The Power of
UNCOMMON UNITY



Becoming the Answer to Jesus' Final Prayer

JOEY LETOURNEAU

ENDORSEMENTS

God desires His people to establish and cultivate the supernatural culture of Heaven here on Earth that will be sustained from generation to generation. This book is an answer to Jesus' only unanswered prayer: a vision of uncommon unity. The transformational nature of the message will be a tsunami wave of love that will bring every nation, tongue, and tribe into unity in the worship of Jesus. I have the vision, and now the vision has me!

Leif Hetland Leif Hetland Ministries Global Mission Awareness

As I read through the manuscript for *The Power of Uncommon Unity,* I became increasingly hungry for more unity in my life and within the Church. Joey takes us into seldom-discussed areas of unity and uses personal stories to show us the Father's heart. I encourage you to read this book and ask God to align your life with His purpose of an uncommon unity.

Garris Elkins Author, *Prayers from the Throne of God*

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Revolutionary Freedom—Anointed to Set the Captives Free

The Life Giver

The Power of UNCOMMON UNITY

Becoming the Answer to Jesus' Final Prayer

JOEY LETOURNEAU

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DEDICATION

To the uncommon community of people and families who are helping make this book possible—thank you. This is only the beginning!

Stan & Cindy Bullis

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Russ & Jennifer Connelly

Caleb & Becca David

John & Terina Dutton

Kyle & Kathy Freier

Jimmy & Rachel Gross

Tyson & Kira Mullis

Dave & Beth Sandy

Benny & Leeann Stone

Brian & Stephanie Stotts

Kristina Waggoner

And most of all, Jesus—my family and I dedicate this book to You and the prayer You prayed in John 17:20-26, *that the world may believe!*

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BECOMING THE ANSWER TO JESUS' FINAL PRAYER

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world O righteous Father! The world has not know You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:20-26).

INTRODUCTION

THAT "SHAKEN" PLACE

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, ***the place where they were assembled together was shaken;*** *and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked…*
(Acts 4:29-35).

Jesus had ascended to Heaven. The Holy Spirit had come down and changed everything. The world was a divided mess and sought to persecute His followers. The nations raged with the vain and the violent.

So what was the answer for this community of apostles

spoken of in Acts 4? They came together in an uncommon unity that Jesus Himself had prayed for, and that the Spirit was willing to lead them in and empower them from. They came together diversely, but with *one* voice. They were shaken from their old ways and supernaturally bound together within something—or Someone—new. They were full of the power of the Holy Spirit; nothing could be more powerful, except, of course, for such indwelling power to be united together when uncommon unity became the great exponent over what the Spirit wanted to do through their lives. They were launched into the deep—and from that "shaken" place they lived "shaken" lives; their unique oneness caused a multiplication of life that would overtake the division of the times.

We often think of unity as an end that we pursue. It is commonly seen as a state of existence where everyone compromises to come into alignment. But unity in the Spirit is different. Unity in the Spirit is a seemingly misaligned alignment held together by the One who celebrates our diversity and created us to come together not in spite of, but *because* of our differences. Unity in the Spirit is uncommon, and it is more of a means than an end. It is the very desire Jesus prayed for before going to the Cross, that His life that was about to be given would be multiplied to *everyone*—all nations and generations. He knew that for such multiplication to happen in its fullest measure, His people would have to be *one—that the world may believe.*

God has created each of us with special visions for our lives, visions that can be taken to whole new planes as we live with Him by faith. These are purposes, dreams, callings, and destinies that are within each of us—areas that we push back

down when they surface because we don't know how they fit with our lives in the world. The truth of the matter is that they often don't fit; we don't fit, unless we live shaken lives. Each of us carries a diverse Holy Spirit river that is waiting to flood out of our innermost being onto the world all around us. God longs to see those rivers uncommonly united together to flood the world with new life!

But such rivers are not necessarily united into one mass body of water. They remain many rivers flowing out to the different parts of the world, across different terrain, with different paces and unique patterns of movement—*but from one Source!* For it is the Source who diversely unites these rivers that flow out so differently, yet so powerfully!

When we live shaken lives, we allow the Spirit to lead us and launch us. There is so much more within us that the world desperately needs, they long for the unique image of Christ we each carry. An image that reveals the Father as we each are shaken from the fears that contain us to shine together in different ways and from different places. It's already inside us, you and I both, by the Spirit of the Lord. We just have to be shaken—live shaken—in a way that lets it all freely flow out. We can't try and grab our composure to steady ourselves or try to regain control; we must continue to live each moment in the same boldness we experience when we are being met and led by the Spirit of God, from that moment where passion consumes us and the mountaintop is no longer reduced to a moment but a lifetime of such shaken pursuit—even enduring difficulty because of new vision for His purposes stored up within.

Encountering God leaves us shaken! It's not a mountaintop

feeling, but a transformed life, a new way of thinking, living, and loving. Our lids fall off and we become like shaken soda bottles with the Spirit ready to burst and overflow out of us, releasing all the contents God has had hidden within, waiting for the world to taste of His goodness from our shaken lives. We are not supposed to leave these encounters and go on with life; rather, we must carry these encounters everywhere we go so that our shaken lives will become epicenters that shake our neighborhoods and the nations.

That shaken place the apostles experienced in Acts 4:31 will become our lives. When we live from that place, then we will be launched from that place! For instance, we often encounter God's presence in worship, but it is when that worship we are shaken by becomes part of our abiding lifestyle that we begin living *from* that shaken place. We often try to compose ourselves before going on with life. Instead, we must allow the Spirit from within us to freely lead and overflow everywhere we go and toward everyone we encounter. It's like the quote stated so eloquently by John Wesley when asked why so many people come and listen to him preach: *"I set fire to myself and people come to watch me burn."*

When we are met by the Spirit of Truth in a sermon or passage and are pierced to our core, we must continue in such a shaken state not just by negotiating the Word into our lives as a lesson but by taking the sword of His Spirit and plunging it through *our* hearts openly to expose the reality of *His* heart through our lives. When we get a word from the Lord during prayer, we often become moved with possibility. But what would happen if we continued to abide from that place of fresh encounter with our Creator by watching that word come to life

through us? Our lives would become places that shake the world, that tumble walls because of the Presence we abide in, and we would become lives ever revealing the Father's nature —loving and launching His children into their purpose, their dreams and destiny because we've given ourselves permission to live out our own.

When we live shaken lives, we become multipliers for the people around us to change the world. We ourselves need to be shaken, but even more, we must abide in the Spirit who shakes us with a hunger and proactive desperation that keeps us living and breeding this countercultural river life. We live in a society that expects everything to be explained and secure. But what will happen when a society is filled by shaken people who are okay *not* having all the answers, a people whose stability does not come from human perception but from a stance that is stabilized *because of* the Spirit's shaking in their lives?

We are watching the Father make His children, His sons and daughters, *into* a house. When David wanted to build God a house out of the purest of desires, God's answer was no. Instead, the Lord told David, *"I will make **you** a house"* (see 2 Sam. 7:11). God's best house is the one He grows out of those who co-labor with Him to give life! In fact, that was the original vision in the Garden of Eden, to "Be fruitful and multiply." We often focus on houses of a physical structure; but with God, whether through Abraham, David, or Jesus, God's priority and the ultimate blessing He would bestow was to make His house in and *from* His people, empowering a *family structure* of people who are sent, who go, who stretch out the walls of His house to cover His family around the world.

God is making *us* a house. This house is full of spiritual sons and daughters who become spiritual fathers and mothers who live out an overflowing, life-giving, multiplication that redeems His family all around the world. We look at those who are lost, poor, orphaned, or widowed, but whatever a person's current state, God already sees that person as His child, part of His family.

In Acts 4, we see a place or room that was shaken, but the world was not changed until those apostles continued to live in and from that shaken place that Jesus prayed for and made possible. From that point on, when the world needed it most, the apostles revealed the answer to Jesus' final prayer as they were uncommonly united and launched to the world. *We are that shaken place!*

> *"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed,* ***the place where they were assembled together was shaken;*** *and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the multitude of* ***those who believed were of one heart and one soul****; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* ***And great***

> ***grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked****; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need* (Acts 4:29-35).

For years I have been shaken by this passage in Acts. I have been shaken by the promises and the testimony that surrounds it. I have been shaken by what happened, and *I am* shaken to my very core by the vision of what might happen around the world if and *when* this passage comes to life through Christ in us, and His presence upon us! In this passage, we see the apostles empowered by the Spirit. They see the threats to what's precious around them. We see them cry out for more—they see a God who is present and ready. We see a unity and community that is uncommon—they see a God who captures all of their differences. We see a place that was shaken—they see God moving in power and a world awakened. We see them share with all things in common—they see a poverty that is quickly overtaken.

