. We will, if we wish to advance, simply have to take a leap of faith and trust God to make clear those things we do not yet fully see. We must lay aside our anxieties and preconceptions, taking the leap to *"taste and see"* God (Psalm 34:8) by drinking in the Word verse by verse, a little at a time. As we practice taking God at his word in his Word we will discover God to be faithful and true. In order to be a healthy and vital people we need to pick up the necessary supply for our journey forward.

Chapter 6:



THE TECHNOLOGY OF JOY

We are not human beings
having a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

- Teilhard de Chardin





Chapter 6

THE TECHNOLOGY OF JOY

If I were to ask you what your “real life” was - how would you answer? For most people in the world this phrase means their jobs, their families, their marriages… the nitty-gritty nuts and bolts of existence. In organized religion this thinking is really just as strong. It is reinforced every Sunday when the preacher concludes his message by “getting practical.” All the good Biblical exposition, all the carefully laid out understanding of who God is, even the depths of spiritual revelation, is considered secondary (and hopefully leading up) to the applied “reality” of the rubber meeting the road. There’s something admirable about this. But also something concerning.

What does that tell you about where religion-as-usual is placing its emphasis? Yes, that’s right… the mind-numbingly pedestrian is what is being highlighted as important. Everything else is just the logical means to arrive at the “practical” conclusion. The significant element is the functional aspect. That’s what everyone came to hear. I recently saw a sign advertising for a mega church’s next service that says it best, it read: *The Spiritual Life for Dummies: A Practical How-To Guide!*

Skeptics and true believers alike want a how to manual for their jobs, families, marriages, and psychological improvement because *this* is what they consider their real life. The only difference between American Christianity and the American New Age movement is the linguistic furniture. While someone who isn’t especially spiritual may use education or self-knowledge as his means to becoming a better person, a Christian inserts Jesus. Jesus as healer, coming into lives to cure physical ailments; Jesus as provider, bountifully assisting in circumstances out of control whether financial or material; Jesus as life coach, filled with corrective suggestions and positive interjections; Jesus as savior, condescending from heaven to rescue this one; Jesus as the constant listener, waiting patiently until the prayer is worded just right so that he might act on our behalf. For most Christians today, Jesus has become a functional power tool: Jesus is merely the mysterious method towards a better “real life.” And those who have left the Christian religion far behind, they fare little better: Substitute “Jesus” with “Higher Power” or “Positive Thinking” and the American pragmatist religion is preserved intact.

But the modern age is hardly unique in this problem. In Christian sacred Scripture, the collection of writings known as the New Testament chronicle of this issue. Then too, believers had families and situations and jobs that all comprised “the practical matters of life”. How did Jesus’ original initiates, the first apostles, encourage everyday people to interact with these situations? What solutions for their problems did these apostles give them?

The first literature that the earliest Christ-followers produced are the letters that the apostle Paul wrote. For the most part they are addressed to small spiritual communities in crisis facing large practical situations that demanded real answers. Now, we know that Paul was a realist in many ways. He was a flint-faced pragmatist who addressed practical concerns in all the churches he worked with. But I would question the notion that Paul gave them solutions to their problems. Take for example his letter to the Colossians. Now without going in depth into the story behind this letter, we can safely say that the Colossian church was embroiled in several crises at once. Scholars debate back and forth over the details but everyone agrees that there were certainly problems. Isn’t it interesting that we can’t exactly figure out what those troubles were? Why is that? If I were writing a letter and untying some very daunting knots you can guarantee that by the end of that letter you would know exactly what the problems were and who the trouble makers were. Not so with Paul. Instead he spends the majority of this epistle doing one thing… unveiling the cosmic Christ. He does not come close to naming the so-called Colossian Heresy. Instead he preaches Christ, high and lifted up. Then after doing this he makes a wonderful statement:

> *“Since, therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things which are above,* ***not*** *on the things which are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our real life is revealed then you also will be revealed with Him in glory!”*
>
> ***- Colossians 3:1-4 (emphasis mine)***

It is true, as some argue that we live in the tension of two realms. We are essentially heavenly beings operating on the earth. Earth is a marvelous place generated from the birthing of Creator God, but we’re also facing the fourfold alienation from God, self, others and environment that we discussed earlier. Living within the orbit of a fully-connected heaven on an alienated earth creates

quite a challenge for us to live with and raises many hurtles. However, notice Paul's solution. He does not suggest that Christ-followers take a look at their earthy crisis and figure out a reasonable course to proceed in. He does not lay out the notion that they must get into the issues at hand or that they should carefully examine what exactly was going on. Neither did he persuade them to gain some sort of cross-eyed view of the whole matter; sort of keeping one eye on the spiritual realm and the other eye on the practical. For Paul there was *no* tension. He states in the strongest language available to him that we are to keep our eyes on the things above, where Christ is and, as it turns out, where we are! The exclusive answer given was a blinding view of Christ as Maestro of reality, apprenticing us to conduct ourselves accordingly. In Christ's Light we see the light. Look at all of Paul's letters (traditionally, Romans through Philemon in the New Testament). You will find this attitude mirrored in each one; the ascended Christ as our living and our Real Life. Even in the Corinthian letters and his letters of instruction to Timothy there is an overarching view of Christ presented. In this way alone do we walk the tightrope of our existence: without our feet planted firmly on the ground and our eyes fixed upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the Faith.

So here's a practical suggestion: Why don't we stop all this talk about "dynamic tensions" and the friction of living in two realms… and let's look at the blazing beauty of the Godhead, God-as-fellowship-with-Godself, Father, Son, and Spirit. Our solution is not to become "more practical," but *less* practical; seeking first God's in-breaking realm and trusting that "all these things" will be added to us. When seen from the vantage point of our unfolding divine destiny, God is our Real Life… the Highest Life… our only Life! As we practice a daily and moment-by-moment Godward gaze (again, please see my *The Power of the Eternal Now* for a ton of simple suggestions), we begin to see problems solved, we start to have those solutions, and we at last see real change. *"Christ is my Life, He is the One who lives. He Himself is now the object of my attention. I am riveted to Jesus, I am nothing in myself. I am occupied exclusively with the Son of God."*

Just what… or should I say, just *Who* is your real life? Let that be what we look to in the end… let that be our practical answer… God alone becomes God all-in-all. Of course, I know this is easier said than done.

I'll be honest… over the past year I've had times of discouragement. Maybe

it hasn't seemed that way, but believe me that it is true. I've just been a bit down. Have you? Personally there have been some challenging issues but really the issue has been *others*. I have looked at my life and wondered why there hasn't been as much transformation as I could have hoped for. I've probably looked at other's lives and wondered the same, and I've also begun to critique "how" and "what" we do as people on a journey into our divine destiny. Even though it began in a small way, over time my eyes have grown accustomed to "dim lighting." In other words, I'd gotten used to looking at things through critical eyes, whether at others or myself. Have you?

Several months ago God began to reawaken my heart towards God's Eternal Viewpoint divine destiny again. It was as though I had been looking around at others when the Spirit was saying to me, *"Jeremy, look no further than yourself… how are **you** doing?"* and then later *"Jeremy, don't even look at yourself, just look at Me!"* So I began to turn once again to the Author of my soul before creation. I remembered the words to a song:

> *"When my heart runs dry and there's no song to sing, no Holy melody, no words of love within. I recall the height from which this fragile heart has slipped and I remember You! I will turn again and do that which I used to do. For the love of You I remember You!"*

These words became a constant source of experience and encouragement. This was me… my heart was desperately dry, the melody was gone, so what to do? I turned… doing something that was foreign to both my personality and my spiritual life thus far… I disciplined myself to going before the Fountain of Life, whether I felt like it or not. Gradually my heart began to sing again and I was flooded with a heart of love for something new that I had never seen before in this intensity, the Realm and Reign of God! The King's claim to this Earth and his loving reign in my life began to take a new and special meaning. As my own individual excitement built I saw others, those I minister among around the world, also become excited once more… new hope… new fire… a new passion… a new desire. The Cosmic Christ was being born anew in people's hearts, and what was once faint sparks starting fanning again into flame… praise the Maestro of destiny, for he is a consuming fire!

I am finding that inner lethargy for just a moment produces stagnation… how true when we are called to *"keep step with the Spirit"* and to *"walk in Christ."* Lately I have been struck by the idea that there is a real difference between

“resting in God” and just retreating. It’s easy to think that “waiting on God” means being motionless and waiting for divinity to move and to work and to produce some extravagant supernatural experience that will propel us forward… but there is a distinction between waiting *for* God and waiting *on* God. The Holy Spirit never calls us to wait around in a personal pity party, but rather calls us to a waiting which always produces a *“renewing of strength”* and *“mounting up on wings as eagles, running, and not being weary, walking and not fainting!”* Resting in Christ always will appear outwardly active; running the race with endurance. Resting in Christ as opposed to resting *from* Christ activates a reckless pursuit and a hunger to know God more. *“To have found Him and still be looking for Him is the soul’s paradox of love”* said A.W. Tozer. One brother said that *“if you don’t want to fall, then walk - walk straight and walk fast!”* I think those sentiments are more than just good ideas, they are necessities.

I told someone today that for the last year though the embers of my fire have burned hot, the flame has failed to burn high. As I got to thinking about it I realized that God never asks for embers… embers which stay dormant and hidden… embers which are containable and keepable… rather God compels us to “fan into FLAME” and reminds us that he is a *consuming fire!* Flames cannot be kept in one place long; flames cannot remain hidden; flames cannot be concealed! They must burst forth. *“And we as living sacrifices”…* As one sister said, we are like that burning bush that Moses saw, on fire but inwardly alive.

I think sometimes we are afraid to be “fanned into flame.” I personally have looked down at such fanning in the past. I have scoffed the mountaintop moments as emotionalism. I have sided with the quote I read in Madame Guyon, *“there will come a day when you become seasonless”* - meaning that we will no longer have “wet” moments or “dry” moments in our spiritual path. What I failed to remember was that she also said that until this moment arrives in our life it is actually God’s grace that gives us the seasons of our life. I have begun to understand that though the day of graceful plateaus may appear, until then God has given both mountains and valleys, they are both sourced in Divinity, in my divine destiny. God gives the mountain top visions so that while we are in the valleys we might remember our bearings and where we are going. Imagine, here I have been staving off the mountain top experiences when that was actually exactly what I needed for those low moments that most certainly would come. Interestingly enough while we can prevent the exciting/ high times by refusing to engage and be stirred up, we cannot prevent the depressing/ depleted times - they

will come whether we want them or not. So, rather than fighting those inspiring seasons, we must embrace them and be grateful for them.

I need to be stirred, to be fanned. Do you? Let us allow God to grant that which he will not hesitate to give. God not only wants us to have endurance but also eternally-sourced divine enjoyment. Endurance without enjoyment is simply human effort. We need to learn how to endure all things but also with the peace that passes understanding and the kind of joy that can erupt into praise and singing even in the darkest of dungeons.

Are you discouraged? Is your vision of life and divine guidance looking more spotted and wrinkled than usual? Mine has… it's OK to admit it… but let's not stay there! The minister at a funeral said it well, *"We will never have reason to fear evil if we **keep walking** through the valley of the shadow of death…" (see Psalm 23)* in other words, let's not camp there. Another person said, *"The best way to cure discouragement or qualms is to take a daring plunge of faith."* I believe that.

A quote I read recently says it well:

> *"Too long have we been waiting for one another to begin! The time for the waiting is past! The hour of God has struck! War is declared! In God's Holy Name let us arise and build! "The God of heaven, fights for us', and we for Him. We will not build on the sand, but on the bedrock of Christ, and the gates and minions of hell shall not prevail against us. Should such men as we fear? Before the world, aye, before the sleepy, lukewarm, faithless, namby-pamby Christian world, we will dare to trust our Lord, we will venture our all for Him, we will live and we will die for Him and we will do it with His joy unspeakable singing aloud in our hearts. We will a thousand times sooner die trusting only our God, than live trusting in ourselves. And when we come to this position the battle is already won, and the end of the glorious campaign in sight. We will have the real Holiness of God, not the sickly stuff of talk and dainty words and pretty thoughts; we will have a masculine holiness, one of daring faith and the works of Jesus Christ!" **- CT Studd.***

I think that one of the reasons why faithful people are so discouraged so often is because we are consumed with what I would call *revelation*… or, perhaps alternatively: realizations… but very few understand the certainty of realities. Here is a sharp word of caution: *anything can distract us from our divine destiny*

unfolded in God - including revelation or realizations.

This is illustrated by a clever little story:

In a monastic community the Abbot was absorbed in his studying of various texts and the work of translating or transcribing them. Suddenly there burst into his room a young monk. The young monk was obviously elated about something. His eyes were on fire as he exclaimed "Father, I have had a vision of the Christ!" He continued in his ecstasy that he had witnessed Christ high and lifted up, seated over all things, reigning at the right hand of God. It was very stirring. The old abbot peered at him for some time and then asked quietly "What were you doing when you had this vision?"

"I was weeding in the vegetable garden as I do every day. It was as the noon day sun was at its hottest that I saw the incredible revelation I have just shared with you." Once again he excitedly proclaimed what had been seen. Once again the old abbot peered at him… Then steadily he asked "What state were the weeds left in as you came here?"

The young monk became confused, not understanding the line of questioning that was being thrown at him. He began to suspect that the older man's heart was hardened and he had become calloused to spiritual insight. He angrily erupted on the old man and specifically accused him of lacking spiritual vision at all. With passion he told the Abbot how cold he had obviously become to the things of God. Allowing him to finish the abbot sighed deeply and then said "You may be very right… However, I think it might be best if you went back to finish weeding the garden."