They were shaken from their old lives, but not just for a moment. Many of us can remember moments when we have been shaken by the Spirit, but this was a people, a community who lived their lives *from that shaken place*. They didn't let it wear off. They didn't fear the loss of control. They were marked by the power of God and launched into supernatural mission and multiplication by the same. They operated from a community that was of one heart and one soul (mind), a unity so strong it marked the power of God with an exponent! The

Greek definition of these unique but special phrases: "One heart" means to be *in sync or in tune,* while "one soul" is described *to breathe spiritually together.* Wow! Here we have a people, and they are only a handful, a small group community who decided to call on God for more, believing Him to move in power, and they did so while *breathing spiritually in sync together* out of oneness with God.

Because of this handful of people living in an uncommon way, the place where they were assembled together was *shaken!* But that was just the beginning. Soon after, the whole world would be shaken; not just because these people *were once* shaken, but because they lived, moved, and breathed the rest of their lives *from that shaken place!*

There is a physical and spiritual poverty around the world —in the slums, suburbs, and cities. It's a poverty of wealth and a poverty of spirit. It's a poverty that's *very possible* to overcome. It's a poverty that *was* overcome by this same group of apostles when we read of the *"great grace,"* and resurrection power (Acts 4:33) that was upon them. They lived and gave freely, by faith, yet still held a community testimony that highlighted the miracle of living such a life, marked with this: *"Nor was there anyone among them who lacked"* (Acts 4:34).

They were shaken into a community of people full of the Spirit who overflowed with the Spirit! They were a community who freely received together and freely gave from the same. That shaken place launched a people who were marked and multiplied by the Spirit and His power because they lived in uncommon unity, set apart with a special vision. They freely gave out all the grace that was upon them and still knew no

lack! Great grace is the greatest of currency; and when it multiplies, it becomes an economy bound to "Kingdom math," a math and type of multiplication that overcomes division every time. They were a people who learned to live and give life more abundantly together.

I want to be shaken! I want to live in a community of people of "one heart and one soul," who breathe spiritually in sync together because we are living *from* that shaken place in Him. I want to be renewed into an uncommon unity, shaken from my current society into a revived community where a oneness is exponentially empowered to breed life-giving, world-reaching multiplication. I want to be shaken and therefore *sent* into my Kingdom destiny. Even more, I want the same for you. May we press our heads to His chest together and know the beat of the Father's heart that will launch us all uniquely, but powerfully, to live out the answer to Jesus' final prayer in John 17—that we would be one that the world may believe!

Holy Spirit, let us be shaken for our neighborhoods and the nations!

CHAPTER 1

THE FATHER'S BLESSING

I believe that the "Toronto Blessing"[1] was one of the greatest examples of a true corporate shaking from and with the Lord. People who attended this revival did not leave the same, and the blessing that began there has continued to shake the world with powerful ripple effects of multiplication in and through a vast number of lives and nations—a ripple effect that we cannot even begin to count or measure. Because of it, our Father's house will never be the same. We use the word *blessing* frequently in Christian and church culture, but we mustn't allow familiarity to rob the depth, power, or the shaking ability that a blessing can have. The Toronto Blessing carries common wording, but what was launched out of it was anything but common.

Familiarity with a word or concept such as *blessing* can often cause us to distance ourselves from the reality and deep substance of it. As often as the word *blessing* is used, there is such multifaceted depth that we cannot allow familiarity to steal, as there is still so much for us to gain and multiply out. My hope in this chapter is that we will be able to dive deeper into *the power of blessing* and the life, uncommon unity, and multiplication that flows from such blessing through us and to

the world!

The "Father's Blessing" is a taste of God's goodness that we have only barely begun to know. However, it is also something that holds the same kind of pregnant, life-giving, world-shaking power that our world is crying out for. It is a blessing often given from an earthly parent, spiritual parent, mentor, or leader. It is also in its fullest form a blessing that is straight from our heavenly Father, one that has already been given and that can and will have the kind of shaking impact that creation longs and groans for because of the life and multiplication it breeds. The Father's Blessing has the substance to empower the release of God's sons and daughters of all ages, nations, social status, and denominations into a revived and reformed missions movement we've not seen since those apostles were met, shaken, and sent from the place where they were assembled in Acts 4. It is a message straight from the Father's heart that we can *all* relay to the world.

The Father's Blessing shakes us from our insecurities, releases us from striving for significance, and empowers us to be a people overflowing the diversity and fullness of Jesus out of our lives with new freedom, realizing that in Daddy's eyes we are *already approved*. It helps us move from a state of striving to overflowing. According to the Father's love, we cannot subtract, are called to more than addition, and have always been created to multiply!

I have experienced this kind of a shaking in a very personal way. I pray that not I, the people around me, nor neighborhoods or nations within reach will ever be the same because of Jesus who is freely released to live from my life, to

live in the same revolutionary way He Himself lived while on earth. I pray the same for you.

MY FATHER'S BLESSING

Growing up, my nickname was Tigger. I was always bouncing around freely, fully, and overflowing life to the greatest extent I could. I didn't know any better except to be myself. I used to wear out one friend after another. One friend would come over, we'd have fun, he'd have to go home, and my mom would call another. I thought it was great! At school, my teachers said I lived out of a "Pied Piper" mentality. As I simply lived and overflowed life, others would follow. It was the most natural form of leadership just from being myself. I wasn't trying to lead per se, but I was freely living and overflowing the life God created me with, the life of Jesus that He was bringing out from within me.

Unfortunately, by my early teenage years that freedom began to change. At that age, I wasn't simply overflowing life anymore but resorted to managing my life and who I was or appeared to be. My vision changed. I was looking too much at myself, at other people's opinions, their expectations, and comparing side to side far too often. Because of this, I lost my freedom to simply and powerfully overflow. This change in me really grieved my parents. They watched me keep God's joy, life, and love locked up inside. I hadn't walked away from the Lord, but now I was managing who I was rather than living freely from who He was inside me and being who He created me to be.

When we do this, everyone around us suffers. We are each

part of a unique but powerful chain of life, one that calls us to be unique, special, and set apart. Other people need what God has naturally given us, and vice versa. When we limit ourselves and stop freely overflowing that unique and powerful life God has put inside us, our sphere of influence will begin to lack what we have been created by God to innately carry and overflow. The "more" that most of us are often looking for is actually within us all the time. I love how Pastor Bill Johnson relays a word he received from the Lord in his book, *Dreaming with God: "What I am bringing into the house has to have a way of being released from the house, or it will die in the house."*

If we do not give out to others the unique image and reflection of God that is within us, that special part of us that was created to shine from our lives will begin to pass away. This has incredible application in a variety of ways, but here we must focus on what it means for us personally and the unique grace God has put within each of our lives. The enemy uses the world to make us insecure, and he tries to intimidate us from being different. But *different* is where God's power waits within each of us, and it is the very place that others in your neighborhood and across the nations are waiting for—the Jesus within you! Jesus is waiting to be revealed through each of our lives in many *different* ways. Too often we keep our world-changing differences locked inside. Bill Johnson finished that particular lesson in *Dreaming with God* with this thought: "We only get to keep what we give away."

The enemy got me with the lie of not wanting to be different during my early teenage years. I lost my freedom to simply "be." I lost the *who,* traded it for the *what,* and completely

forgot *how* God had created me to live and overflow. My parents wanted the son they had always known me to be, the one who let the joy of the Lord bubble up and give life without even needing to try. That's what happens when we are free from looking at others. That's what happens when we allow the unique and different glory of Jesus that God has put *inside* our house to flourish and flow *outside* of our house to others. When we are free in the Lord, we do ministry without actually having to *"do"* ministry. Just being the person God created you to be will change the world around you and create a mass multiplication effect far beyond what you may ever know.

For me, I started to try to *fit in* instead of allowing God to *stand out*. I went from "Joey" to "Joe," as if it was more mature and, you know, "cooler." Little did I know that the "Joe Cool" we often strive for puts out the fire within us that Jesus has kindled for the sake of the world. I needed to be shaken back into a renewed state. I needed to be shaken back into freedom. I needed to be shaken into a life that could burn freely and overflow powerfully *with* Him. My parents saw this and went before the Lord to see how they could empower such a shaking in my life.

My dad came to me a few weeks before my sixteenth birthday with a proposal. He and my mom had been praying about something special for my birthday gift. They wanted to throw me a "Father's Blessing" party. (Important note: my mom had every bit to do with the Father's Blessing; it is not gender exclusive, but rather an expression of the Father's heart revealed.) I had no idea what this blessing was at the time, so I was pretty hesitant. However when my dad came to me, I could see the look of importance in his eyes; so, reluctantly, I agreed.

My dad asked me to read Genesis 27:1-40 to gather background on the blessing, this particular passage having to do with the blessing Isaac would give to Jacob rather than Esau. I understood the story, but did not yet know the relevance *or the power* that was hidden behind the familiarity.