The Abbot continued, "Where were you when you had such revelation of Christ? You were weeding in the garden. Christ did not come to you in the cloister. He did not dawn on you in your cell. He appeared in your mundane task of the day. But Christ's desire was not to interrupt that moment and draw you from it… Rather it was so that you might see how intertwined he himself is with your living and your life. There are many distractions from Christ… But none so great as spiritual vision. It is wonderful to have the things of God. But it is even better to have God himself. Now go… Return to where he came to you… Living and life."

This account helps me understand that even a vision of the spiritual world, or

of God himself, can distract us from the daily and active experience of God. Constantly seeking the next understanding, we neglect the living of the current understanding. Always searching for the new picture of God we fail to complete the present picture we have been given. It is easy to become men and women of revelations and realizations; I have watched it in place after place I travel to. It is modeled in most bookstores' spirituality sections. It's not hard to see. Revelations and realizations are addictive. They feel wonderful. And quite honestly, they're not that hard to attain. But it is another thing to become people of destiny, people of *realities*.

What realities has the Spirit of Life put in *your* life? Do you have a job? Does it seem mundane? Do your chores seem different than pursuing your destiny? They are not. Jesus is remembered as having said that his Abba had been working and that he himself was working. The depths of spiritual wisdom present a God who works for a living! And now through *you* God may work, becoming a co-creator of your mutual divine destiny. Think of this: how else could God be expressed as a plumber, or a carpenter, or a writer, or an inspector, or a salesman, if not through you being one of those things?

God longs to be seen and noticed in the most menial of places. In prisons. In ghettos. Even in extravagant houses. Apply yourself to that work and discover your God anew. Are you married or do you have a partner? Love your spouse. Live for your spouse. Enjoy them. Be selfless with them. Then discover that as they have known your love that you will have known the Spirit of God. Do you have children? Adore them. Sacrifice for them. Pour out your affection and your attention onto them. You will at last experience the Father's own heart as this happens.

God is so simple. We make God complex. But our vision is too shallow and our revelation is too small. Only when God is seen as our living and life is God reality. God's Spirit, your spirit, that portion of God that was marked off and sealed with your name tagged onto it, has been circling this universe a very long time, waiting to be born into your ordinary existence, experience life through your hands, encounter the trials and tribulations as your incarnation.



Chapter 7:



THE LIFE OF A SEED

Everyman has his own destiny:
The only imperative is to
follow it, to accept it, no matter where it leads him.

~ *Henry Miller*



"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and **known (Yada- To know intimately) me**."

Psalms 139:1



Chapter 7

THE LIFE OF A SEED

I'd like to go back to that startling revelation that God unveils in and to the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah: *"Before you were in your mother's womb, I **knew** you."* Now, recall, that word knew means intimacy. We need to understand that. We need to comprehend that this kind of knowing is like when a man knows a woman, as in when Adam *knew* Eve. It's when something is traded, given, imparted to. There is an impregnation that occurs. Stop, right here.

You were known by God.

You were intimate with God.

God impregnated you somehow.

God gave you something.

God imparted something to and through you before you were ever physically conceived - even while you were in your mother's womb, He lowered you down to the earth realm, and placed you as a seed – *"for unless a seed dies and falls to the ground, it cannot live again."*

Have you ever considered the significance of being a seed? Perhaps not - but there is a phenomenal, breath taking significance to this little reality. It reminds me of a lovely store I often enjoy sharing:

There was a woman who dreamed she died and went to heaven–which was in the shape of a great supermarket with God behind the counter.

"What are you selling?" she carefully asked God.

"Your heart's desires," said God.

She couldn't believe what she was hearing, and so the woman worked up the nerve to ask for the very best things that a person might hope for. "I deeply desire peace of mind, and health, and happiness… and love… and faith… and goodness" Then realizing that these might be mostly centered on her she quickly added more altruistic desires, "Also – I have long desired an organization that might do some good for others. Some sort of justice mission. Perhaps a brilliant institution who spreads care to orphans and widows in disenfranchised countries…" Then with a final bit of gusto she said, "Oh, and freedom from fear!

Not only for me, but for everyone."

God began to chuckle. And the woman scowled. "What?! Why are you laughing at me."

God smiled, "Oh my dear I think you've got me all wrong. This isn't a fruit stand… we don't sell fruits here. Only seeds. We're handing out seeds."

There are two things here. The first is that God uses small starts, baby steps, tiny fragments of being. This is certainly what is present before there is anything. Do not imagine that what is fashioned and known before the foundations of the world is somehow a well developed, fully grown man or woman. No. It is a whisper, a trace, a hint, a possibility, a seed. That is how God works. And I feel that this makes it far more real just in knowing this.

But the second thing that this lovely story hints at is that this small, undeveloped, promise of a seed houses something very grand. In fact all of God's purposes rest in it. The entire eternal purpose of God is at home in an inkling, a fraction, a portion. The whole is at home in the part. Once again, we must merely throw up our hands and affirm, "This is simply how God works." We may not understand it, or be entirely comfortable with it, but we can be confident that when God fashioned you - just the promise of a potential - all of his lofty purpose was all fashioned and housed within you also.

The seed that God planted in your mother's womb, (you), has since grown, hasn't it? You are no longer a toddling, burbling, bubbling baby. You are not an infant in arms. You are developed, matured. You have taken shape. And as you have grown, you are beginning to awaken to something, aren't you? Yes. You are starting to discover that high and lofty destiny that God placed inside of you before time began.

There in the uncreated realm of God's person - before the universe had yet been sung into existence the Godhead made a decision - and out of this terrible, awesome, and altogether impacting decision a you and I came into existence. Paul speaks of the outcome of this meeting between Father, Son, and Spirit in his beautiful letter to the Ephesians:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he marked us off in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his

sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

Think of this for just one moment. Think what Paul is claiming. He is suggesting exactly what I have mentioned above - that portions of God's own life, something very special in God himself, were sectioned (or marked) off for a high and lofty destiny - a destiny which was absolutely unique and set apart or holy! And all of this rather incredible, indescribable mysterious chain of events culminate not in annoyance or utilitarian emotionlessness - but rather they were executed in absolute ardor, in love! No wonder people hated Paul. Having this in mind will put the religious out of business. Imagine - being purposed in love, and not rules and regulations. That quite a start isn't it?

It is easy to be speculative about all this. Theology gets heady very quickly In all honesty it isn't that difficult to relegate these truths to some sort of abstract notion. But think of yourself. Imagine yourself, just as you know that you are. Just as you believe yourself to be. With all of your flaws and strengths, victories and failures, warts and wonders. Then recall that the text says "He chose us." Not an abstract idea, but rather "us," as the totality of who we are. Located squarely in that little seed was the whole of God's purpose and all of who you and I would one day become. An identity - your identity - was known to God before anything.

I enjoy saying to people that we hung out with God for eternity before creation. Some people get legitimately scared at that kind of revelation. But here's the truth - you were there with God, as a seed, as a marked off, chosen, and holy portion before the world was born. That's why I say you're a spirit having a human experience. We are not humans having spiritual experiences as we so often imagine. We are spirits having the experience of being human. The true you is not only human - it is even more than that. That is the faithful world view. Reality as what we can taste and touch and see and handle - and more besides. In this case you can see and touch my humanity - but I am much more than this. I am also spirit. A human is born. A human dies. But as spirit, as the very life of God, as that which is out of God, we have always existed and we will, in some form, always exist. Spirit cannot die because spirit has neither beginning nor ending.

This is demonstrated in the Hebrew understanding of the ancient priest Melchizedek. The rabbis of old believed that Melchizedek was a spirit

descended from the Throne of Grace who came down, or materialized, and appeared to Abraham. The Scriptures make it clear that Abraham gave a tenth of all he had to the priesthood of Melchizedek. And the Bible goes on to say that Melchizedek had neither mother nor father, because he was not manifested in a natural body. Similarly we say, along with the apostles, that Jesus was clothed in a natural body. The Word was made flesh. It was as if a flesh garment, an earth suit, was made for the Son of God. The Word was lowered into the earthly and material realm and Jesus was given a fleshly body, making his dwelling place among the nations of men. This earthy incarnation becomes the hypocenter by which the peoples of the earth experience their consciousness shift.

Let us recall that we are told that Christ is the first born of many brethren. Knowing that Christ is our foundation and example, what can we learn? We see him lowered from heavenly places as an eternally pre-existent spirit, descended into embodiment, and accomplishing his mission in the earth realm. Look at Christ. Then look in the mirror. This same type of work is what God is doing in and through you. You are of the same stuff as Christ. Spirit of His Spirit. Kind of His Kind. Marked off, fashioned, from before the foundations of the world and appointed for this very hour.

We can discern a pattern and order that Jesus has set into motion. We will never come before him; *he* is the firstborn and son among sons, but we follow after his pattern as we participate in his likeness. We follow the pattern and protocol of Melchizedek, who is a high priestly prefiguring of Christ, who descended and ascended. Jesus' pattern is after Melchizedek [*Hebrews*], and we follow in hot pursuit.

At this moment, we need to pause because, God choosing you, marking you out in Himself, for Himself, for a high and lofty purpose, isn't all that happened before the foundations of the universe.

In Amos 9:9 God says something fascinating, *"I will give the command and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken, and not a pebble will reach the ground."* At first this looks merely like figurative language - a kind of metaphoric way of talking. But recalling the words of Jesus in John 12:24, "*Except a corn of wheat fall* ***into the ground*** *and die..."* You can take this even further by saying the ground is, "*the earth realm,"* (as opposed to the heavenly realm). What this is saying is that the passage isn't only talking about dirt. It isn't only that kind of earth. It's the realm of earth. It's the natural

sphere in question. Bringing that understanding back to Amos we can see that the ground being discussed is actually the entire realm of earth. God is saying that people are being and have been shaken outside of the natural sphere, in the heavenlies - in the eternals, outside of time and space. his was not a sifting going on within time and space, it was a sifting going on within the heavenly realms!

The passage continues

> *"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit."*
>
> ***(Amos 9:13-14).***

God is saying *"Look. I will sift the house of Israel like grain is sifted – yet not one of them shall fall to the earth realm."* This is the pattern of God - everything that occurs in the natural has already occurred in the eternal. The temporal is merely a display for what God has always been doing. In this case a sifting that went on before we were ever in our mother's womb. This sifting did not take place on natural earth; not one grain (or spirit) fell to the earth realm. You have been processed by the time you came to the earth realm. And this sifting was not a rough handling - again all of it was done in love.

The life of a seed, of God developing something slowly and beautifully, begins in eternity - and that is where it also ends. Scripture tells us that we were crucified with Christ. It also says that the Lamb of God was slain BEFORE the foundations of the world was laid. This means that we have experienced his life changing power, the breaking of the outer shell and the release of the inner spirit - all before we started the journey. Isn't that incredible? Not only were we called, chosen, marked out, and given a high and lofty destiny - but we were also sifted in such a way as to produce the power of God operant in our lives. Perhaps what I mean is best housed in a story:

There was a great oak tree that stood on the bank of a mighty river. It had been there for perhaps hundreds of years, tall and strong. At its base there was a little colony of acorns that had accumulated. In fact they were quite developed for acorns. They had acorn schools and universities, they had acorn temples, mosques, synagogues and churches. The acorn colony proudly segmented its

population into workers, educators, home makers, law enforcers, etc… They had quite the effective society. Still the haunting question continued to arise with more and more frequency - is there more than this? Are we missing something? Or what is our purpose? No matter how many positive implements the acorns put into their day to day living there was the unmistakable sense that there could be more to the picture than met the eye. Great acorn philosophers and prophets arose from time to time to say that in actuality there was a whole other world that was being missed. But the leaders of the acorn society always put them in their place and suggested that the community go on about their business, paying no mind to the troubling words.

Then one day a shout was heard from above the colony. The whole group looked up to see one little acorn falling to the ground. Once landed he picked himself up. He was disheveled and didn't look entirely kempt. He had sprouts instead of the well adjusted cap on his. All in all he appeared entirely too wild to fit into the high society of the acorn kingdom. As they crowded around him, he suddenly started to rant and scream, pointing at the tree. He shrieked, "We… Are… That…" Over and over. No one understood. Finally, an elder approached him and was able to slow the cracking young acorn down. "Now, what do you mean? We are that? If we're that," he said pointing at the tree, "Why don't we look anything like that?" The acorn paused and said, "Because we have to be broken!"

This is life of a seed. In order for the reality that is inside of us to come out, we must be broken, or sifted. We will experience it over and over in our life with God. But it isn't new! As I said earlier, you have already been crucified with Christ, already been broken. Your beginning was in the kind of death that leads to life, and can therefore never be touched by death again! If you begin at the end, all you have to look forward to is discovery!

Think of all the things that are true of you - that have always been true of you, because you were enveloped in God before anything! You were fashioned. You were marked off. You were chosen. You were called. You were known - for all your failures, strengths, successes, and faults. You were destined to a mighty purpose. And you were released, through the breaking of your outer shell, to that ultimate intention. What now is stopping you? What hinders you? If God - if even God - is for you… then what can hinder you? Nothing. Neither things in heaven, nor things on earth; things above or things below; powers nor

principalities, angels or demons, people or spirits. For all of this - your entire life was sealed in God, before you were even conceived in the earth realm.



Chapter 8:



BEYOND CATEGORIES

Carefully watch your thoughts, for they become your words. Manage and watch your words, for they will become your actions. Consider and judge your actions, for they have become your habits. Acknowledge and watch your habits, for they shall become your values. Understand and embrace your values, for they become your destiny.

- *Mahatma Gandhi*





Chapter 8

BEYOND CATEGORIES

There's a compelling story about a sage teacher, saintly and aged, who was teaching on the subject of the incredible power of words to shape and form us, both for good and for ill. After he had finished the discourse one man toward the back of the room sharply disagreed with him and argued powerfully that words really didn't have the influence that the guru was saying. As he was speaking the wise teacher interrupted him, and yelled "Sit down you ignorant man!" The contrarian looked appalled and then began to vehemently rebuke the guru, calling him all sorts of names. The guru apologized profusely at the end of this rant and said humbly that he had lost control of himself, that he had truly not meant to silence the man, and that he was ashamed. To which the other man nodded and sat down contritely. At last the guru's face broke into a smile. "You see friend. With a word I created a monster and with another word I silenced the raging beast. How powerful are words -- wouldn't you agree?" The disagreeable disciple had no argument against this.