The night of the blessing came, and I sat with family and friends gathered all around. Everyone graciously took their turn offering some sort of encouragement, words of love and affirmation to speak blessing into my life. When they had finished, my dad and mom came and stood behind my chair. My dad began to read over me a Father's Blessing that he and my mom had been praying over for weeks. The blessing communicated value, belief, purpose, and unconditional love. The blessing acknowledged strengths in my life, gifts, milestones, and promises for the future. The blessing cast vision for my life, and at the same time it released me to be different, it offered me freedom to live outside of the wants or expectations of the world—even the ideals of my parents—where they instead blessed me to live the unique, powerful, and special life God had created me for. This Father's Blessing wiped away comparison by letting me know that in God's eyes, there is no comparison! That's how He feels about all of us. When we realize this, the unity Jesus prayed for will become naturally common in the most uncommon and exponentially powerful ways.

That whole next year was revolutionary for me. I didn't know what had been imparted during the blessing, but I soon started to live out the effects. Life became sweeter again. I slowly began to leave behind the versions of myself I was striving for and became "Joey" again. My relationship with the

Lord soared to new heights and dug deeper to the root at new depths. *I was free!* The blessing released me to take my eyes off of self, and it helped me to stop measuring against others so that I could take hold of God's vision for life, different life, *shaken* life!

A *DIFFERENT* BLESSING

I often go back to one quote written in my Father's Blessing. It offers something that I believe is profound, and something I believe can and will change our lives when we embrace the true meaning and power behind it, in ourselves and in one another. My dad shared:

> I'm very proud to have you carry the LeTourneau name to future generations. I hope you don't believe that I think you're a lesser person because you're not like me in every area of life. That's a common belief among sons of Type-A dads. The truth is that I think the best hope for the LeTourneau name lies in the very ways that you're different from me.

I didn't fully realize it then as I do now, but there is power in those words he spoke that is life changing—*potentially world changing!* We are so often afraid of what is different in one another. Due to our insecurity, that which is different can often seem very threatening. We are more apt to try to make people in our image rather than empowering them to live out the unique image of God *they* have been created in. We often

avoid those who are different from us. Sometimes we will tolerate those who are different. Eventually we learn to look for and approve the best part of people while navigating around the differences. But what will happen in this world when we begin to *approve* and *empower* the differences of God's design in self and in others? It is often what is different within someone that is waiting to make a difference in the world. But far too often, those unique and powerful parts of Christ within us stay locked up inside, hidden from the world because they are, well, *different*. That which we keep locked inside is destined to die inside.

The Father's Blessing changes this; it embraces the differences in our lives and releases us to approve and empower the differences in others. It amplifies the unique revelation of Christ we hide within so that it can get out and live, even multiply to others who are inwardly yearning to be who God has created them to be. There is a multiplication of Christ waiting to shake the world and it is hidden within the power of difference. The Father's Blessing helps us to see difference *differently;* and when that happens, we'll see a unity and multiplication released that is so viral we can not even try to quarantine it.

The Father's Blessing shook me from a counterfeit vision of life and released me into the Father's "different" vision for my life. We often cannot receive what God wants to give us or walk in the dream and purpose welling up within our lives for striving to bring about such fruit through the ways of self. When we receive the Father's Blessing, then we can open our eyes to see who God has created us to be—no matter how different—and begin to walk in the unique calling within us

that is just bursting to get out! Most of all, for me, the blessing released me to pave a new path and encounter the Lord in new, and even world-changing ways. The blessing from my earthly father released me into an empowerment of my heavenly Father in ways I could not *yet* see. The Father's Blessing sets the stage for the fullness of Christ that is *already* within us to be shaken, stirred, and poured out on a world around us that we're destined to give life to!

JACOB AND ESAU

For example, let's look at Jacob, beginning with that Scripture passage my dad had asked me to read before the blessing: Genesis 27:1-40. Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew, and now Jacob was coming to get what his heart and soul longed for as part of that birthright—*his father's blessing*.

> ...*"Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!"* (Genesis 27:27-29)

Jacob received the blessing from his father, Isaac, and became a renewed person. The value he already held (as Isaac

gave him nothing new that wasn't already within him) was now publicly valued, approved, and believed in. He was free to walk forward in new ways and blaze new paths of experience. Jacob became a world changer the day he realized he didn't have to change himself to impact the world—realizing he was blessed for *who* God had made him to be, because of what was already innate within him, created from the image of the Father.

We often think we must change and become like someone else to change the world. However, God's reality is that you are most equipped to change the world by the grace of Jesus who is already uniquely alive within you. We must be renewed more than changed, and that is exactly what the blessing did for me personally, and for Jacob as well.

Esau, on the other hand, was a completely different story, and one we must understand with compassion for the sake of all those around us who are ever nearby, striving to be something, or acting out of their wounding simply because their hearts long to be blessed in the same way. The Word tells us this:

> *When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me—me also, O my father!"* (Genesis 27:34)

Esau stared at his earthly father craving significance, worth, value, and purpose. He finally realized he wanted to know that he too was special. I believe at some point or another, we have all had or still do have that same cry of Esau within our hearts. If we could listen to the hearts of those around us with spiritual

ears, we would hear that cry within them, wanting so desperately to be believed in, valued, and approved for who they are in Christ, squashing the notion that they must strive to prove something that is already within them. With the Father's Blessing, we can help answer their cry and set them forward on a new, free, empowered path with Christ to be exactly who He created them to be.

With Esau, Isaac could not give him the blessing that he had already given Jacob. However, that is different for us now. Through Christ, we have been brought up into His birthright as co-heirs with Christ, sons and daughters of God. Now, the Father's Blessing is just as powerful, and even more so, but it also has a reach that is far greater and is meant to empower *all* God's children. The Esaus of today can experience the fullness that has already been given, but oftentimes they must be shown the Father's heart, the love of Christ, and be given the Father's blessing *through us* before they can release themselves to receive it directly from God. Through Christ, with Jacob, we are all grafted into the Father's Blessing, given to and through Abraham. Promises, empowerment, inheritance, and blessing! There is so much to come under when it comes to the Father's Blessing that originated with Abraham—which also means there is much to pass on.

Let's look at the life of Jacob after the blessing, as it sets the stage for a series of events where God's momentum in Jacob's life suddenly began to build and eventually multiply! Jacob was about to leave to begin blazing the trail that was alive within him when his father, Isaac, blessed him again:

May God Almighty bless you, and make you

> *fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham* (Genesis 28:3-4).

So Jacob went and began to let his faith take hold of what had already been given to him. The blessing illuminated what had been given and increased his ability to believe. Now, it seemed anything was possible! The blessing paved the path to Bethel, a miraculous encounter we often refer to as Jacob's ladder. Previously, Jacob received *from* God but *through* man. But now, Jacob was living in a new freedom because the blessing of man had already been fulfilled in his life. He did not have to search for it any longer and remain blind to what can be received directly from God. He was free to encounter God for himself and truly live out the life that had been hidden inside all that time. Isaac's was a Father's Blessing that caused release; but now God's was a *Father's Blessing* that would shake him at his very core and become an encounter that would multiply for generations. It was from this point on that Jacob lived his life from "that shaken place" and eventually shook whole nations.

> *So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top*

> *reached to heaven, and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"* (Genesis 28:11-17)

Many of us know this passage in Genesis 28 well in a variety of ways. But I want us to look at it through the scope of the Father's Blessing and what it means for us all. We must see it through the blessing from his earthly father, Isaac, as well as this new encounter with God, his and our heavenly Father. First, Jacob could not go forward to start such a journey without the blessing he received from Isaac, it released him. Second, when we do not walk in the premise of blessing, aware that the Father has special vision for our lives and that we are

already approved by Him simply for *who* we are, we tend to live from a lot of striving and proving. And we tend to expect the same from others. There is very little rest in that.

But we see that Jacob arrives at Bethel and he is at rest. He is not striving to prove himself or create significance. Rather, he is at rest in who God has made him to be and free to begin the journey to allow that to come forward in new and world-changing ways. This place of rest from our striving for significance is *huge*. We often fail to receive from God what He's already given, and keep buried inside us what's already there because we are trying to measure up and prove our worth. But in God's eyes, the Father's eyes, that worth is already inside us waiting to burst out and be fruitful and multiply to all the families of the earth—not by what we prove, but by *who* He has *already* approved. *That* is the blessing we've been grafted into, that of an approved child of God! That is the blessing Jesus has brought to life, the same Jesus who lives in us!

To find rest from this place of striving releases our focus, faith, and energy to encounter and enjoy what God has already done. The blessing from Isaac released Jacob to rest in his spirit and soul. It was this rest that allowed Jacob to encounter God fresh and new for himself, a personal encounter that left Jacob free to live the fullness God had created him for.