Do you see the point? Words have incredible power. In our eagerness to categorize the world around us, to apply labels to things, to say "this is this" and "that is that" we are not only identifying realities, we are actually creating them. Words are not only descriptive, they are prescriptive. The world is always birthed through Word. This is immense power. And we see the first man, Adam, being given it early on. Just as God, by the word of his power formed the world, so too Adam is invited to give name -- or meaning -- to God's creations. The animals parading in front of Adam, naming this one a deer and that one a possum, isn't only an endearing children's story. It is actually an incredible insight into god-like capacity that humans have with their words. We become the masters of the things we name and are mastered by them also. The wisdom writer is correct: *"Death and life are the in the power of the tongue."* (Proverbs 18:21a)

There is a ridiculousness to this too, isn't there? I have often thought that there's something silly about the idea that we can "speak something into reality." It goes against common sense -- but it does something else. We are often made slaves to the things we speak or label. This is illustrated in another little story about a farmer whose home and property lay somewhere between Finland and Russia. In those days the surveyors were trying to define the borders of the two

countries and the man found himself approached by both nations asking which one he would rather have his farm a part of. He thought about this for a while before deciding on Finland. When the Russians learned of this they were incensed! How could he choose anything other than their great land they asked? He responded very simply, “I’ve always wanted to live in Mother Russia. You are right it is indeed a mighty country. But to tell the truth, the winters are so cold in Russia, I just can’t imagine living there!”

Ha! Can you think of anything more ludicrous? The man’s land was in the same place regardless of the boundaries or the labels put upon it. But he had so much associated with the name that he couldn’t imagine his farm being in Russia without it also being as cold as his preconceptions. This really does demonstrate something very interesting. Words are not only incredibly powerful, in the sense that we give them great meaning and shaping power in our lives, but they are also often actually meaningless. Now, I know what you are wondering. How does this have anything to do with my divine destiny or discovering God’s great purpose? Here’s the simple truth -- as plain as I can say it: the only limit on God’s loving intentions for you are the boundaries you place upon it, the labels you put on it, the definitions you give it, the belief you have about yourself and what God could want from you.

Humans are always categorizing things. We are always naming things, giving words and meanings. Somehow our labels not only powerfully describe reality, but they also create it; often in ways that have a way of detouring the very work of God in our lives. Consider how we have the tendency to identify God’s working as “good” or “bad.” If it benefits us immediately, monetarily, materially, or in a way we can easily understand and explain, we are likely to say “Thank God for His good gifts.” But if there is pain involved, if there is tragedy, struggle, or loss -- we tend to rebuke, rebut, or rail against the “gift.”

“God take this thorn! I don’t want it anymore! Surely not *every* gift is good, God -- please get this thing away from me!!!!” We judge the quality of God’s dealings with us based on our finite vision. But consider for a moment -- what if Moses had so judged his experience? The forty years he spends on the backside of Sinai, tending to a bunch of goats -- good or bad? Today, we know that this experience was crucial to the preparation of God’s messenger. What about Joseph? The devastating results of someone else’s poor choices sat heavily on his shoulders, didn’t it? Slavery. Prison. Abuse. On and on. Yet -- we see that it

was for God's great purpose, wasn't it? The truth is that we have almost no clue what God is shaping in our lives for our good and His glory. Our capacity for vision is limited. We go about calling bad things "good" and good things "bad" all the time, and we get it wrong every time. Now, here's the secret. This is just the old fallen life operating at its most broken.

In the garden paradise of Eden there were two trees. One of Life and the other of knowledge of good and evil. Think about that second tree for a moment. What defines it? Why, definition itself! Knowing good and knowing evil. Identifying *this* and distinguishing it from *that*. Labeling one thing thus and another thing as contrary to it. While this "fruit" has the appearance of God's life, which discerns all things and knows all things, while it looks as though it will make us wise, it actually has the polar opposite effect. Judging and labeling always do. Saying something is evil doesn't mean God doesn't use it to work his incredible purpose into our lives. Just like saying something is grace-filled and God-drenched doesn't actually mean that it is so. The real proof is in God's use of such events and items. How does he utilize these realities in our life?

Let me illustrate very easily. Several years ago friends of mine bought a house that seemed perfectly fine. But to them it wasn't a home. It may have fit a lot of people's needs, but not theirs. So they set about knocking out walls, and extending rooms, and tore out the cabinets that I had thought were great and good, on and on, until the house was exactly as they had envisioned it in the completion held in their mind's eye. This helped me understand that something isn't good unless it's of use. We are quick to judge something based on our subjective view, and that judgment operates in such a way to limit how we interact with that thing. But God looks at things in a very different light -- he looks at things in terms of his Life… is this according to his purpose, does it produce life? This is why it is the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil -- compartmentalization, categories, and calling things as we see it in the temporal, versus the Tree of Life. God always wanted us to eat of that tree. To God there are no categories. There is only the divine pulsating Life, washing and working, willing us towards himself.

I'd like to go a step further by talking about one of the most basic categories our mind associates us with: gender. Now, gender is basic, isn't it? I'm going to argue that it's not as simple as we might initially judge. And if we can't label something as "basic" as gender, in a spiritual vision of God's working, then we'd

better not even attempt to label or categorize all the other glorious things that eye has not seen, nor mind conceived, that God has prepared for those who are *called according to his purpose.*

As you begin to read and understand, the Scripture makes it very plain, in John 1:12 it says: *"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name – which were not born of blood nor the will of flesh or the will of man, but of God."* According to this Scripture, the real you - the essence of you - the spirit that you were birthed with in heavenly places -- contains no gender. Consider the following Scriptural wisdom in light of this – let its truth surprise you afresh:

> *"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free,* ***nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*** *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*
>
> ***(Galatians 3:26-29, NIV, emphasis mine.)***

"In Christ" – which is to say, in that consciousness where we recognize the anointing of God to be ever-present, the All in all - there is only complete equality. Why? Because you have awakened to the fact and the reality of the Kingdom, reign, or New Creation ecology of God: In your essence, you are not male and are not female. When you begin to awaken to the fact that you are spirit having a human experience, then you're qualified and redefined as a *son of God* transcending mere earthly judgments of gender according to what the Scripture says.

The teachings of Jesus, echoed by the early church fathers, are very clear. They say over and over that "we" (all of us) have been made "sons of God." Augustine of Hippo pictured God telling him *"I am the food of grown men, grow, and thou shalt feed upon Me, nor shalt thou convert Me, like the food of thy flesh, into thee, but thou shalt be converted into Me."*

Clement of Alexandria spoke the revolutionary truth even more boldly: *"Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal. 'I', said He, 'have said that ye are gods, and all sons of the Highest."*[1]

Adopted as sons. Given a spirit of sonship. With our ultimate destiny to be

one with God, as Jesus prayed, *"that they may all be one; even as You, Father, **are** in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us."* (John 17:21a, NASB.) On and on, the Scriptures and early Christian leaders lay this reality on us. This includes women. Once I turned to a young and beautiful sister and Christ and said, "Praise God! He's adopted you as his son!" We may balk at this, but that is what the revelation of God's Word tells us.

But there's more! The whole of the New Testament is addressed to a *Person*. The gospels are written for her benefit, the epistles are literally written to her, and the book of Revelation is given as an edification to her; she even has the last word in the Bible. Who is this woman? She is the church, the Bride of Christ.

Now, what is my point here? My point is that in as much as we have been made to be sons, we have also been brought into a beautiful woman, the Bride - the very wife of God. In other words - all the categories are being blown away. We have sisters in Christ identified as sons, and brothers in Christ called out to be a member of the Ekklesia, the Bride, a woman. When we dwell on these things, there's something that must stand out to us - God has done away with the traditional boxes we put things in. Down to the most basic way of identifying our selves - gender. He's done away with all of our definitions.

Because you have been made aware of this fact, we have reason to pause. We say: "Wait a minute. The origin of where I started was not after the will of flesh and blood, it was God. I am neither male nor female now; I have awakened to the fact that I'm in Christ." Think about it: You were in Christ before the foundation of the world, the Bible says. And even more, Jesus died before the foundation of the world! *(See Revelation 13:8 and 1 Peter 1:19-20)*

Therefore, you've always been in Christ – do you hear what I'm saying? You were in Christ before you came into the earth realm; that's why he died before creation, before the foundation of the world. This "in Christ" reality exists deep in your DNA, in your primordial memory. When you enter into the earth realm, though, it's like you pass through a veil of amnesia – you have to reawaken to what's truest about you, and accept Christ in your waking life – accept the truth of who you really are.

When Bishop Augustine of Hippo would lead his fourth-century North African spiritual apprentices through an intensive three-year period of soul-searching, inner wrestling, purification, and Baptism, he would then personally

serve these new followers of God in the Way of Jesus their first Holy Communion. This is what he said to them:

> *"You are Christ's body and members, it is your own mystery that lies here upon the table of the Lord, and it is your own mystery you receive… it is what you are yourselves."*

In that same era, the fourth-century Eastern Christian poet Ephrem the Syrian proclaimed:

Christ's body has been newly mingled with our bodies,

His Blood too has been poured out into our veins,
His voice is in our ears,
His brightness in our eyes.
In His compassion the whole of Him has been mingled in with the whole of us.

You must wake up! You have to get your bearings. It's about remembering your divine origin! You reawaken not to a separated, limited identity but to something much more glorious. Because you were one with Christ before the foundations of the world, you have reawakened to *his* identity as The Son of Man and The Son of God. From an earthly vantage point, when you were born you became the daughter of humanity or the son of humanity. But -- do you hear what I'm saying? The spirit of Jesus, the anointing – the Christ, if you will – is neither male nor female in essence. You are not bone of bone and flesh of flesh. You are spirit of God's Spirit. Essence of Christ's Essence. The limiting, divisive categories have been destroyed!

This is a very difficult concept to grasp, because every time we look in a mirror we are reminded of our gender. But let's consider the incarnation of Jesus. He came as a man. And while he was in his earth suit, that's how others encountered him. Even Jesus' own mother at one point confuses his earthly father, Joseph, as being his real father, when he was twelve years old:

> *Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.*

When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ***(Luke 2:41-49, NIV)***

Jesus' response here is a correction. His business is not one of the flesh, it is one of the spirit. His father isn't merely flesh and blood, he's God the Father. Now, Jesus was the firstborn among many brethren, because he was spirit, not female nor male, those brethren must be the same as him. He was spirit; he was the son of God. When he became lowered into the earth realm, he became the son of man. That's why he had two titles. He held them both in tension and responded to both. For Jesus, reality was not only what could be seen - it was also what could not be seen. This is true for us as well. You see, we're sons of God, and *we're* also sons of humanity. As Jesus was, we are. He's the uniquely-begotten child of God; we are children – under The Child!

What's our problem? At birth we arrive in the earth realm, and because we're walking around asleep, with amnesia toward our true identity, we think of ourselves solely as children of humanity, bound exclusively to dirt and dust. But when we say 'yes' to Christ's action and revelation in our lives, we begin to awaken and realize "Wait a minute! I *am* a child of God, because the real me is a spirit having a human experience!" Therefore, your spirit becomes on fire, and the embers of your spirit become ablaze, because you begin to remember your extensive eternal prehistory with God as a spirit before you ever entered your mother's womb.

This is *remembrance* in its purest sense. What does the conjunctive word 're' mean? It means to go back to a set of origin. Therefore there's always been a new thing; that's why Scripture says have your mind 'RE'newed, taken back it its origin, the perfected state it was once in. That's very common; a child knows this. It's elementary teaching. 'Re' entails a trip back to the state of our origins. When we remember our identities, we are awakening to our essence, in the

ministry reconciliation – reconciling back to our original state.

There's a practical element to this discussion. I go to many churches where the men sit, bibles on their lap, spectacles firmly attached, hands raised in the air, bobbing their heads and saying "Amen." They collect the offerings, they run the Bible studies, they administer the bread and the cup, they do the preaching, and they greet you on your way in to sanctuary. Men. Men. Men. And what about their dear spouses? Tending to their infants in the back room. Or, preparing the casserole for the after church potluck. Or leading children's church. Why? Why this segregation? Overwhelmingly what is cited is "gender." The role of the woman. The "god-given" function of womanhood. I understand there are several verses that speak to this, (of course there are more passages which say overtly *"Go and sell **everything** if you wish to follow Jesus."* That's why they make hi-lighters - to underline the things we benefit from and disregard the things we don't) - however, in the overwhelming light of God's story, the whole of Scripture, we see the truth. Sisters - take your high place in God's kingdom! Don't let anyone limit God's purpose in your life! I don't know if you have been called to be a pastor, or a teacher, or an elder - but I dare not limit what God does, because God does not use the categories that we do. Those are our hang ups. Not God's. God is a boundary breaking God. If we are living by his life we will find ourselves loosed from the oppression of such arbitrary labels. Of course, we'll find an abundance of them if we are adhering to fallen life, eating from the Tree of Knowledge - the Tree of Labeling and categorizing. This is ultimately revealed at the apex of New Testament understanding through the apostle Paul who strips away the veil and says point blank: *"There is no longer male nor female, barbarian or Greek, slave or free, but we have been made one in Christ!"*

This is explosive! Think of the compartments that Paul is blowing up with these words. Gender, yes. But also cultural identity. It's gone. There's not a racial marker any more in Christ. Can you imagine what kind of difference this revelation would have made in Rwanda? No more Tutsi. Nor more Hutu. Just Christ! Christ as my all and Christ as our only Life! No more black, no more white. No more red man or yellow man. It's gone. In fact it has never existed. It's as arbitrary as the man's farm being located in Finland was to how cold the winters would be in Russia. It's been made nonsense! What else? Slave or free. Class has been done away with. Those who have a leg up and those who don't have a leg to stand on - now equals. The one who gives much and the one who

has nothing to give and may only receive - they are now one! All of the ways that we as humans label and box our realities have been exploded in the light of remembering God's kind intention, our divine history from pre-eternity.