When we learn to receive the blessing directly from the Father, it's not just a release we get but a fuel of promise toward fulfillment—in God-sized measures and terms. Jacob awakens from this incredible encounter and says something so profound, *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."* Jacob was awakened to what, or Who, was already

there, something or Someone he had failed to see the whole time. Is it possible that it is the same with us? Are we striving to be who we think the world, our parents, our church, or even who *we think* God wants us to be? Is it possible that all of this striving adds to the enemy's strategies of division? And all the while, God is already within us in such a unique, immeasurable extent that if we let Him out of our lives we will find the "more" that we are looking for—*that the whole world is looking and waiting for.*

Is that awesome God already within you and around you to the extent you haven't allowed yourself to see or experience Him? Should we be saying this with Jacob in regard to our own lives, *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it"?* This is true for all of God's sons and daughters. What if each one was helped to see the God who is already alive within and around him or her? Many cannot experience that kind of shaken personal encounter directly from the living God because they have their eyes on others, striving to be like someone else, comparing, trying to measure up. But when we, like Isaac, like the Father, *like Jesus*, begin to offer that Father's Blessing of value, belief, and approval to those around us, simply for *who they are in Christ* and *who He is in them,* they too will be set free to encounter the living God *personally and powerfully!* They will be free to receive His blessing and vision and look at their own lives and say, *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."*

Jacob referred to this encounter as the *"gate of heaven."* And truly, these personal encounters do become the gate for how God's Kingdom comes here on earth as it is in Heaven, *through us!* When we've been shaken into this new

perspective, we become that gate of heaven and can begin to live *from* "that shaken place" the apostles lived from in Acts chapter 4. With new purpose we begin to take hold of the promises of God and contend for those unique and different promises that the Holy Spirit brings to life through each of us. We contend through faith and patience (see Heb. 6:12) for what Jesus has already won, because we contend for the promises of God to be released from the hidden parts of our lives so they are revealed here on earth as in Heaven.

Jacob received the Father's Blessing from Isaac, and was released to live the life for which he was uniquely created. There is freedom in finding our own identity in Christ that brings us to a place of godly rest; and it is in this rest we encounter God and receive what He has been waiting to reveal directly to us. It's then that we begin to realize for ourselves *who* He is and *who* He has made us to be. This frees us to come into that uncommon oneness with God that leads us and empowers us through uncommon oneness with others. Now, we're not trying to be like anyone else, nor are we causing unnecessary division from our fears and insecurities, but we are free to be the purposefully and powerfully *different* person He created. Then, once we have our vision renewed for who God created us to be, we can contend for those promises to come alive in and through our lives.

> *...but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises* (Hebrews 6:12).

Jacob was one of those who saw the promises God had for his life, and who contended for those promises even when it wasn't easy. He held on with faith and patience to inherit what

was promised him, that which he could only see once he took his eyes off himself.

God gives us promises, the ultimate of such is Jesus, but He wants us to go after them with Him with a tenacity of spirit and a patience of soul. Oftentimes we will see or know the blessing of His promises only to run after them with faith that God can and will, but without the patience to persevere. Other times we stand firm in the patience to trust God, but lack the tenacity of faith to believe and reveal God through faith in action. But when we combine faith *and* patience with the promises God has hidden within our lives, we will see an inheritance revealed that overwhelms us—God loves to overwhelm us—an inheritance so rich in substance it can multiply to the world. Becoming a contender was the next step the blessing released Jacob to live out, for he had seen by faith something new that was readily available, something worth contending for.

> *Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked,*

> *saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there* (Genesis 32:24-29).

When we see the vision and promise that God sees within our own lives, as well as in others, it changes our capacity, or perhaps our willingness to contend for that which we've already inherited to come to life! What is amazing is this identity and vision frees us not only to contend for the promises in our lives, but a newfound security enables us to contend for all God's different promises hidden within others as well. The Father's Blessing from man releases us from a vision that looks at self, measures against others, and strives for worth, approval, and significance. We are then capable of receiving the blessing God has available to us in that living, personal encounter with Him, and helping others do the same.

In that process, God teaches us to see with new eyes and gives our spirit new vision. We can now see what we're contending for and what we're hoping for, even when hope appears lost. This vision gives us new eyes to recognize the glory of Christ in others and all the promises that come with such. With this new vision in his own life, Jacob wrestled with God, unwilling to give up on the vision for his life God had shown him. Jacob had a new tenacity of faith and hung on all night long with patience to the extent that God touched and dislocated Jacob's hip to try and get Jacob to let go.

God wants us to partner with Him and others; and in doing so, He wants us to contend for what He has promised. The battle is not ours; we don't have to fight for victory. Through

Jesus Christ, the victory has been accomplished and assured. We wrestle with our own mind, with our own doubt, with our past; and we wrestle to live by the vision that the thief has tried to steal—that which Jesus has already bought back. We are not wrestling anymore to accomplish something; we are wrestling for our lives and others to partake fully of that which has already been promised and fulfilled and placed purposefully within us—that which is waiting to be revealed to the world.

Jacob would not let go. We must not let go of what God has placed before us—within us! The Father's Blessing releases us from contending for survival and empowers us to see the thriving life of Christ released from within us and the entire family of God around us, no matter how different. We must contend for He who is within us to be set free, that we might enable the fullness of Christ to live out of us and multiply by blessing others to freely live the same. There are differences in our lives that the enemy is contending to keep locked within us through his deceptions, differences he has always used to divide us. We must contend to see with new eyes, come into an uncommon unity with God and one another, and contend for those very differences we have long kept protected so they might be fully revealed for the glory of God. There is hidden glory within us, within our neighbors and the nations that is waiting to be revealed.

God spoke to Jacob and said, *"...for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."* The Father's Blessing set Jacob up for these two victories, causing him to see his life with new vision, and the world—*all the families of the earth*—with new purpose and opportunity. When we

partake of Christ's victory in these two areas as well, with self and others, we too will see a multiplication of the Father's Blessing that enables all the families of the earth to be blessed!

ANSWERING THE CRY OF ESAU

We have an opportunity before us to release and empower generations of world changers. The problem is, many of these world changers have already been overcome by that "cry of Esau" in their lives, looking at the world bitterly and quietly crying out, "Bless me too." Isaac did not have another blessing for Esau; but through Christ, we have the blessing, the fresh vision to impart what so many of these world changers are waiting for. They need us. They need to be blessed and released into their own "shaken place" with the Father, shaken from their old ways and identities and into His new. Many of them are trying to change themselves from being the gloriously different and unique son or daughter of God they have purposefully been created as, trying to measure up to others. This is a tragedy that God has already given us a remedy for.

It is time that we see self and one another through new eyes, with new vision—we must see and bless through God's eyes! As we do this, we will offer the Father's Blessing of unconditional love and approval, of value, belief, and purpose to these hidden sons and daughters of God—blessing them with the Father's heart to be who God has already created them to be. As we join the Father, we will release a generation who will shake the world, because they themselves have been set free for their own unique journey, their own encounter with God where uncommon unity will come alive and the world *will* believe—*all the families of the earth!*

When we realize the Father's Blessing on our lives, whether from an earthly father, a different Isaac, who imparts that Father's heart perspective and approval, or whether we learn to receive straight from our heavenly Father—*everything will change*. We will begin to multiply the same into lives all around us. We will take what God has given us and use it to empower the "different" part that God has given the people next to us. We will release them from looking at self, or at us, so that they may look at the Lord and what is already there for them, *already within them*. We will reveal a oneness with God and one another that has been hidden for too long. We will live with renewed minds that are able to approve God's good, perfect, and acceptable will in the lives all around us, rather than just our own (see Rom. 12:2). We will become like Abraham, like Jacob, *like Jesus*—multipliers!

After Jacob wrestled with God and continued on his journey, God met him and blessed him yet again:

> *Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty.* ***Be fruitful and multiply;*** *a nation and a company of* ***nations shall proceed from you,*** *and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land"* (Genesis 35:11-12).

God blessed Jacob as a *multiplier*. He blessed Jacob with his inheritance that he might go forward and multiply all he had received, that nations and kings would come from his body. That is what happens when we take what God has put within us and let God multiply it freely out of us. We have received far

more inheritance than we often know. There is so much more of Christ within us by the power of His Spirit than we often recognize. But when we walk in the Father's Blessing, we walk in the freedom of our supernatural identity to see what has already been given to us so that we can multiply it *all* to the neighborhoods and nations around us.

God thought so much of this Father's Blessing when speaking such over His Son, Jesus, that He ripped open the heavens at His baptism and practically stopped time, just to pour out His love, belief, and approval. What is more, the Father did this *before* Jesus' ministry began.

> *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:16-17).

God said this blessing before the Son's ministry because in the Father's eyes, He was *already approved*. *Before Jesus did any ministry or any miraculous works, His Father blessed him.* Before Jesus could prove who He was or show His worth and value to the world, God opened the heavens and shared His love for Jesus, and declared that He was *already* pleased. *That* is the Father's Blessing we are to give to one another. Before someone is "up to par," before they *do* anything, they must know that they are loved and approved because of *who* they are in God's eyes.

When we give this kind of blessing straight from the Father's heart to ourselves and to those around us, new and abundant life will be free to come forward in and through many more lives. The uncommon unity Jesus prayed for will begin to come together, and we *all* will be free to multiply!

TO YOU THE READER

I bless you. I bless you with the Father not because I necessarily know you or your God-given unique potential, but because God knows you and loves you for who you are. Nothing you can do can change His love for you. You are approved, and He is well pleased. He loves you, He values you, and He believes in you. The Father cherishes the very differences in your heart, the differences that will come out by the nature of Christ and multiply to the world all around you. You have been created to be fruitful and multiply, and all that you need is already within you by the Spirit of the Lord. You are blessed by the Father, and I join Him in blessing you to be exactly who you are and all that He has created you to be. There is no one like you; and I praise God for that! I thank the Father for the different treasure and dreams He has stored up within you that will bring Him glory, love, and that will bear fruit that no one else can. I bless you because you are different, created to bear a unique likeness of

His image that the world is waiting to have shine toward their lives. You are a blessed child of God, and I love you because He loves you so. He is in you! Go, be fruitful and multiply!

Love,
Joey

ENDNOTE

1. The Toronto Blessing was a incredible revival held 1994 Canada that birthed churches and ministries worldwid

CHAPTER 2

LAUNCHED!

Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, ***"I never knew you;*** *depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness"* (Matthew 7:22-23).

We can so easily find ourselves in a pattern of striving. We strive to be somebody, to measure up, to fulfill promises that have been *given* to us, and we strive to bear fruit that we see from other people or churches. We can strive for signs, wonders, or any form of significance, and far too often we measure ourselves and success from side to side rather than the measurement of closely and uniquely knowing Him. We *want* to live a life that is launched to live and give life like Jesus, so we strive. But in reality, such measuring and striving only takes us further away from the real thing, and often separates us from one another.

We are each created to be launched into greater fruit than we can imagine. We don't have to strive to be someone or go somewhere that is already God's natural process and desire for

our lives. The enemy has deceived us into a culture of measurements and comparisons to keep us looking at self and others and keep us striving for fruit that measures up. But all this does is keep us striving through and toward division, locking us into a worldly culture rather than sending us out to be transformers of culture. The enemy wants to keep us away from that place from where we are launched. He wants to keep us striving for fruit so that we can't actually bear the impossible fruit that is *already inside us* because of He who lives in us. The devil knows what is inside us, so he tells us about our insignificance so that we will try and prove our significance.

But the truth is, there is Kingdom significance within you that is waiting not just to come out, but to be *launched into the world*. The enemy wants to keep us as a caterpillar that tunnels holes through whatever fruit it can find. But God sees the wings inside us, and wants to launch us to the world. The question is, can we cease from striving long enough to surrender to the cocoon that will transform and launch us into *more than we can dream?*

The butterfly is the very picture of transformation. It goes from a simple creature that crawls and scoots, one with limited vision and even lower capacity to fulfill such vision to live an inside-out life. It flutters peacefully and joyfully through its newfound kingdom in the air where perspective is now a strength rather than a problem. The butterfly's diversely patterned, uniquely colored wings are the platform for dreams that are suddenly within reach.

If the butterfly is the picture of transformation, then what is the cocoon that it is launched from? From the outside, a

cocoon can look like a perilous prison of confinement and inactivity. A simple, slow-moving creature like the caterpillar has enough limits, why would it want to purposefully surrender itself to that which looks like it could be even more limiting? To the outside world, the cocoon looks like a place of confinement; but from inside, the cocoon is the very picture of a launching pad. *We must celebrate the cocoon!* The transformation of the butterfly cannot be experienced or launched into its fullest potential if not for the cocoon. The cocoon is that place where the caterpillar surrenders its own striving, its own perspectives and opinions, and its own individual ways of accomplishing life. The cocoon offers one thing in return for the ways and efforts of self, oneness with the caterpillar's Creator. Most of our attention often centers on either the caterpillar or the butterfly, but if we want to live a life that is launched into the world the way Jesus prayed, the way the apostles in the book of Acts lived, then it is not about the caterpillar or the butterfly but what happens in between —*within the cocoon.*

This is where the heartbeat of our Creator aligns us with Himself and syncs us in tune with one another. We all want to see our lives and purposes launched to greater heights; however, the world is transformed by those who first learn to celebrate the cocoon. This is where oneness with the Spirit is developed and uncommon unity is naturally found. We lose the insecurity of insignificance that bludgeons our thoughts daily as a caterpillar, and we are launched to fly upon and fulfill all that has been inside us the whole time. This newfound security and our brand-new wings enable us to fly with one another. Our unity is not found in the likeness of our wings,

but in the origin of oneness we commonly experience with our Creator in the cocoon. Oneness empowers us. It empowers us when it is shared with God, and it empowers us when shared with one another.

Unity is the great exponent that multiplies all we have ever been or strived to be. If we want to live lives that are transformed by God and launched to the world, we will dive into that cocoon with the Spirit of God and let His full process of oneness and uniqueness take place. It is this kind of intimacy *and identity* that brings uncommon unity to life. Not only will we be transformed, we will be launched out together from uncommon communities to carry transformation to the world. We will become the picture from within our cocoon.

LAUNCHING OUT INTO THE DEEP

> *Then He* [Jesus] *got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking* (Luke 5:3-6).

The purpose of the cocoon is for oneness with the Creator, and the by-product is that we are launched out into the deep. That's where the oneness of the cocoon comes in. I am not saying we ourselves should jump straight into the deep end before ever learning to swim, nor should we send others to do the same. In all actuality, I believe we spend far too much time teaching people how to swim, how to steer the boat, and how to fish, and we spend far too little time facilitating each person's cocoon connection with Jesus where their wings *really* come to life! They don't need our teaching to prepare for launch nearly as much as they need time in the boat *with Jesus.*

Eventually, a caterpillar breaks free from its cocoon—often mid-air—into fluttering flight. It is launched directly into the air, right to the big leagues. Why? That's how powerful the cocoon is and the transformation that takes place inside. That's how vital this unusual season of human loneliness and godly closeness is to our wings and our dreams. If we are ever going to go into the deep places where Jesus longs to live through us, the deep places of the world that He Himself went to, then we must learn that the cocoon is essential, and its purpose is to transform us into His image and launch us out to be Jesus to the world. The shallow end was for teaching, but being with Jesus in the cocoon gives us wings for the deep. We are called, each in our own way, *to the deep!* Going out to the deep places as the apostles did in the book of Acts requires us to live lives that are not just taught, but transformed and *launched*. Unfortunately, many don't get off the launching pad. There are processes they think they have to prove themselves through, various trainings and programs, which are in fact very good *and necessary*. My focus here is

not to devalue these at all. Rather, these should be the accents instead of the main preparation for launch.

Like He did with the disciples, Jesus wants to lead us into the deeper waters where we experience miraculous catches with Him. The disciples were still in the early stages of following Him, but He didn't use their immaturity as an excuse to limit their potential. In fact, that is often the time in people's walk with Christ when they are most ripe to taste what God created them for, their cocoon. This is often when we teach them the ways of the caterpillar—but our new birth should empower us into the ways of the butterfly. Why would we focus on making people more refined caterpillars when there are wings inside ready to come out by a natural process waiting within the cocoon? We need to take people into the cocoon and show them a vision for launch. We are indeed called to makes disciples, but if we will ever be a generation that is launched to the world, we will have to learn that this launch in someone's life is intended to go deep early on, and requires less of us and more time in their cocoon with the Creator.

One of the things I love most about the life and ministry of Jesus is that He did evangelism and discipleship *at the same time!* We compartmentalize these two aspects far too often, so that by the time many of us would be ready to launch out to the deep we have lost our passion and fervor. Jesus knows the way to lead; we need to lead people to their own cocoon time with Jesus, instead of focusing on them being led by us.

When we focus too much on outward processes and shallow proving grounds, we model a harvest field that is only ankle deep. It is safe, but there are few fish there, and we know that Jesus is going where the fish are. Jesus focused on

launching out to the deep, and His prayer that the world would believe shows us that He is focused on sending you and me there as well! We often save the deep subjects to be found in church, in services, programs, Bible studies, and the like. We often make teaching the deeper place, but such knowledge does very little when sitting in shallow waters. Our teaching is deep, but our catch and expectations are shallow. A concerted effort is needed for teaching and catching to complement each other. Even our greatest efforts to empower people are limited compared to being empowered directly by the living God, and then going *with* Him to the world. The world is waiting!