I'm telling you something that seems to be common sense – 're'awakening, 're'membering, 're'conciling, 're'newing – God is carrying us back to our origin, beyond categories. Let me give you a parabolic paradigm that helps us see that this is such a large part of God's work: Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son was basically a type and shadow of man coming to earth and descending back to God. The man had left the Father, went down unto the lower-most parts of the earth, leaving his father's house, and he began to forget where he came from, wallowing among the pigs, lost everything he had – almost eating like an animal. And yet David in Psalms says that man at his very best is a beast; he began to be a beast in the earth realm. But! All of the sudden, the prodigal son began to awaken to his descension. He said "Wait a minute! I was once with my Father!" I believe he came to his senses, and began to ascend back to the Father, and what was the Father's response? He gave his son the signet ring, the robe again, and said "Welcome home! My son was lost, and now he's found."

Christ comes to earth; we descend behind him, but unlike him, we forget where we've been – we forget that we've been in the Father always. We forget that, begin to squander our wealth, acting like a bunch of beasts – we forget that we're children of prosperity, and sons of God – we forget that. But then suddenly, the Holy Spirit begins to align life experiences to bring all things back into our remembrance. This is beginning to make sense, isn't it? We too can have a return to our Father's house, as we but wake up and recognize our true identities as children of God!

We are being called to remember the things we knew before. God brings us back to our original state of mind; *Don't you remember who you really are, Prodigal Son?* The Prodigal came back into his right mind and re-entered fellowship with his Father. If you scratch beneath the surface, this deeply wise story by Jesus is not merely about 'back-sliding' from religion and good behavior; the Bible says that we're always in the palm of God's hand, and the footsteps of a righteous man are ordained by God. God knows what you need in your life more than everything. Again He calls nothing "good" and "evil" only useful or useless. He's about the work of renovation. You have to realize that

David in Psalm 23 is never delivered out of the valley – he's equipped with a rod and staff, but through the valley he goes. And it's the Holy Spirit who leads Jesus into the wilderness, *not* the Devil. Jesus says to Peter "It's the Devil's desire to sift you like wheat!" Jesus could have rebuked Satan, but he didn't – he stood by Peter, allowing him to be sifted, because Jesus knew that Peter needed this sifting to get the tares out of the wheat of his life in time for Pentecost. God will allow things to happen when we descend to the earth realm. We go through hard times, where God sends the Holy Spirit to remember all the things we once knew. We awaken to the fact that we were in God before, and we are returning to God now.

Praise God, he has a mission for humanity. God has a mission for spirits to return back to him. We have to be enlightened by God's grace to return from whence we came. Otherwise, we get lost in this life, not seeing the forest for the trees. Even Job's accusers, whether they were bad, demonic, evil, good, sanctified, whatever – Job's accusers even said "We are of yesterday, and our lives are but a vapor." They knew they were of yesterday – not today. They said "We remember what it was like being yesterday." This is part of our awakening. Why? Because a shadow is a shadow of something real. Our present lives are shadows of our eternal existence. Just as Pascal, the famous philosopher, said - we seek happiness today because this is something we once possessed. We seek goodness and beauty and justice because that was our point of origin and today the traces of its presence are all around us, beckoning us to come back.

Now to be absent from the body is to be in the presence of the Lord. In other words, the body of our concepts, our ideas, our words and categories and compartments and labels. When we are whisked away from this fallen form of living, where do we find ourselves? Present with God. In a physical sense where do you think you were when you were absent from your body? Here's the reality. You can come & go from the presence of God because you're awakened to your eternal home. Having had the light of God's revelation break our boundaries we no longer look on time and space as limitations. This is seen in the person of Jesus. Remember the moment when he's facing down the Pharisees and also surrounded by his disciples? They're asking him questions and such, and he responds by saying, "before Abraham was, I AM!" That's present tense! He's standing there in the flesh, and yet has broken through time and space, predating Abraham. He's in this realm and in the Earth Realm. Those who live of divine life, who eat of the right tree are always present with God, outside of Time and

Space. They are always more than what we can see with our eyes.

I want you to remember this one thing: Knowing that you were in God before the foundation of the world, you begin to remember that you have an identity already; you don't suffer from an identity crisis. You already have rivers of living water bubbling up inside of you, all things pertaining to life and godliness. God says "I have given you all things" – it is of greatest importance - the supreme imperative that you remember and wake up. This is the realization that you need to have: "I'm not trying to get my hands on anything, but I'm waking up to the fact that when I was in God before creation, I already had everything" The work of God is lowering you to the earth realm in this same degree of empowerment, anointing, and impartation of intimacy from the Father!

What are you waking up to today? A remembrance of your truest self, your innermost being. The seed of God, not corruptible seed but incorruptible seed! "I was not made of flesh and blood; therefore, no generational curses can ever touch me or harm me. If I was born of the flesh, I'd have every legal right to be affected by doubts and fears and the dismay of temporal insecurity, but I'm not born of the flesh, I'm born from above and so I don't have any right to be affected by these categories. I have the blood of Christ coursing through my veins, the DNA of God is indelibly imprinted upon me!

This is why the Bible says that I suffer, not from a lack of God's intention or divine power, but from lack of knowledge. Slowly though I'm beginning to awaken to these truths, destroying the lack of knowledge within me – I'm awakening to the Mind of Christ I once possessed before the foundation of the world. I'm recognizing that I can accomplish anything in my life I put my hand to, because I have been lowered from the heavenly realms, full of power and faith and victory. Scripture says it was dealt to *every* person a measure of faith, and God's gifts and calling are without repentance. They were not placed there when you were young; they were given to you before you ever came into your mother's womb. By the law of this natural realm, God cannot take them back – they transcend these laws. Your talents and gifts that were in you and in God before you entered earth, came from a supernatural spirit realm. They're subject only to the domain of the Kingdom from which they originated – they're not subject to the domains of this world.

Therefore God says *"My gifts and callings are without repentance, and as long as the earth remains, there will be seed time and harvest"* – God has

already set into motion natural laws; what came to you before you entered this realm will remain in you until you finally return into a the full experience of God. The talents and gifts in you, the Mind of Christ in you, will never submit themselves to the laws of this realm because they came from a higher place.

You need to wake up this hour.



Chapter 9:



AWAKENED TRANSFORMATION

According to His divine power that He has given unto us ALL things that pertain to life and Godliness.

- Peter, The Apostle



"… ..that He (Jesus) might be the firstborn **among many brethren** (us)." Romans 8:29

"As thou hast sent me (Jesus) into the world, even so have I also **sent them into the world.**"
John 17:18



Chapter 9

AWAKENED TRANSFORMATION

As we get in touch with our divine destiny before birth, and truly *wake up* to this birthright, we'll discover that transformation is the natural outgrowth. Just as fruit isn't created by painting a tennis ball red and desperately hoping it takes on the qualities of an apple, so the spiritual fruit of transformation isn't cultivated by focusing on and hoping for fruit. Once you nourish the roots, you are naturally going to bear the fruit. Religion often puts the cart before the horse, but we're going to see how another way is truly possible.

Let's ask ourselves: ***What is transformation?*** (In this chapter, we're going to delve into this material conversation-style. See if you find your own questions in what's in **bold**.)

First, it might be helpful to say what transformation *isn't*.

Have you ever heard the story of the exhausted rabbi who spends years in devoted service to God? He serves and serves for many years, only to reach old age and exclaim in exasperation, *"God, I'm tired of being so poor! I've served You all my life, I've given You all I've got. Now, honestly -- could you just smile upon me in my last years and let me win the lottery?* For six months the rabbi prayed this. Finally, he grew annoyed that nothing had actually happened. "God!" he shouted, *"I can't do this anymore! I'm beginning to suspect that you don't even care. Is this how you treat your servants Now, give me a break. Let me win the lottery!"*

Amazingly the heavens part and a voice thunders from on high, *"You give me a break! Go buy a lottery ticket already!!!"*

In other words: Transformation is miraculous, but it isn't magic.

God won't do for you what you yourself are capable of. Transformation isn't a spiritual high, it isn't a peak experience, and it isn't enlightenment -- at least not as we tend to think of it. Further, I would say that it isn't a curriculum or a course that can be taught, or a secret handshake, or an in-group of so-called initiates, or esoteric "exclusive" knowledge. It's really not any of those things at all, and yet you can find it at home among them as well. The truth is that transformation comfortably wears many different clothes, and doesn't seem to be

terribly offended by their diverse shapes and sizes, or the divergence of colors and cuts. So, there's something really unpredictable about it that we're never quite in control of. *"The Spirit blows like the wind; no man knows where it comes from, or where it is going."* It's beyond us, at the same time as about us.

You still haven't actually answered my question. What is transformation, really?

Transformation is fundamentally a different way of being in this world. The Desert Fathers and Mothers tell of a moment when one of the monks went to see Abbot Joseph, a great friend of God, and he says, *"Abba, as far as I can, I keep my daily prayers. I fast a little. I pray. I meditate. I live in peace and, as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?"*

Then the old man stood up, stretched his hands toward heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire, and he said to him, *"Why not be changed into fire?"*

The point is being changed; and that is what transformation means. Psychologically speaking, your life-center is altogether shifted. The core of your identity has been altered. You are not your own anymore. *"It is no longer I who live… "*

Life-Center. I think I know what that means, but maybe you can explain more?

Sure. There are many theories about how a human being exists and constructs their world. One of the most dynamic of these theories describes each person as a composite of the groups we belong to, the hobbies we enjoy, the things we do, and think, and feel. In this way of understanding life development, these are called the "life-structure." They're essentially what we find valuable. Those things are really different for everyone. Interestingly, we prioritize them into two groups – primary and secondary elements. Primary elements are those things which, if changed would radically alter our entire identity, while secondary are important but maybe not fixed. Of course this that list, and its positioning, is always in flux. A person's job may be relatively important to them – it gets them what they want and helps create viability for all the other things that are truly meaningful, but, if they lost that particular job, it wouldn't be the end of the world. On the other hand, for some people their work is the most essential facet

of who they are in society. It has great significance to them. Change that aspect, and they would seem very different.

So everyone has a different way of measuring what's important to their identity?

That's right. An example of how we access our identity through these life-structures might be hobbies. For some people those hobbies are fairly secondary in terms of importance. It's *just* sailboating, or golfing, or guitar playing. But to another person, that hobby is critical to how they immediately understand themselves. A Tiger Woods wouldn't understand golf as a secondary life structure at all. For him, it's primary. Don't mess with it.

One more thing about these life-structures: the list for secondary elements can be pretty expansive. There's a lot that can fit into these nominally important ways of being. Comparatively speaking though, there are relatively few primary elements to our life structure. Two or three at most. These are truly the pieces to your personhood that are critical to who you think you are. Mostly that can be measured in terms of time. A person's family, a person's job, their religion or race perhaps, their lover, their social status etc… these are the typical contenders for what's of primary importance.

I'm sorry, I feel bad for saying this, but did I miss something? I thought I asked about life-center, and instead you're telling me about life-structures. Are they the same?

Great question. And I apologize for getting to it so slowly; but no: life-structure, with its shifting scales of what may or may not be meaningful at any given time, is different than your life-center. This way of understanding our unfolding human development suggests that at each person's core level is something of an anchor, a holding space. Whether this is innate and we're born with it, or if it's the product of social and environmental conditioning, is up for debate – but there it is: a unique center to your being that is remarkably consistent, no matter how much our life-structures may shift. In fact, the major reason our primary and secondary life-structures shift at all, why people experience a sort of topsy-turviness every so often, is because a dissonance emerges between our most intimate truth, our core, and the activities or events we've given ourselves to. Functioning optimally, our life-center acts as an

internal monitor and dispatch -- sending out signals of what is meaningful, what is of value, what is most critical; what the heart wants. When this is operant and acknowledged, everything else gets weighed against this intuitive messaging.

Interesting. This life-center sounds remarkably similar to the divine destiny we've been discussing – what's eternal.

You've got it! You're not wrong. Life-center is that which existed before we were even born. What's intriguing is that the theory of life-span development is very well regarded. There's been quite a lot of independent research that's gone into this. Our life-centers – whether people acknowledge them as our eternal spirits or not – are real. In a way, this center is the essential piece of yourself. If you strip everything away, who would you be? Largely, this is about identity. If you are not your name, your social status, your family, your job, your religion, your friends, your lover – who are you? And that question is simply endless. It's a bottomless hole. Yet we sense that there is a kernel, no matter how indefinable, that is real and true and constantly at work as we make sense of arranging our lives.

Just a minute ago you mentioned "dissonance…"

Yes – a feeling a being out of sync. When your center and your structures no longer match up. When the construct we closely identify ourselves as being no longer matches what we've been doing, or investing in… That's when we feel the primal disconnect, the dissonance that lets us know that something is off.

It feels like most people I know are experiencing something like that…

Culturally, we know that people are finding it more and more difficult to even access this sense of inner-identity. Clinical depression is record level, general anxiety, phobic disorder -- all of these are on the rise. In fifty years time, the American Psychological Association diagnostic manual has quadrupled in size. So yes, there's a tremendous culture-wide sense of dis-ease that is hanging around in the spiritual atmosphere of our planet. The great poet Kahlil Gibran said it profoundly: *"human beings cannot be happy unless they get in touch with the springs of life in the depth of their souls; however, we choose constant exile from our own home, locked out of our spiritual sanctuary; so we cease to be an authentic person."*

I love that imagery of being locked out from our own home -- that's what you mean when you say we're disconnected from our life-center or divine destiny?