The Body of Christ is the habitation of God within His people. The Church should be the cocoon, not for depth of teaching from us, but for a new depth of interaction with the Creator Himself. We must be a place where our foremost teaching is to empower each caterpillar to go straight to the Source for themselves, where God can and will empower them directly, with our aid, to go out to the deep places of the world. In doing so, we will prepare them for launch! The cocoon facilitates launch, and we are called to facilitate the cocoon, rather than teach them the better or more refined life of the caterpillar. Every person created by God in His image has an innate desire for wings—and to fly. People want the launch they were created for, much more than they even know. We would be shocked to learn how many Christian caterpillars actually have wings inside waiting to bust out, fly to the outermost parts of the world, or simply and powerfully through our own neighborhood letting God reveal His true colors of transforming love through what has finally been revealed *in* our wings.

The world cannot taste or see God except through our wings—they reveal the new birth! And we will not contend for the wings we were created to fly on without a vision for launch. We must have a vision *for the deep* that requires us to have a cocoon of oneness with our Creator that is *even deeper*. The caterpillar could scoot, crawl, and toil all night and accomplish nothing, just as the disciples struggled and shared with Jesus before He got in the boat to empower them. There is more within us waiting to be empowered because we were created for the deep.

God is preparing us for launch. He is preparing to launch His people out to fulfill Jesus' final prayer, *so that the world may believe*. This also means He is preparing to launch us out of our churches, out of our comfort zones, outside the glow of nightly television times in our homes. The deep isn't always comfortable and shallow waters often are. But there are few fish there. And Jesus is praying for the deep, He desires *the world*. We have no need for wings and are content little caterpillars until we have vision for the deep, and then we have reason for launch. Only then will we give up our striving and seek out the cocoon. The Church has the opportunity to be the protective shell of the cocoon. Where each person has the opportunity to dive into the rabbit hole inside and be wooed into a transformational oneness with their Creator—a oneness that empowers each person to impact the deep places of the world!

We are called to our neighborhoods and the nations. The people in *those places* need not only to be evangelized, they need to taste and see what we received while *in the cocoon!* They need us to go to the deeper places while showing them a deeper oneness that's available with their Creator, a oneness

that is uniquely shown through the colors and patterns of our newfound wings. The world is waiting for us to be launched outside the church into deeper waters. But that will only happen when we put a renewed emphasis on the cocoon, because caterpillars can barely survive in *shallow* waters, much less the deep.

If we will fulfill our call and answer the world's cry, we *will* find ourselves in deep waters, *after* we have known Him in the cocoon. We might prepare in shallow waters, but only for the purpose of being launched to the deep. And for the deep, we need wings. We need what, or Who, is inside the cocoon, and we need vision for the deep places He is launching us into on the other side. Uncommon unity with our Creator is not just the goal or the end, but the means for launch. Striving, scooting caterpillars may bicker over which way or path is best, but *empowered* butterflies flutter freely together on the differences that become their wings. Only the cocoon can bring out such a unity where every wing, color, and pattern is different—yet all are flying together toward the deep.

We have mistaken unity for making people into similar caterpillars within proximity of one another. But the kind of unity Jesus prayed for finds us united in Him, while being launched out in different ways and methods and to different regions or targets of the deep. Oneness, and therefore true identity, happens inside the cocoon. A place that seems small and separate is actually the place we are best prepared for the uncommon unity Jesus prayed for so that together we can each uniquely go out to the deep waters He created *us* for. We may launch out in different directions and different ways, but we'll do so *together!* The cocoon celebrates our diversity while

uniting us in the most uncommon but powerful ways—in Him.

IN THE COCOON

Before my book *Revolutionary Freedom* was published and released by Destiny Image Publishers, it went through quite a time of preparation for its launch. *Revolutionary Freedom* started for me in the winter of 2000 in a vision with the Lord, without the plan of writing a book. It came from hours and hours a day of being on my face with the Lord, when one day the vision began. God led me piece by piece until I had the core of what became the finished product. I began to share that core piece of the book with family and friends and saw immediately that God's favor was on it. However, I heard the Lord speak clearly, *"Put it on the shelf, it is for a later time."* So that's what I did. Every now and then I would sense a prompting to take it off the shelf and edit, rewrite, or add something the Lord was showing me to include. But for the most part, the book was on the shelf until the Lord said otherwise.

Fast forward to February 2010. We were living in Ethiopia and preparing for a trip home to the United States for April through June. I was preparing for our trip and seeking the Lord for the upcoming season, asking how we could align with Him and join Him in the time ahead. One of the clear words I received was that it was "almost time" to take the book off the shelf and submit for publishing. I asked the Lord for His leading in this and He highlighted Destiny Image Publishers and said that this was the one. However, it still wasn't quite time, but "almost time." So I continued to wait and trust.

We had a great trip while in the States reconnecting with family and friends. For Anna and Aynalem, our two adopted daughters, it was their first trip to the States with us, so it was a very special time for them to get to know people who mean so much to us. Also, Destiny, my wife, and Mercy and Galilee (our natural daughters), and I needed to send our passports to Washington, DC, to renew our Ethiopian visas. We were scheduled to travel back to Ethiopia the first of July and had great anticipation with the Lord, believing Him for a powerful and fruitful season ahead, which did end up coming to fruition. However, our passports were not returned to us from DC with the new visas. We had spoken with the embassy and the passports and applications made it, were processed for new visas, and put back in the insured, self-addressed envelope we had included. We had every bit of tracking possible, but suddenly, one day the envelope disappeared. The day of our flight back to Ethiopia was quickly approaching, and we had spoken with virtually every level of the U.S. Postal Service, but no one had a clue where our passports might be. The postal service employees we spoke with said that they had never seen something vanish in such an unusual way. To use their words, "It's like they dropped off the face of the earth." As you can imagine, that wasn't the most comforting statement to hear.

We kept praying and asking God for a solution. It required approximately $2,000 to expedite the replacement of all four passports, replace the visas again, and pay for all the changes to our flights. We were on the phone with our travel agent almost daily, continually bumping back our flights as we waited —hoping—for our passports to miraculously show up out of nowhere. But nothing came, and we had zero of the $2,000 we

needed to start the process of going home.

We were living in our aunt and uncle's living room, who were graciously allowing us to overtake their space. Each day was a battle and a grind, watching God provide just enough to live each day, wanting to go home to Ethiopia, and yet not having any answers. Finally after more than three weeks of this struggle, I started to sense an answer that perhaps I had been missing the whole time. I began to sense from the Lord that I had forgotten something I already had and was late recognizing. Finally I got it, the day of Destiny's birthday party, I realized what the Lord wanted me to see after all these years—it was time to take the book off the shelf. It was His timing. The Lord had prompted me that the time was coming, but I had forgotten.

Late that night I went online to begin submission of the book to Destiny Image. I finished the process about midnight and climbed into bed with a unique, unspeakable peace that seemed to be dripping from the ceiling above. Seven hours later I was up and on the phone, continuing in my mission with the post office, our travel agent, and others to work on getting us home. It was now Monday, and our flights were rescheduled to depart California on Friday. These were the last open seats before flights would be booked solid for three weeks due to increased summertime adoption travel.

As I was on the phone, our daughter Mercy came up to me and stood patiently like she had something important to say. When I got off the phone and inquired what she was thinking, she told me that she just had a dream. "Daddy, God showed me in my dream that we got our passports," she said with a big smile from ear to ear. "Really? That's great," I responded.

"We'll see what happens!"

Eight hours later I checked our account, which now showed a balance of just over $2,000. That was a huge increase on the zero balance it had shown that morning. We were all in awe of the Lord; He had been waiting for us to align with Him in His timing before going back to Ethiopia, timing that has proven very strategic as we now look back on our last year in Ethiopia and our move back to the States. God had been holding the book, but now He was preparing it for launch, and we had to get on board so as not to delay His timing. Immediately, we planned a drive to San Francisco the next day to try and get into the passport agency, even though we had no appointment. When we arrived Tuesday afternoon, they told us that their computers were having problems and they were running behind. We had to make our Friday flight, but still needed the four passports and get them to DC and back by Thursday in order to make our flight. This meant we needed the passports the same day so that we could go to FedEx before that day's shipment went out.

Amazingly, we received our new passports, despite their computer problems, in only three hours. We actually ran down the street with the stroller leading the way and prayed over the FedEx envelope as it started its trek to DC and back. We called the Ethiopian embassy in DC to let them know of the situation; they were already familiar with us after the loss of our original passports and said they would do their best to process them immediately.

We started our drive back to Fresno that evening and then called a family member who had been around a lot when God first gave the vision of the book some ten years before.