That's right. We keep on shuffling the deck of cards - our secondary and superficial life structures – hoping to come up with something that will satisfy our hunger, but it's all fairly superficial, never really calling into question our deepest, divine sense of self. There's a lovely story that illustrates this incredibly well. A man had lost the keys to his house and was hunkered down sifting through every individual blade of grass, and even dug around in the dirt. His neighbor saw him looking and came over and joined him–both of them now meticulously searching for the lost keys. Finally, in the heat of the sun, exhausted and slightly annoyed, the neighbor asked, "Well, do you remember where you last saw them!?"

Without blinking an eye the man said, "Of course I do… They're in my house!"

We have lost our truest sense of self–our real home. Estranged from this place, we find ourselves searching everywhere around for the point of entry, for the key. We search without, frantically leaving no stone unturned. We even enlist others in our hunt. Community or solidarity is certainly a real and valuable experience–but useless when the parties involved are mutually experiencing a futile search. The blind leading the blind. Outward perfection, intimacy, achievement, individuality, endless data, security, justice, religion, excitement, authority and power, contentment–all become mechanisms by which we continue to miss the point. The key–the thing we most need to find–is not outside the house, or ourselves, it is inside. We continue to search outside for the thing that lies within.

This is pretty amazing stuff -- but how does it relate to our original topic, transformation?

Oh yes! That's right. Here's where the two connect. Go back to that concept of life-structure. For the most part, conventional religion aims at getting onto that chart, so to speak. Let's say you visit a synagogue or mosque or ashram or church – behind the scenes they're hoping that there will be some sort of resonance, and that you'll be willing to identify with their events or understandings to a greater degree. They're hoping that you'll make some space in your vast pantheon of possible life-structure elements, and include them in on

it.

Does it work?

Sure it does. That's how most social engagements operate, whether its church or it's playing hoops with the guys every Saturday. We get interested in something, there's some sort of payoff for us, and so we open up our calendars. It becomes a routine, a commitment, something we can basically count on.

Now for many people this process stops there, at the hobby level. It fills a void, gives them some kind of network, and adds value to their week. They're satisfied, even though – if truth be told – they could survive without it. Essentially, it would be no great loss to their identity if that ended. They would move on.

But for some the draw is great enough, the commission is compelling enough, the belief is strong enough, that this involvement becomes a crucial part of what they want to be about. It's no longer a hobby; it's now a primary structure.

Is that the aim of most religious leaders? To get their folks to understand their faith, or involvement, as a critical or primary life-structure?

Yes, I think so. This isn't a malicious intention, as some atheists paint it. The hope of a minister or spiritual teacher is that the knowledge of God, the experience of community, becomes such a positive reality in someone's life, that it becomes inextricable from how they live their daily lives. I think that's of real value, considering most religions merely put different language to the same truths: surrender, detachment, compassion, and forgiveness. Allowing these things to become central to your basic structure is a beautiful thing. I would suggest that it's far higher than merely flirting with those realities at a secondary, hobby, level.

But, I get the impression that this isn't exactly what you're advocating for, is it?

No, you're correct. While this kind of commitment, and giving, is good – it isn't actually transformation. As I said earlier, transformation is the annihilation of your life-center. A claim has been made upon you. Your core identity is

replaced. You are operating from a different, higher, livingness. The structures may look remarkably the same. Your job may not change, your church, your family life, your status (or it might – radically) – but your essence is altogether new. As one spiritual teacher says: *"Before enlightenment I was depressed -- after enlightenment, I was depressed."* In other words some things may not change that much in an exterior sense. But a dramatic shift has occurred.

Here's what transformation is like: There was a man who had invented the art of making fire. He took his tools and went to a tribe in the northern plains where it was very cold. He taught them how to make fire -- showed them *all* of its uses, they were very interested. They could now cook and keep themselves warm. They were very grateful to him. But before they could express this gratitude to the man, he left them. He wasn't concerned about receiving their well-wishes, just their well-being. He went on to another tribe where he began to show them the value of his invention as well. They were interested there too… but the priests of that land didn't like this too much. They began to notice that he was drawing large crowds and that they were losing their popularity. Their supposedly sacred stories weren't listened to as much. People were, instead, using fire and living rewarding lives in the light of it. So the priests decided to off him. They killed him. Crucified or stoned him. But they were afraid that the people would turn against them, so they (being cunning) did something devious. They had a statue of the man made and mounted it on the main altar of the temple. The instruments the man made for fire were placed there beside the statue as well, and the people were instructed to have a reverence for the statue and the instruments of fire – and they did this for centuries. The worship went on… but the fire didn't.

So, Transformation is the fire?

Yes, it's the spark at the interior level. We make it about so many other things. We become consumed with externalities – with primary and secondary life structures. But true transformation emerges from a different mode of being. Your life-center has been raised. A different life exists in you now that did not before. And we essentially access that through a process of disciplines, little rafts, that taking us towards this inner island, our core – The Fire.

Why not become fire?

What you're talking about is so vital. But I'm feeling overwhelmed. I need a first step. Where does any of this start?

It all begins with desire. That is the most important part of this process. I can talk till I'm blue in the face about living by a different life, operating from a higher consciousness, but you have to want it. I think at a fundamental level – we all hunger for it – because we all crave that balance, the end of dissonance. We want to come to our true home. We sense, instinctually, that there's something more. But the hunger I'm talking about is something even greater – it's more overt. There was a villager who comes to a holy woman and asks her to show him God; he wants to see the Divine face-to-face. The holy woman is silent; she totally ignores him. For six days this does on. Finally the holy woman speaks: *"I can see that you do truly want to know God. Tomorrow, when I go to wash my robes, meet me at the river."* So the villager does this. And as he wades into the waters, the holy woman grabs the poor fellow and holds his head under the water for almost two minutes, during which the villager is recklessly thrashing. When he finally comes up the holy woman asks him why he struggled. The villager replies obviously that it was because he was drowning, he needed air, else he would die. *"When you need God as desperately as you needed air in that moment, then you will find him."*

A disciple, a person who is on the path of transformation, is a desperate person. They are unhinged. They need God – a fellowship with ultimate being of essential self – nothing else will do. That's where you start.

Desire is step one? Ok I get that. But, is there something practical, beyond that?

Yes, and its wrapped up in the adventure of being connected to originating source and eventual destiny of the Universe – nothing less than the unfolding mystery of our preexistence in God. Now, remember the story I mentioned earlier – the keys to the house are actually *inside* the house. In other words, if experience of the ultimate is what you want, then desire is actually the practical tool for access also.

That's seems like circular reasoning to me.

I hear you; it is certainly a paradox. The journey to knowing God, experiencing an exchange in your life-center, where the divine life becomes your

own, is something that cannot be taught; we can, however, make space or clear room for such an encounter. Transformation, experiencing the divine, is not an "it" or a "thing," it is not chance or being in the right place at the right time. Neither is the character of a disciple the product of genetic coding, cultural conditioning, or circumstances – or perhaps better stated it is all those things, and more besides. The knowledge of the holy – being an awakened soul – is just that: a way of being. It can be cultivated; it is a choice, an option. It is an art, developed through authenticity, imagination and experiment; lived out through practice and commitment. Discipleship is about engaging the *event of God*, surrounded by others. It is a space, a community, a set of regular practices, a technology of transformation. It is a place of awakening where a new way of living is embodied. Deep change, core identification with the life of God, is not only possible, it is ultimately practical.

Wow, that sounds incredible. Sign me up.

Where do I go?

Well, that's really a problem in our culture. There aren't many spaces where this can actually occur, where whole-life transformation is thoroughly aimed at and experienced. Our world is a planet largely living with a collective amnesia. We have forgotten our point of origin, our own true identity, and divine destiny in God. One of the byproducts of this is the loss of *schools of divine wisdom*, where deeper ways of knowing are taught, (rather than only higher-information based education). Remember, transformation isn't about knowing more; it's truly about knowing with more of yourself.

Do you want to discover your divine destiny, deep in your bones? Are you willing to take fledgling steps, attempting to recover something precious that was lost? There's much experimentation that needs to occur before we truly have a container that matches the content I'm talking about. It will take a lot of failure and a lot of collective risk to get there. Will you join me? If so, please see carefully, prayerfully consider the exercises that follow for the remainder of this book. Next, more important than consideration, place them into action. And let's find out who we truly are – together.

Father, I speak an awakening to every person listening to this teaching, in the name of Jesus, to wakest thou who sleeps and have slumbered for such

a long time, that they wake up!

Seize it Now! Praying Scripture to REALize Your Divine Destiny

Out of the entire created order, two objects stand out in the universe as uniquely God-breathed; your spirit within you (*Ruah* in the Hebrew, breath; see Genesis 2:7) and the sacred Scriptures.

As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

In each of these lies a precious element – something that is otherworldly, timeless, and with no dimensionality, giving them the quality of being everywhere, and of the same substance, all at once. Most spiritual seekers today have very little awareness of their human spirits, and take nearly no thought at all about combining their spirits with Scripture in the form of prayer. It is truly a lost art, and one I hope to share with you now.

Since God is Spirit *(See John 4:24)*, we may only receive God *in* our spirits. It's like a drop of water hitting a great ocean – how long does it take the latter to receive the former? It's like a thorough and instantaneous reception.

In the pages of Scripture itself, there is quite a bit of reference to being in the spirit or walking in the spirit:

> *"Be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires… If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit."*
>
> ***(Galatians 5:16 and 25, Common English Bible)***

> *"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet…"*
>
> ***(Revelation 1:10)***

But what does being "in the Spirit" really *mean*? Some phrases can become cliché – and thus meaningless – by their overuse, and then fall into disuse. Many spiritual seekers today, to the extent that they consider these matters at all, think being "guided by the Spirit" is just a fancy way of saying "Chin up! Have a good attitude."

While having a positive attitude is important, flowing in the Spirit with *our* spirits is so much more. The human spirit is actually an invisible organ that God

breathed into humanity's inception:

> *"The LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life.*
>
> ***(Genesis 2:7, Common English Bible).***

The spirit of person is a God-receiver, like an antennae tuned to a divine frequency. Our spirit is like a vase for manna, a vessel to be filled with divine Life *(See 2 Timothy 4:22).* Your spirit is the door to the *other realm* where supernatural glory is as everyday as your waking life; this realm, separated from us by mere intention, is the holder of the Light of God:

> *"The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD, that sheds light on one's inmost being."*
>
> ***(Proverbs 20:27).***

By the simple virtue of being alive, you have a spirit:

> "*But the spirit in a person, the Almighty's breath, gives understanding."*
>
> ***(Job 32:8, Common English Bible;***
>
> ***see also Hebrews 4:12-13)***

Your spirit has the ability to step out of space-time and enter into the center of God's own Life in this other realm. In fact only your spirit has this quality of truly touching the divine:

> *"God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth."*
> ***(John 4:24).***

Your mind, emotions, and dispositions alone cannot gain you entrance to the other realm; only the spirit can make this journey *(See John 3:6).* If we did not have a spirit, our entire existence would be meaningless in relationship to God *(See John 6:63);* we are completely dependent on the inward spiritual experience, transcending what we're thinking, feeling, or deciding. *(See Jeremiah 17:9; Galatians 3:24-25, and 2 Corinthians 10:5).* In order for anything of God to be truly handled and entered into, in living experience, it must be seen, co-created, and enacted in the realm of the human spirit because *that* is the address where God has set up residence!

Let these words from Scripture wash over you, speaking directly to your inner being, your human spirit:

"I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my ways… The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. Look! I'm standing at the door and knocking. If any hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to be with them, and will have dinner with them, and they will have dinner with me. So it is also written, The first human, Adam, became a living person, and the last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

(From Ezekiel 36:27a; Romans 8:16; Revelation 3:20; 1 Corinthians 15:45b).

Many religious people read the Bible regularly. However, the conception most have of the Bible is that it is a dusty old tome, a book of doctrines designed to exhaustively tell us what to think and – most importantly – what not to do. According to the Bible itself, though, this is a *misuse* of Scripture! As the Apostle Paul wrote, *"The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."*

In our limited view, we come to the written words of Scripture with the intention of knowing something, much like a taxidermist 'knows' a butterfly or a moose – by killing it and nailing it down! We are looking for answers to questions and solutions to problems. But all of this is centered on our normal mode of discursive consciousness. Most of Christianity approaches Scripture exclusively in the department of thought. There is nothing truly *spiritual* about any of this.

We must not come to the Bible only to learn and to understand. The Bible is not the tree of knowledge *(Genesis 2:9);* it is the tree of life! If we take the Word of God as the tree of knowledge *(2 Corinthians 11:3)*, we misuse the Bible, because the letter kills *(2 Corinthians 3:6).* We must never take the Bible as a book of letters, but as a book of Life *(John 6:63).*

There are two ways to touch the Bible: the outer way and the inner way. The outward way to touch the Bible uses our mind to comprehend what is going on; while the inward way is by using our spirit to touch the supply of the Word of Life *(John 1:1; Hebrews 10:7; John 6:63).*

The Bible is living because it was breathed by the living God *(2 Timothy 3:16).* Our spirit has also been made alive by God *(John 3:6; Ezekiel 36:26; Genesis 1:7)* and can breathe God in. Now our living spirit and the living written word of God may be united! The Scripture which is God breathing out may be received in our spirit by us breathing in. It is as simple as breathing. We can

handle the Scripture in such a way that it is active in the realm of spirit. Something inwardly craves that word *(1 Peter 2:2-3)* of God and we must satisfy this need for nourishment in the inward way *(John 6:35, 57).*

Throughout the centuries, many lovers of God and students of the Bible practiced praying the Scriptures though they probably did not call it that. Some in the past pointed out that we can gain great insight by reading the Bible prayerfully. To read the Bible prayerfully is praying the Scriptures. There are a variety of practical methods that we can employ in handling Scripture spiritually.

First, we should understand that when we come to the Bible in order to receive spiritually, we should ready ourselves. We are getting prepared to read the word of God, not a newspaper or a novel. We must be quieted. The noisiness of the soul (thoughts, sensations, and temperament) must be silenced if we are to enjoy the Lord's presence. Sit still and allow yourself to focus on Him; consent to glimpse only Him. As other thoughts flash through your mind call Him back gently by speaking out, "Lord Jesus!" Rest for several minutes in His presence: adore Him, worship Him, and gaze on Him. Each time you are drawn away by distractions and thoughts once again call out to Him, He is as close as your mouth. Sit like this, allowing the waves of His love to crash around, be mindful only of Him. Then we are in God's fellowship. At that time we are in the spirit and are drinking from the Divine Spirit. Now we may approach the Bible in a pure way.

One way may be called interactive pray-reading, known by ancient wisdom masters as *lectio divina.* This is best utilized in a group setting. As one person reads a passage of Scripture the others continue in spoken prayer. They may call out to God, "Thank you, Beloved," or "I am open to Your revelation." They are interacting with the Bible while praying. This setting will seem quite stirring because there is no real room given for the mind to process or be activated.

Another way that may be familiar is responsive reading. This is also primarily for groups though not exclusively. In this practice one person reads a selected passage; they pause from verse to verse and allow for a moment of silence. This is followed by expressions of gratitude or declarations of truth related to the scripture just read.

One more form is basically personalizing Scripture. Using this method a passage is read subjectively from the individual to the Lord. The words used in

the verses cease to be as important as the direction the Spirit takes the reader along. The Bible becomes a river bed whose banks are inflexible in their guidance, but our words and personalization act as fresh water pouring through the channel of Scripture. In Psalm 23 for instance, the Lord is seen subjectively as *our* shepherd, not just David's. This is a deeply personal and touching way of handling Scripture that becomes meaningful to the individual.

We have seen there are several ways to blend a prayerful spirit and the Scriptures and we should employ as many of them as bring Life. You can pray quietly or loudly. You can pray quickly or slowly. There shouldn't be any restraint placed upon us as we receive the word of God in all prayer and petition *(Ephesians 6:17-18).* Yet in all things we must touch the spirit and not merely our mind, emotions, or will. Thank God that God has given us the ability to drink deeply of divine written Word into our spirit.



Chapter 10:



NAME, BEING, AND ACCESS: CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

We are not creatures of circumstance; we are creators of circumstance.

- Benjamin Disraeli



"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God.**"
John 1:13



Chapter 10

NAME, BEING, AND ACCESS: CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

"What's in a name?" Wouldn't a rose by any other name smell as sweet? Names really have no significance with our culture except in telling us apart from one another. They don't tell anyone about who we are. We generally think of names as unexceptional or accidental. They have no real usefulness. However there is one name that is much more than just a name… the name of the Lord Jesus.

In the Bible the name of someone identifies not only that person *(1 Samuel 25:25, Acts 1:15, Revelation 3:4),* but that person's family and lineage. In biblical times, a person's name could also tell you about their character. In fact, your name and the meaning of your name, defined your very self. A name and a person are "interchangeable" in the Scripture. As this was true for other people, it was certainly most true of the Lord Jesus. He is His name. The name of Jesus is the person of Jesus. So when we speak His name we are literally speaking Him.

The name of Jesus came from the Father. It is the Father's identification of who His Son is *(Philippians 2:9).* There are no limits to the Father, and there are no limits to His Son's precious name. The sick were healed in His name, demons were cast out in His name, and the dead were raised in His name *(Acts 3:6-10, Matthew 10:8, Matt 7:22).* His name is powerful, full of love, grace, and healing.

This is the same Lord we touch just by calling out His name *(Romans 10:12).* We only need to speak his name, and there He is, the same yesterday, today, and forever *(Hebrews 14:8).* We are, as believers, gathered together in His name *(Matthew 18:20),* and in that name have access to His divine presence. His name is the very embodiment of Salvation. He *is* the Savior *(Matthew 1:21, Acts 4:12).*

By knowing God's name, we recognize that we are God's people, we also know that God is the one who speaks if we only have ears to hear – or mouths to speak. We know that God is real *(Isaiah 52:6).* We may call on that name from a place of ruthless trust and be saved *(Romans 10:13).* In fact, we can see that actually no one can acknowledge Jesus as Lord, or even say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit *(1 Corinthians 12:3b).* It is by the utterance of His name, His

matchless name, that every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him Lord *(Philippians 2:10-11, Revelation 5:13).* All of God's action is centered in the Person and therefore in the Name of Jesus!

There are many places in the Old Testament, *(Genesis 4:25-5:2, 12:8, 26:25, Deuteronomy 4:7, Psalm 99:6, Job 12:4, Judges 15:18-19, Joel 2:32, Isaiah 12:3-4, Zechariah 13:9)* and New Testament, *(1 Corinthians 1:2, Romans 10:3-4,12-13, 2 Corinthians 4:13, Hebrews 13:15; 3:1; 4:12-14, John 20:31, Acts 9:14,21, 2 Timothy 2:22)* that refer to ***"calling on the name of the Lord."*** Many Christians think that this really has just the same meaning as simply praying to the Lord. It's true that "calling" is a sort of prayer, but it is actually much more than just praying. We are free to take Scripture at its word. We can trust just what it says plainly in front of us. The Hebrew and Greek words for "call" literally mean: to cry out or to call out. It is not silent, it is audible… It is aloud. When we are "calling on the name of the Lord" we are simply speaking or crying out, "Lord Jesus." It doesn't have to be any more complex than that! We can be full of confidence when it comes to speaking out His precious Name because we are not just saying a hollow word, but rather we are allowing the Spirit to be activated through our mouth. We may each say the name "Lord Jesus" with confidence and know that it is the Spirit coming out of our believing heart.

There is a song that says, *"When you say Lord Jesus, you've said it all!"* This is true because when we release Him as Lord with our mouth there is nothing we can add to it. We can say "Lord Jesus you are Peace," but really it would be just as true if we simply said, "Lord Jesus" because He is peace. It is wrapped up in His person and in His name. We don't have to sit and think about or consider how to say all the things He is because they are situated in the name.

When we call on the Lord we express Him aloud and literally activate Him in any situation. In that moment that we speak out His name He becomes reality to us! We experience His Person as wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption *(1 Corinthians 1:30)* as we simply declare Him "Lord Jesus." While this is always true *of* Him, it becomes true *to* us when we call out for Him. This is much like a light switch. There may be electricity in a room all the time, but in order to have light we must turn on the light switch. We activate the Lord as Light in our midst by simply opening our mouths and flipping the switch. We call out His name! Because the Father has centered everything in Jesus, we now become the recipients of all things of God as we release the name of Jesus.

Calling on the name of Jesus is literally joining the Father in a glorious unity. “Lord Jesus” is God aloud! “Lord Jesus” is God’s presence within the sound of our very voice.

“Call upon His name… Cry out and give a ringing shout!” (Isaiah 12:4,6).

The more we call out His name, the more we cry out and give voice to His Lordship, the more we will be freed from ourselves in that moment. We are freed from our judgments, our personalities, our ego, and we can let them go to turn toward Him. If we connect with Him in the ever present moment, we can disconnect with the attachments that enslave us. We do not have to whisper or to whimper His name. We must cry out! It is not merely the prelude to a time of prayer, it is not only a way of centering oneself on Him, but it may be the very content of the entire prayer.

Imagine doing nothing but saying the name Jesus Christ. By calling out to Him as “Lord Jesus” we may do this to our heart’s content. You might want to try it right at this moment. It’s simple. Just open your mouth and say, “Lord Jesus”… tenderly, gently, lovingly, with reverence, in whatever tone you would speak to a dear friend. You may speak to Him with confidence and joy. In this instant that you are calling on His name, He is overflowing from your spirit and in your expression. Amen!

Calling on the name of the Lord is not a doctrine or a theology… it is simply a practical tool. It is a way of breathing Him in and out. As with anything that is so practical, it really requires practice, and we must try to remain faithful to the practice. In other words: the more we touch Him in this way, the easier and less awkward it will become to us. Just as we must exercise our muscles if we want to grow stronger, we must exercise our spirit and practice calling on His name.

Imagine doing this not just individually but with others in the Lord. Can you imagine being surrounded by others who are each calling out His name aloud? In such a setting there is a sense of being immersed in the waves of His being, of being drowned in who He is. As He is declared Lord from each mouth, we become lost in His presence. All cognitive or rational prayer of our mind is short circuited by the sweetness of His name released among those gathered.

As we call out “Lord Jesus,” we will find that we do not need eloquent words or well put together thoughts… we will simply bask in His spoken presence.



Chapter 11:



WHERE SPIRIT AND SOUL MEET

BODY

The Creator has not given you a longing to do what you have no ability to do.

- Orison S. Marden



"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the **womb of the morning** ***(Aramaic: I have begotten you):*** thou hast the dew of thy youth."
Psalms 110:3

"…which is in the **bosom** ***(Aramaic: lap, womb, inward part)*** of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:18



Chapter 11

WHERE SPIRIT AND SOUL MEET BODY

On the sixth day of creation God fashioned a special being: man *(Genesis 1:26-27).* This creature was unique in the entire universe because he was made in God's image, or the Divine likeness. He was also created to contain God's own Life. Humanity was meant to be a vessel *(Ephesians 5:18b).* Picture a glove. It looks like a hand, but it is also made to contain a hand. This is human-kind. We were designed for a distinctive function and we all contain a divine essence.

God made humanity as a container, a container that has three parts *(1 Thessalonians 5:23).* The first step God took was to create a man out of the dust of the ground *(Genesis 2:7).* This was the body. The body is a part of the physical realm. The body is connected with the earth, deeply rooted in the things of the physical world. We interact with the material world around us through our body: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Our five senses give us information about our environment – without them, it would be incredibly difficult to interact with the world at all! Our body is the part that people see, the part of us that people think of as our "self." It is the outermost part of the human being.

The next step was to breathe into the first man the breath of Life. In the Hebrew language the word "breath" also is translated as "spirit" *(Proverbs 20:27; Zechariah 12:1).* So, the "breath of life" that God breathed into the first man was actually man's spirit. If we could see the human spirit with our eyes it would look very much like a clay jar *(2 Corinthians 4:7).* It is the spirit which is capable of containing God's Life because it was placed into humanity by God. The human spirit is the God breathed vessel for the divine Life. This innermost part of human-kind was made to contact God directly, and if we can silence the chatter of our mind, it was also made to receive directly from God. A person's spirit is a portion of the kingdom of God residing within that person. Because God is Spirit, human-kind was given the ability to correspond with Him in a spiritual way. Humanity has the means to worship God in spirit *(John 4:24).*

The first man "became a living soul" *(Genesis 2:7)* as a result of God breathing a spiritual organ, the human spirit, into his body. In other words, a soul is the outcome of the spirit. In God's order of creation spirit comes before soul.

The spirit was intended to give life to the soul. The spirit was meant to be the source of humanity's living. Humans were designed to be God centered. The soul was formed as the remnant of God's breath, our spirit. So just what is the soul?

The soul is humanity's mental faculty. It is the ability to think, feel, and choose. The human soul comes in contact with the psychological world around him. The soul has three compartments. One of these compartments is emotion *(Deuteronomy 14:26; Song of Songs 1:7, Matthew 26:38).* In our emotions we feel love, desire, hate, joy, and sorrow, and we feel these emotions in our body. Another compartment of the soul is the mind *(Joshua 23:14; Psalms 139:14; Proverbs 19:2).* In the mind we have thoughts, opinions, concepts, rationality, and ideas. The third part of the human soul is the will *(1 Chronicles 22:19; Job 6:7; Job 7:15),* where we make our decisions. All of our sentiments, passions, and feelings spring out of our soul. When we are considering something or thinking through a problem, this is from the soul. And when we choose to do something, we are operating in our soul. The mind, the will, and the emotion are the three parts of the soul. If you evaluate all of these qualities you will be tempted to say: *"This is the sum total of who I am!"* Actually, this is very true in some ways. The soul life is really the center of the human life. It functions as an identity and forms a person's personality, dictating how she interacts with her environment around her. The soul life is the human life.

The first humans were designed by God as tri-part beings. They possessed bodies that could relate to the physical world; souls that could relate to the psychological world; and spirits that could relate to the spiritual world. Each "organ" of a person's being is necessary in order to interact with the world appropriately. Imagine trying to use your sense of hearing in order to smell a rose, or applying your taste buds to distinguish colors. This is ridiculous! You have to use the right sense if you are to experience life fully. This is also true of the tri-part person.

While the soul is the center of human activity, the spirit is the center of Divine activity. God intended that a person's spirit, filled with His own Life, would be the source of living. Therefore God Himself in a person's spirit is the wellspring of that person's very being. The soul, or human life, was meant to be dependent on the spirit, or God's Life. The soul was destined to draw its energy and luminescence from God. Human thoughts, feelings, and dispositions were to

be subservient to God’s abiding existence within. Humanity was not designed to be ruled by opinions or emotions but rather by spiritual experience.

Human-kind was provided with a glorious earthly body. The body is capable of engaging the world at large. We can taste, touch, and smell using the instrument of the body. This shell was made to house two “organs.” The outer organ is the soul. The soul is made up of the mind, the will, and the emotions. It is the basis of human life. The innermost organ, at the very center of a human being is an invisible spirit. The human spirit is the container and communicator of God’s Life. It was made to be filled with divine Life. This is its only function!

We may picture human beings as a sort of radio. A radio has three primary parts: an outer shell, a transmitter or speaker, and a receiver. The outer shell is like the body; the transmitter or speaker is like the soul; and the receiving unit is like the spirit. Each component has a specific function. One is meaningless without the other. However, there is a real order to the radio. The shell is for the speaker and the speaker is for the receiver. The only reason the transmitter piece exists is to express that which has been received.