However, he did not know that we were in the process of taking it off the shelf. When I called, he began to share that he was interceding for us two nights before and asking God why we were delayed, pleading for our return to Ethiopia. He said that as he was praying he had a vision, and the Lord showed him that we were delayed because it was time for the book to come off the shelf and that it needed to be submitted now. I began weeping as he shared this, and let him know that the Lord had spoken the same thing to us that same day—that very night we submitted the book we now know as *Revolutionary Freedom*.

Thursday morning, just in time for our early Friday flight, our passports arrived. Ten minutes later, no joke, our *old* passports showed up in an unmarked plastic bag left on the doorstep with a note, "Sorry for any inconvenience." The Lord has a funny sense of humor. But, He knew how vital it was for us to come into oneness with Him and His timing *before* going back to Ethiopia, for the sake of the book and for the new season He was launching us into. We would not be where we are right now if it had not been for these events. So He held back our passports until we found that place of alignment, then gave us two sets of passports, put us on that last flight, started the publishing process of *Revolutionary Freedom,* and launched us and the book into a whole new season. We heard back from Destiny Image quickly as we began what ended up being a powerful season of fruitfulness and multiplication in Ethiopia—our last year there. An amazing oneness developed that last year that began to spread like a growing family.

God held us and the book in a cocoon-like state, and it was in submitting to that oneness with Him and His timing that

prepared us and the book for launch within His perfect season. Timing is such a vital element in our oneness with the Lord, and therefore with one another. We are now watching God form an incredible community here in Colorado, watching a unity form so quickly, uncommonly, that it seems miraculous to us all. Many of our initial connection points with this family community came through random stops or connections God made through the release of *Revolutionary Freedom,* in various parts of the country. The uncommon unity that is now launching us as a community has been a direct result of the oneness and timing God called us into with Him for the book. There was a long cocoon season, but such a season brought forward the timing that has united us all in preparation for God's desired launch. In fact, we later found out that the $2,000 that showed up hours after submitting the book had originally been sent by a gracious donor three weeks earlier, but kept being returned to sender for different reasons. God was hiding passports and delaying funding until we were in alignment with His timing. That is how the cocoon impacts us, by preparing us for launch.

Many of us have pretended as kids to shoot something into the air, and counted down that moment of timing for launch. Timing is essential for such a powerful action such as launching a shuttle toward space. It's this countdown that helps prepare and bring the "launch team" together. Timing plays a huge role in the oneness Jesus prayed for and is of the utmost importance if we will each be launched to the world to see God's best emerge and multiply out of us. For such to occur, there is a right time and season. Timing is extremely important to the Lord, and even more so that we learn to

discern such timing. This was one of the greatest rebukes Jesus ever spoke when He did so to the Pharisees and Sadducees:

> *He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times"* (Matthew 16:2-3).

As we prayed about moving back from the United States to Ethiopia, I often stood on the rooftop of our home looking up at the sky as I prayed. I stared at the clouds and meditated on this verse. The reality was that I would love a clear sign before making such a big move with our family, leaving our Ethiopian family, and moving one country to another. The movement God had shown us there had really taken off, and the "family" of local leaders was emerging greatly. I wanted a sign to make it clear. But God wanted me to discern the season we were in, and to see the season that He was preparing to reveal just ahead. He wanted us to see the clouds of our circumstances, certain rising needs among our kids, to recognize the flow and direction He was clearly moving us toward and understand how that affected our decisions at the current time. He wanted us to recognize and discern His timing and step by faith, not according to a sign, but according to what He was doing.

This verse in Matthew 16, though convicting at times, gave us the greatest clarity and comfort in knowing how to come

into oneness with God and be ready for the launch He had planned for the book—and for a new season in our lives.

We often place such a high focus on *time,* but far less emphasis on *timing*. Why is that? Our oneness with the Lord and the uncommon unity with one another depend greatly on learning to flip this emphasis in our lives. We must become a people far less controlled by time and far more sensitive to God's *timing*. It is imperative for launch. The world is waiting to believe in the powerful way that Jesus prayed would take place, and He is waiting to launch us out as the answer to empower such belief. We will live this answer out toward the world when we are united and ready for launch, synced together through the recognition of His timing.

HEART-SYNCED

> *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul…* (Acts 4:32).

Look at the apostles in the book of Acts. As we have discussed, they were found together in *"one heart and one soul."* This reality comes alive when we look a little deeper at the Greek definitions for these phrases. *"One heart"* means to be "in sync" or "in tune." While *"one soul"* literally means to "breathe spiritually together." The living definition of each of these phrases insists upon timing. We are not told merely that all the apostles were united in agreement. Rather, we are told that they were in sync and in tune, so much so that they were *breathing spiritually together*. This was not a unity of opinion or method, it was a oneness of *timing*. Such oneness is

impossible without each person being in tune with the Source, and therefore with one another. It can't be the other way around. True unity always begins in living oneness with the Source.

Opinion does not unite us, the beat of the Father's heart does! That is why the cocoon is so important for launch; we develop a oneness with our Creator and begin to learn His ways and timing, as do others. We get used to the beats of His heart and the discerning of His seasons. From the cocoon, with our Creator, we will be launched out to the deep places of the world, revealing the answer to Jesus' final prayer because out of such closeness our hearts will begin to beat in sync with His tune. Together we will become part of a new song that shakes the world, the sound of uncommon unity coming from all who live by the same beat of God's heart.

Right now, we are watching God bless our family with people who are brand-new to us, with various gifts and callings, almost on a daily basis at times. They are sounding the same beats of the Father's heart He has made echo in our hearts and home. We are watching God align previously hidden people and families who have been on obscure, oftentimes lonely, but very powerful journeys—cocoon times—only for those journeys to suddenly match up just in time for us to launch together!

Look at a marching band or orchestra where the beats of the drum line help launch all the diverse sounds and parts by establishing a rhythm that creates their unity. The impeccable sound that flows from their instruments is not because they have all learned to do things the same way, but because each of their different parts come to know the timing of the

foundational beats. The Father's heart is our drum line, where *His* beat is newly established in *our* hearts so that we may come into "one heart" with those around us. And from that heartbeat, we breathe spiritually together while launched out in different directions, through differing means, into the deep places of the world. As we go out, we may even get different results. But we are not so much called to measure or compare the amount of results created over a period of time; rather, we learn to measure our lives and steps by the beats and *timing* of His heart, which keeps us together in Him. We can strive for results, and we just may get them. Or we can be launched by the timing of His heart and later discover world-changing impact so great it could never be measured.

THE GREAT EXPONENT

I like to refer to this *"one heart and one soul"* kind of unity we read of in Acts 4 as *The Great Exponent*. God has made us in His image, with the original purpose of taking dominion over the earth, being fruitful, and multiplying. From the beginning of time we have been created to be people who are empowered to produce great impact. Then Jesus reconciled us to the Father through His death on the Cross, and gave us a new kind of life —*resurrection life!* Our potential was then increased to an infinitely greater impact. He then sent His Spirit to come and dwell *in us*, to lead us and empower us to live and love the way Jesus did toward the whole world, completing the Great Commission *in power*.

The Spirit is the most powerful force on earth, God Himself, and He dwells in us. The greatest, most loving, world-changing power the world could ever know is *already* inside us who

believe. So you can imagine what happens when we come together for such power in each of our individual lives to be joined in unique oneness. The Spirit makes this oneness happen and brings us into alignment with the beat of the Father's heart. He enables us to be one with God just as Jesus had prayed. The indwelling Spirit of God is already the most powerful agent of change on the face of the earth; the only thing greater is when we as individuals are united uncommonly in the Spirit, and this unity becomes *The Great Exponent* that combines with the Spirit's flow in our lives—an exponent that launches and multiplies our lives out to the world. We live from the same beat so that our song may hit a new decibel and the world will sing along and believe! The Spirit inside empowers us individually, beyond what we even know. But uncommon unity among us empowers the Spirit to multiply exponentially through the Body of Christ and give life to the world.

Imagine the reverse effect of the Tower of Babel. God had to destroy their attempt because they were operating in such unity, but to a negative end. God knew the devastating effects of what would happen had they continued to operate in such oneness. He recognized their unity and realized that it had world-altering potential, and evil could not be permitted to breed in such a united way. That same potential and power of unity is available to us all—in us all—and it is what Jesus prayed we would live into, *for the sake of all*. We have been invited into an uncommon unity that is the very heartbeat of the Father. Largely, it is an invitation into the cocoon. We give up the scooting, slow, striving ways of the caterpillar, come into oneness with our Creator, discover our true wings, and are launched out to the deep of the world! Uncommon unity is The

Great Exponent over all God has made available to us and the launching pad to see Jesus' prayer answered.

We must celebrate the cocoon and get ready for launch —*together!*

CHAPTER 3

THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which you have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:20-26).