The body is for the soul and the soul is for the spirit. The only reason the soul exists is to express that which has been received in the spirit. We must see that the soul was always intended to serve the spirit.

God originally intended human beings to be whole creatures. We are whole only when our spirits are the center of our being, when our soul is dependent on the stirrings of Divine Life within us, and when we can be grounded and present in our bodies.



Chapter 12:



WRITE YOUR DESTINY:

KEEPING A JOURNAL

I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam & jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

- *Martin Luther King, Jr.*





Chapter 12

WRITE YOUR DESTINY: KEEPING A JOURNAL

When you find yourself on a journey toward awakening and uncovering your divine purpose, you must stay open to the truth of your heart. Many other voices may try to assault you with their “truths,” but let go of those voices as gently as possible. Try not to form an attachment to them, however seductive they may sound. The easiest way to self-awareness is to get all those thoughts out of your mind and on paper, where you may be able to distinguish more easily between them. It’s an extremely valuable practice that’s helpful to make a priority in your life.

Keep track of your thoughts, reflections, prayers, and day-to-day activities - even the most ordinary day could be something you look to later and find a flash of insight. Devoting energy to a journal is devoting energy to a healthy spiritual life. Writing can serve as an effective way help us weave together our past, present, and future, giving us a better picture of our divine purpose.

As with similar exercises, in journaling, we are free to observe ourselves and explore what we find. When we take the step of laying ourselves bare on the page, that vulnerability will come to our aid in our self-excavation. We can see that we are moving and growing, a being in action, a person full of life.

As a suggestion, let your first piece of writing focus on who you are in God. Let whatever emotions arise as you do this and express them as they come. Any doubts, hurts, lack of clarity, or ideas you wrestle with -- just let them flow from your heart. Those emotions are all a part of the path you are taking.

The remainder of your reflections can come from the other exercises found here.

Make the entry as long or as short as you like or have time for. Don’t be afraid to be creative with your words. This journal can look like whatever you want it to, whatever helps you the most. If you want to try writing a poem, wonderful! If you like to sketch, and would rather put your thoughts into pictures, great! It’s whatever is right for you.

It’s best to keep in mind that you are only writing for yourself and not others.

You want to be as truthful as possible in this log of your pathway to awakening. You're writing about the way you experience yourself, the world around you, and God, so just let your words reflect as much authenticity as possible. In this way, your writing is a spiritual act, a conversation between you and God.

Another helpful writing tidbit: before you begin, it's useful to quiet your mind and let go of all those thoughts running through your head about the day. If you are able to do this, it will be much easier to listen for divine whisperings.



Chapter 13:



ENGAGING WITH THE BREATH OF LIFE: SITTING AND BREATHING

Life is a promise;
Fulfill it.

- Mother Teresa





Chapter 13

ENGAGING WITH THE BREATH OF LIFE: SITTING AND BREATHING

There's only so far that our thoughts can take us, though they can be useful tools. You might not always see much growth come from pouring over the Bible. If we only practiced what the Bible teaches, we'd probably be so active that we'd no longer have time for prolonged studies and reading. We've stored up enough information in our brains that we know what to do.

Many of the spiritual masters recommend calming our minds and quieting the chatter of our thoughts for a few moments so that we can come to a place of inner stillness. It is here in this inner stillness that we can hear and know God.

Once our souls are quiet, we are free to fully engage the present moment and encounter the All in All. This posture invites an experience of oneness with Divine Life. As Madam Jean Guyon the 14th century Catholic mystic said, *"There comes a moment in every believer's life when they must put aside the things of the world for the things of God. Still later we must even put aside the things of God for God, himself."* This is the idea behind quieting our minds and laying in the lap of God.

CONTEMPLATION EXERCISE:

If you can, try to begin your contemplative practice in the morning, or before you get very far along in your day. Otherwise, you can get caught up in your "to-do" list and any worries or anxiety you might be carrying. If you can set an intention of mindfulness before you begin your day, it can help your day flow more smoothly.

Find something in the Bible that is speaking to you, in this moment, this specific juncture in your life. Connect with it from your center, reading it several times to allow it to sink into your spirit. It is sometimes powerful to read aloud. Sink into the words; let their waves wash over you.

You can also bring your awareness to things other than Scripture. There are so many things that can remind us of God. His beautiful and wondrous creation is an endless source for meditation. When you see a fellow human being acting in a compassionate, kind, or graceful way - this can be a catalyst for reflecting upon the person of God. God can even be found in the midst of a large crowd or

while you’re stuck in traffic. All it takes is a willingness to always be on the lookout for the Divine.

CONTEMPLATION EXERCISE:

Sit still in a chair with your back straight and your feet firmly planted on the floor for ten minutes. Let your spirit speak to your soul about your divine purpose, as it was known to God before time began. Record all that arises within you.



Chapter 14:



LAYERED AWARENESS

Lord, ***thou hast been***
our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were
brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the
earth and the world, even from everlasting to
everlasting, thou art God.

Psalms 90:1-2





Chapter 14

LAYERED AWARENESS

The things you think, even right now as you read these words, are only a piece of what you have inside of you. Underneath the conscious layer of yourself, there is the unconscious. Here is where your personality can be found, that which your ego has conditioned you to believe is your true self. We don't often question unconscious motivations for our behavior. We rarely stop to wonder why we respond a certain way in certain situations. We just think, "this is who I am." Occasionally, we can catch a glimpse of our true self, or our divine essence, but that glimpse can be easily lost in the midst of all we have going on around and within us.

The idea of the inner observer is an old one, with roots in the biblical story. We are one with the Lord in his Spirit, and it is by his Spirit that we are able to witness our own. When God observes us, God sees the Son because we are in him. Redeemed. Sanctified. Holy. So, when we begin the practice of developing our inner witness, and we see through the Spirit of the Lord, we can start to see ourselves as God does. Many of the traps of our unconscious will start to fade away because the ego won't need to keep building such strong defenses around your personhood. Then you will be more fully able to live from your divine essence, that which is of God.

Cultivating your inner witness simply means to observe without judgment, critique, or evaluation. The inner witness is only there to pay close attention to what is going on within you. For example, imagine you had a rough day at work. On your way home, you decide to indulge in a milkshake, even though you've committed to a healthy diet and weight loss. By the time you get home, you're calling yourself fat and telling yourself that you'll never succeed. The inner witness might then observe: She had a milkshake and then she began to put herself down.

Seems a bit awkward to refer to yourself in the third person, I know. However, this practice can be very powerful. It reminds us that we are, at our core, so much bigger than our actions or even the unconscious motives behind them.

Try it on for size for a little while. Begin allowing the Spirit of God to flow into your spirit and listen to what God's spirit knows about you. It's a good

rhythm to fall into throughout the day. Examine your thoughts as they come to light. Be mindful of your actions in the present moment. And the most important aspect of this: do not judge. Only God can do this, right? Attempt to let go of the desire to categorize, critique, or condemn your thoughts, actions, or motivations. Just see, listen, and accept.

ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE DESTINY

Jesus told us that he didn't give in the same way that the world did. I find this fascinating because giving and receiving are really just two sides of the same coin. Everything we own, each material object, from our car, to our house, and our clothes, does not have any value except that which we've assigned to it. The difference between having nothing and having something grand is actually very little, when you think of it from a material point of view. If two women happen to be holding two dirty and wrinkled pieces of paper, they will look as though they are in similar situations. And they would be. There's not much difference between the two. But, what if one of those pieces of paper is a twenty dollar bill and the other is a used dinner napkin. Is there a difference now? Not really, it's just that we've all agreed to call the money valuable and the napkin trash.

In a sense Paul knew this when he said he knows how to be abased and how to abound. Emptiness and fullness are just different sides of the same state of being, if you're living in the now. At the core level we own nothing and we own everything.

Think about a time when you gave something away. Oftentimes, we give, wanting the received to know and understand the value of what we've just given them. We want them to think us generous and magnanimous. We might also wish that when it is our turn to receive, this person will remember our gift and give us something of similar value in return. It's hard to give without strings attached. It's difficult to give out of our center, the place that is full of openness and compassion. We approach the world around us in the same way that we give. It's simply an extension of our perspective of the world. When we move from a place of freedom and grounded love where we share our oneness with Christ, and indeed all the universe, then we are able to simply be vessels. We are vessels of the love of God.

Try out some of the exercises below. To get your feet wet, do one that will come easily and naturally to you. And then, if you want to take on a stretch, pick one that you know might be a little harder to do. Reflect on the difference you

experience. Remember, the point is not to do it the "right" way, but rather to bring yourself into a place of awareness of what is happening in the present moment.

INNER FREEDOM, OUTER FREEDOM: GIVING EXERCISES

1. Call to mind this verse: *"If you have two coats give one away."* If you have more than one of something, give away the extras.
2. Give something not of value to you, and something of great value.
3. Give away something you've been complimented on.
4. Create a gift to give away.
5. Give to a stranger and an enemy.
6. Give to children.
7. Bless someone with your listening ear, giving them your time and attention.
8. Sell away your possessions and give the money to the poor.
9. Secretly give a gift to someone.
10. Be grateful for, and give back to your parents, who gave you so much - life.

RECEIVING EXERCISES

1. Think about the gifts you've recently received. Be mindful to how you reacted to them.
2. The next time someone gives you something, express your gratitude only with your eyes.
3. Only eat when someone offers you food, but don't tell them you're waiting for their offer!
4. In need? Instead of talking about it with others, only talk about it with God.

BODY SENSATION AWARENESS

The goal of awareness isn't enlightenment; the "reward" is simply awareness. In these upcoming exercises, don't look for huge insights or deep revelations. Preferably, try *not* to try at all! The point is to witness. Sit back and relax. Watch. Observe everything you can. Feel your shoulders tense or how you have tightened your jaw. Be aware of the ideas that float across your mind. This may feel like a waste of time and you might think of how you are bored or start thinking of what you need to do next. Allow yourself to view YOU through the observation of the Spirit. The Spirit is in your spirit, soul, and body.

The following exercise is specifically designed to get a person to “lose their mind and find their senses” as the famous psychologist Fritz Perls was fond of saying. As we’ve said earlier, many of us are in the habit of living in our heads. We spend so much of our day fantasizing, imagining, conjecturing, worrying, stressing, and judging!

We spend quite a small amount of time being present in our bodies and aware of how we are feeling in the actual present moment. Then we are not living where the I AM of God is found. We are so rarely bring our attention fully to the moment and we are frequently in the past with its regrets and mistakes, or in the future with its anticipations or anxieties.

While I believe we must learn from the past and plan sufficiently for the future, connection with God is always in the present moment. *“To succeed in prayer it is essential to develop the ability to make contact with the present and to stay there.”*[2]

In the end, the best way to fall into the holiness of the present moment is to leave the sanctuary of our thoughts and enter the sanctuary of our bodies.

BODY EXERCISE

Relax. Close your eyes. In these next few minutes try and become aware of how your body is feeling. It’s amazing that we are not normally really aware of the sensations of our own bodies. Try and feel them, sensing your aches and pains, perhaps your soreness or tension. Now turn your focus toward how your clothes feel against your body. Are they tight? Loose? What does the material feel like against your skin? Soft? Scratchy? Do you feel it at all? Think of your feet next. How are they positioned? Do they feel cramped or crowded or crushed? Are they cold or are they sweating? If you’re wearing shoes or socks, do these feel constricting? How do they feel against your feet’s skin? Now observe how you are sitting. What is your posture? Shoulders pulled back, or are your shoulders rounded and slouching? Are you sitting upright or slumped into your seat? Feel the weight of your body as gravity pushes it downward toward the floor.

Then starting from the very top of your head, try to feel the way your hair falls from your crown. Turn your awareness to your face next -- relax your forehead, your cheeks, and your eyelids. Become fully aware of your ears, chin, and mouth. Going down your body, take note of your shoulders -- what they are

doing and how they feel. Apply all of your consciousness to your right arm, then to your left, then on to your hands and into your fingers. Travel further down the length of your body. Feel your back, your stomach, your thighs, calves, feet and toes. Repeat this whole exercise several times.

During this exercise truly allow yourself to know the sensations of your body. Stay out of your head; don't just imagine what they feel like. Actually feel it! Be as present to your body as you possibly can. Do this for as long as you'd like. Please remember that the goal is not to get it "right" or have a mountaintop experience, but rather to acknowledge what is happening within you -- true awareness.

INHABITING PRAISE

I recently met a Rabbi who seemed happy to share with me that he did not give thanks for his food. He figured that he didn't know if it would actually end up serving his body well, or if he would like it's taste, or if it would fulfill his daily nutritional needs. So he didn't think it necessary to be grateful until he knew. This made me a bit uncomfortable, as it might make you. How can we be ungrateful for a gift, even if that gift is not perfectly suited to our tastes or needs? I think most of us were raised believing we should be thankful for any gift, large or small. But if you think about it, I think many of us are not too different than the man I described. Don't we wait to see how everything will turn out? We are easily grateful for the things we like and enjoy. However, this stance closes heaven's windows and effectively disconnects us from the present moment. If we want to see God's future realized in our lives, it is essential to develop a posture of praise.

There is no doubt God is worthy of our energy and praise, and giving God this adoration is good for us to do. Our praises keep us planted in the present, allowing us to be fully alive and responsive to a Person we love and adore. While there are many types of prayer I believe that this one crops up most in the life of the believer whose heart is open to God. The prayer of praise is based on the belief that every gift (literally everything) comes from God and is good and perfect. God is not surprised by things that happen in our life. God does not panic. God is not anxiously seated on the edge of His throne, tapping his foot and chewing Everything happens by God, through God, for God, and of God. Everything. Think of that! If this is true -- if God is HUGE -- then God can be praised for everything. In fact, the act of praising God for everything, including

tragedy and the things that have yet to come, enables us to accept reality as it is. It also helps us to take leaps of faith or risks, because we begin to understand that all things work together for good.

PRAISE EXERCISE

Think of something in your past or your present that you are frustrated by, something that disappoints you, or something that makes you feel guilty. If you have any sort of complicity or responsibility for this then certainly confess that to God and express your sorrow. Now, that you are finished… praise God for it.

Declare that you understand that even this works together for your good and His glory. In this way you are fulfilling the command that we are given through Paul: *"Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances…" (1 Thessalonians 5:16).*

PRAISE EXERCISE

When praying to God, begin with praise. Praise him for who He is even if, in the moment, you don't feel like it. Try to make praising God a habit. Think about His character, His feelings, His promises, His actions. Remember He is a Being that interacts with humanity. Try not to think about yourself or your own circumstances, but draw your attention on God.

LETTING GO, LETTING GOD BE GOD

In Western culture we are particularly partial to God experiences, but those experiences must align with my tribe's. To put it differently, we want to find God in *our* religion or denomination, in *our* sub-sect or place of worship, with *our* small group, together with *our* clique of confidants. We have become so used to it that it seems like an ordinary way of being in the world. But if we are to let God be the God that is larger than us and our imaginings of Him, then we have to let him out of our tribe. The point of this exercise is to truly discover the vast richness of God that can be detected wherever there are those eagerly seeking Him from an open heart. We are also to get away from the habit of coming to God to receive something; Isn't that often why we go to church? To get something? Maybe this is why so many sacred assemblies feel dead -- countless numbers have been taking and now little remains. These services need to be reinvigorated with the awareness of God's non-dual presence from a non-selfish heart.

WHERE CAN'T HE BE FOUND EXERCISE

Try attending several different churches, synagogues, mosques or temples. Do it close together if you can, even on the same day. Make sure that one of them is a gathering that you are familiar with; perhaps in the tradition of your childhood. Next, go to one completely different from your upbringing.

[As an aside: It could be easy to dismiss someone of a differing denomination, or especially another religion, as being irredeemably lost and worthy of condemnation or perhaps "witnessing." But it's far more challenging, and ultimately rewarding, to apply your newfound understanding of God as All in All to see where He might be revealing pieces of Himself in the Other. Remember that Jesus' lineage includes many non-Jewish people and even prostitutes *(see Matthew 1)*; a group of Bedouin Magicians recognized the infant Jesus when many of his own faith didn't, and presented Him with gifts. Jesus talked with heretical Samaritan women with no preconditions. As a follower of Jesus and one united with him in the Spirit, you too can be an agent of God's scandalous grace and boundary-breaking discovery in the present moment. It is this kind of presence that can be most radiant.]

Allow yourself to participate as much as you can, or that you find reasonable with your own conscience. Notice the ways you pull back or withhold yourself. See if, and how, you judge others as different. Attempt to open your heart to discovering the God to whom all truth resides.

REST IN DESTINY:
CONTENTMENT IN WHO YOU ARE

Albert Camus, the noted existentialist philosopher said, *"You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of…"* It is so easy in today's culture to find happiness by defining pure identity and putting ourself in a box.

Our identity, as we said earlier, is comprised of what we do and contribute to the world around us. Everything we strive to prove and accomplish, everything we are seeking outside of ourselves is available in the present moment, if you only stopped and brought your awareness to it.

Why not stop the cycle of the constant redefinition of self, and just rest in the truth of who God says you are?

CONTENTMENT EXERCISE

Today, turn your focus toward your breath, relax as much as possible, and

then say the name “Lord Jesus.” Say it slowly, and with as little disruption of your relaxed state as possible. Perhaps it isn’t more than a faint whisper. Breathe in, “Lord Jesus…” Breathe out, “Lord Jesus…” Then, take note of your world and your place in it.

CONTENTMENT EXERCISE

What has God said about you? Make a list of his declarations about you. (HINT: Ephesians and Colossians are good places to begin for truths of who we are in Christ. Try starting there). For one day, every time you see the color green practice “waking up” to God’s declarations of you.

ALL IN ALL: FINDING GOD IN EVERYTHING

You know how difficult contemplation can be if you’ve attempted any of the other exercises. It is hard to just be with the universe as it is, and not as our thoughts make it out to be. We allow the sounds and the sensations to just wash over us, and we remain present to them. We note our awareness of comfort and discomfort, of this thought or that thought driving past us. Some have said that the discipline of awareness is like a flashlight. In a dark room, you can shine the light on anything and see it for what it is. Focusing the beam in different places will show you different things. Again, these are things you’ve probably noticed if you’ve integrated the activities into your every-day life.

However, there are times we must become especially mindful of elements that don’t come naturally to our senses, namely the persistent presence of God. The point then of the following exercise is to continue the art of meditative awareness but to also let our minds and hearts be stimulated to recognize the invisible reality of God’s being in everything. The All in All.

DISCOVERY OF THE DIVINE

Begin with your previous exercise in body consciousness. Notice not just the sensations, but also the grosser and more subtle realities and sensations. Indigestion. Headache. Numbness. Sweat… Just allow yourself to feel those sensations. Try to do the same with the sounds that you are aware of around you. Take note of as many as you can, but be careful not to label them as you observe. As you begin to settle into this, you will probably become aware of a peace and tranquility within your spirit. If this happens to you, just relax into it. Let the here and now feel good. Now, express these sensations to God, but do so without words. Pretend that you can only communicate with God with your face and your eyes and your hands and your breath. Tell God that it is so good to find

Him in all the places you do. In the moment, all around you, and even in the difficult or uncomfortable moments.

Come back to your awareness. Be very present to your breath, the sounds you can hear, and the feelings in your body. Claim these things as the knowing of God in this moment. If you'd like, whisper to God, "Lord, *this* is you!" Become open to the whole world around you and within you. Become open to God.

WHAT'S AT STAKE:
AN EXPERIMENT IN RISKING

Hope is actually caught up in our inability and unwillingness to take a leap of faith. Hope is actually an intense longing for what we cannot or do not yet see; it is a passionate wresting of the future into the present. Hope is active. It moves, but hope can often be treated like a drug that depresses our desire for action. When we relegate the possible good to the future, pining and wishing for that perfect day, we give ourselves a wide berth in the lane of passivity.

There's no changing the present struggle of this life. Hard times and difficulties will come and they will go. You can't afford to keep waiting to fulfill your desires. Accept what is and get a firm grasp of what is to come. No more waiting. Don't believe the illusion that some future moment will be your catalyst. Don't wait to do what you love and are called to do. There are no *"if only's…"* Just do what you wish you could. Take those first steps today!

RISK EXERCISE

Take one hour a day to do what you sense in your spirit that you must do -- regardless of your daily schedule. This will look differently to everyone. It could be creating art or going for a jog, beginning a business or selling your possessions to become an aid worker in Sudan. It might also look like something more internal, like being mindful of your heart attitude and praying a simple prayer. It might even mean calling a parent you need to reconcile with. Most often this takes the form of taking steps in the moment toward actualizing the things you've always dreamed about doing if you only had more time or greater resources. Start now. If you don't a year from now, you'll wish you had. Do what you can. But as a warning: you may find that you can't or don't actually want to go down the path you thought you did in the beginning of your journey. Unrealized dreams allow us to think of ourselves in a different light, and when we aggressively take steps towards their consummation, we are occasionally in

for a rude awakening. That's okay. Learn from it, and move beyond it.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

Know and experience God right now, here, in this moment. Know God as you work, take in nourishment, go to sleep at night, and as you raise your children. Change nothing on the outside, and still encounter life as it is. That is the main idea behind these pages. In a way I'll simply be taking different stabs at this reality, attempting to convey this fairly simple theme in a myriad of ways until one of them speaks to you. One of the ways I'm hoping to engage you, the reader, is through very practical -- and practicable -- actions. Like any adventurer or explorer will tell you, it's one thing to see something on a map; it's entirely something else to encounter the territory in real life. This is why I feel it to be imperative for spiritual development to make use of what have, for centuries, been known as "spiritual exercises."

Enjoy physical exercises? Do you automatically think of squats, bench presses, and bicep curls? Truthfully I haven't always enjoyed the idea of exercise because it requires something from me. It draws me into a routine. It forces me to try something I might not be able to do. And quite honestly there's nothing worse than failing at yet *another* goal. That's why so many people stopped making New Year's Resolutions. Nobody likes to fail and then be reminded of their failure at next New Year's party.

It's too bad that people think of a spiritual discipline or routine in this same way. We have been conditioned to believe they are at the center of a radiant spiritual life. It's easy to think that Bible reading, conference or seminar attendance, church or encounter group gatherings, tithing, devotionals, and various forms of prayer, most of which just ask God to do something for us, are the backbone of proper religion or spirituality. This just isn't true. Realizing our oneness with God through Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of the faith. Nothing more and certainly nothing less. How faithful I am at attending church says little about my union with the Divine. Nor does how early you get up to read your Bible. To equate those elements to our intimacy with God is a minimization of the overwhelming God we serve. Far from being the root of the life of faith, those activities are merely scaffolding by which the actual object may be constructed. In other words, they're not the main act!

Any form of work may be thought of as preparation for what is possible. A

runner who is faithful to the discipline of running each day, will be able to run a race in the future. A runner may not even know about a race that is coming, and it could take them by surprise. But since they have been training, they are ready for the race before them. Consistent practice leads to ability and mastery.

Similarly, a scientist uses experiments to discover the data that will help them formulate a hypothesis. The end result is not the experiment itself. Oh, it's helpful. It's certainly useful. It may prove or disprove certain elements that they had assumed. It will undoubtedly assist, but its ultimate purpose is as a means to an end. Because of this, interestingly, there's really no such thing as a failed experiment, save one that doesn't occur -- one that never gets off the ground. In truth any "results" you see from an experiment simply further the objective, which is knowledge -- or awareness of what's really going on. I think taking this perspective on spiritual exercises is wonderful. They are both training for what is to come, but also a wonderful means of seeing what *is*.

Imagine you're trying to turn your attention toward God, but your mind keeps wandering. You are distracted by thoughts about work, about your budget, your upcoming mortgage payment and credit card bill, or payment for your child's soccer cleats. You smell dinner cooking in the kitchen. Your feet are numb. Your back hurts. At the end of your ten minutes, you're bound to be frustrated. You want to believe that your time spent was useless or a waste. But was it? Why exactly are you frustrated? Is there a reason?

The goal was simply to notice what arose as you spent ten minutes trying to focus on God. You did it. And now you know. What is it exactly that you know? Well, you can gather that in these ten minutes, on this day, in this month, in this year, that you couldn't stop thinking about your finances. This is something worth noting! Record it and the move forward. You've made a discovery, now move on to the next experiment.

Isn't this great? How freeing! When we see spiritual exercise as a glorious experiment, observing all that is brought to light as an implement to assist us in our real work of loving union with the Divine, then we are free to truly have a great time with it! Routine, discipline, experiment, or exercise as adventure. But that is exactly what it is when we free ourselves from the notion that we have to get things right. There's nothing to get right… besides stopping passing judgment on ourselves and others! The most important thing to God is that we belong to Him and want to spend time with Him. This is precisely what these

practices were created for: a way to make room in our hearts for the presence of God.

As you read through the chapters, you'll see that an exercise of some sort is at the end of each one. I hope you'll consider trying these experiments, and perhaps as you do you might eventually weave them into your life. I have adapted many of these tools for growth from ancient and modern sources alike -- experienced pioneers of the spirit who have gone before and with us. These roads, well journeyed by our spiritual ancestors, can come to our aid as we learn to *"practice God's presence."* However, even if you do not use these specific exercises -- I want to encourage you to let the words of this book sink into you. Don't allow yourself to become complacent about your own health and growth. As a dear friend mentioned once, *"If you wish to know yourself, be awake, practice awareness. If you wish to be yourself… ACT!"* And that is the premise behind the exercises throughout this book. Be yourself. Wear your own skin in the present now. Be caught in the presence of the Eternal I AM who speaks your destiny. Why put it off when you can start today?



BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Jeremy Lopez is the Founder and President of Identity Network International, Sounds for Now, Awakening to Your Now and Now is Your Moment. Identity Network is a prophetic resource website that reaches well over 153,000 people around the globe and distributes books and teaching CD's. Jeremy has taught and prophesied to thousands of people from all walks of life such as local church congregations, producers, investors, business owners, attorneys, city leaders, musicians, and various ministries around the world concerning areas such as finding missing children, financial breakthroughs, parenthood, and life changing decisions.

Dr. Jeremy Lopez is an international teacher and motivational speaker. Dr. Jeremy speaks on new dimensions of revelatory knowledge in scripture, universal laws, mysteries, patterns, and cycles. He has a love for all people and desires to enrich their lives with love, grace and the mercy of God and to empower them to be successful. Dr. Jeremy believes it is time to awake the

Christ Conscious mind and live out the victorious life that was meant for us. His desire is to live a life filled with purpose, potential, and destiny. He ministers with a revelational prophetic teaching gift that brings a freshness of the word of the Lord to people everywhere.

This is accomplished through conferences, prophetic meetings, and seminars. He serves on many governing boards, speaks to business leaders across the nation, and also holds a Doctorate of Divinity. He has had the privilege of ministering prophetically to Governor Bob Riley of Alabama. He has also ministered to thousands overseas including millionaires around the world. He has traveled to many nations including Jamaica, Prague, Paris, Indonesia, Haiti, Hong Kong, Taiwan, UK, Mexico, Singapore, Bahamas, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, etc. He has hosted and been a guest on several radio and TV programs from Indonesia to New York.

He is the author of nationally published books, 'The Laws of Financial Progression,' 'The Power of the Eternal Now' (Destiny Image) and his newest book, 'Releasing the Power of the Prophetic' (Chosen Books). He has also recorded over 45 teaching CD's. Jeremy's ministry has been recognized by many national leaders and other prophetic leaders around the nation.



[1]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divinization_(Christian)

[2] DeMello, "Sadhana". pg 16.