Unity has always been a big part of my life message. Even when I was very young, before I even knew any outward concepts of unity I would find myself naturally walking in that place among others. I loved rallying people together around

ideas, to play sports, introduce friends, and empower people to come together from different parts of life toward varying purposes. Before I could ever speak about God's design for unity, it was already a vital part of my DNA.

The first time I ever had the privilege to preach was at a citywide youth event when I was seventeen years of age. The date of the gathering happened to fall on the weekend that wrapped up my one-week fall break at the beginning of my senior year in high school. I was incredibly blessed by the opportunity and took a great deal of time pressing into the Lord, asking Him for His heart and what He wanted shared. Just before fall break began, I received clarity for my message —unity, Jesus' final prayer.

Fall break was usually a time that I would be on the go, even more so than usual. But when I heard the focus of unity from the Lord, I also sensed His Spirit giving me direction for my break from school. I was to fast from social involvement that week and huddle up with the Lord Himself to be prepared in a deep, intimate oneness with Him. I was very social growing up, so I thought this might be a long week.

However, I will always look back on the oneness Jesus and I shared that week as one of the best weeks of my life. One might think that unity would actually start in that social arena, that interacting with friends and others would actually strengthen the message I was preparing to speak. But it was this deep oneness with the Lord that was most vital in preparing the way for the message of unity to come to life. The unity I experienced with God that fall break of my senior year was uncommon—*life changing!* It led me to understand the unity Jesus Himself prayed for so earnestly before going to the

Cross—still uncommon—and sure to be *world changing!*

I believe it is imperative that we as the Body of Christ continue to learn how to come into timing and alignment *with* the Father's heart. As I press in to Him for *this current time,* I am overcome once again with the burden of His heart to see us, His children, rise up within the earnest desire Christ prayed for and walk in a *sound* unity that will reveal the fullness of God's heart, His grace, and His Son Jesus to the world—*that they may believe!*

As much as unity has always been a natural beat in my heart, there have been enough desert and wilderness times these past ten to twelve years that, instead of drawing people together, I have found myself isolated and alone, seeking to walk the path He has set before me. But now in these last years, I have seen God strengthen my ability to live and lead through a life of uncommon unity *because* of those alone times. It seemed like the opposite of the powerful unity God had called me to early on, appearing as if it was off the radar, only to realize it was being more deeply prepared in uncommon oneness with Him.

Unity carries a timing from the Father's heart, a beating desire at the very core of God's nature, and I believe we are hearing those heartbeats right now, *for this time*. I believe there are many individuals and families, perhaps even you, who have felt the same. There are many who have been isolated in a place that appeared to be the very opposite of the dream and calling they know the Lord has put within them. We have been in *a wilderness of oneness,* learning the core nature of Jesus' final prayer and desire for ourselves. God has been deepening our dreams and calling in the foundations of oneness with Him, a

oneness that has prepared the way for the generation now rising up to reveal the answer to Jesus' final prayer, that *we* might be *one,* that the world would believe.

If there is anything you take away from this book, I pray that such would not be merely of the words you read, but of God's desire for a powerful, uncommon unity with and among His children—an uncommon unity that can change the world. I believe that this is the unity our Father is calling us back to, oneness we can live from through good times and hard times, to the ends of the earth and back. I pray that such unity would come alive and bring us each into unique but perfect oneness with *His* vision for such. The heart of God beats at this time for His people to come into an uncommon unity that shakes and transforms the world—a unity that empowers us to live out Jesus' final prayer. I pray that we would align with this beat of the Father's heart for what He *will* accomplish through uncommon unity in this generation and during this season of time.

THE HEAD AND THE BODY

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forevermore (Psalm 133).

This Scripture passage has been everywhere I turn this past season. I have not been able to escape it. The Lord reopened me to it recently to begin speaking out through prayer. Then I would move on into other passages only to have the Spirit continuously lead my fingers to open to this page again. So, I began declaring it *again and again!* And then I moved on, remembering the passage, but not yet getting the urgency of importance or timing He apparently wanted me to understand. He brought me back to the passage yet again, in preparation for a conference where I would be speaking. At this conference, I saw the passage's truth come to life and contend against intense warfare only to bring about even greater sharpening and powerful victory. I went to the next conference where we were ministering, and though I had not heard Psalm 133 spoken out loud by someone else for years, I heard it brought up or spoken three separate times that day, even though it was not any part of a discussed or deliberate theme or message.

The Holy Spirit was trying to highlight a message to me. He had turned me back to its pages time and again. He brought people who continued to value and speak its importance. And on top of it all, Psalm 133 aligns with two of my life passages from John 17:20-26 and Acts 4:29-34, each with a unique and exponential value for unity that empowers us from an uncommonly found place. I don't hesitate to say, not only was the Holy Spirit trying to prompt me of Psalm 133's content, but He wanted me to see the power of unity He had given me a passion for all these years come alive in the current season —*now!* Now, is *His* time! And *now*, we must be ready to join Him where His heart is.

I believe this so much so that I would say I *know* the Father's heart breaks for how His house is divided. I am not talking about the physical structures of His house, but us, the family structure of His house. We are His house, His people, His children. But I am not writing this to point to the faulty lines of division creating a crack in our house. The Bible does not focus only on how to rectify division. Rather, God always points to division's antithesis, *multiplication!*

There is an opportunity before us to come together in an uncommon unity, found together in the intimate places of His heart, and launched together to uniquely reveal His Kingdom to our neighborhoods and the nations. The Father grieves over how we see one another, and the petty lines of opinion we allow to cause such judgment and death. We must grieve only if we do not take the opportunity set before us, the opportunity to empower a generation to become the answer to Jesus' final prayer, *that we would be one that the world may believe!*

We are part of the Body of Christ in which *Jesus is the Head*. That very premise—or promise—makes this picture from Psalm 133 come to life:

> *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like t h e* ***precious oil upon the head,*** *running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments* (Psalm 133:1-2).

You can see where we are heading with this, no pun intended. Unity among the brethren is like oil upon the head

(Jesus), and then it proceeds to run and drip down the rest of the body (us). Naturally speaking, we often think of unity as something that happens among *us,* the members who must unite. But in His reality, the Father's uncommon definition shows us that in all actuality, unity begins with the Head, and all other parts of the Body come into alignment with such. As each of our body parts is connected to and governed by the brain, so does true, uncommon unity take place when we are each found first in oneness with God. When unity starts with the Head, there is an oil, an anointing that begins to drip down and cover the entire body. Isaiah 10:27 says that the anointing oil destroys the yoke. It is most often the yokes we each carry that bump up against one another and keep us from coming close into a united alignment. But when we come into unity with the Head, His oil drips down, breaks off each of our individual yokes, and suddenly we fit together flawlessly because now what we were carrying cannot be used against one another, and we are free to be brought together.

I was at a conference recently where the featured speaker had invited me to come and share a little about my recently released book at the time, *Revolutionary Freedom.* After the night's activities were finished, the speaker and her husband asked us if they could anoint us with oil as part of what they had seen the Lord empowering across the nations. I've been part of a lot of times such as these, both receiving and giving the anointing through oil and prayer. Almost every time though, I have always used or had used upon me a small, scented anointing oil that was packaged for such and offered little more than a few drops at a time—occasionally a handful. But this time was different. The two walked up to my wife and

me with a full liter of olive oil. I figured this was the only oil available and though it was a large size that it would be used sparingly. Wow, was I wrong!

One at a time, they took the liter of olive oil (it was not completely full, but full enough) and began to pour it upon the crown of our heads. The oil started at our heads and flowed down our faces, then our necks, our shoulders, and dripped down our clothes and bodies. We were drenched in oil, so much so that even those who were part of the conference and knew what was taking place stopped us to see what had happened. We were glistening, even shining, because of the oil dripping from our heads. Those around us couldn't imagine that we would be *this* covered in oil, from head to toe. But is this not what the blessing of life from Psalm 133 is talking about? The oil starts at the Head and flows down to cover, seal, and envelope the whole Body.

This is the picture of unity that God is calling us to. It is not a uniting of opinion, direction, method, or theology—this is a different kind of unity that starts with the Head. When we each come into a new, fresh alignment with the Head, we find that we are also uniquely, uncommonly, and powerfully united with one another as well. Unity with one another begins with our own oneness with Christ, His love and His vision for unity. We often see unity as coming into the same agreement with one another. But Jesus sees unity as diversity—glorious diversity—an uncommon kind of unity that actually celebrates and blesses the powerful diversity of Christ in one another and their own oneness with the Head. That's where the oil is coming from. When we look to unite out of similarity, we become like two positive-sided magnets repelling one another

because of the will of self or insecurity. But when we celebrate the other's positive touch to our negative, or vice versa, we come into a connected position that is hard to pull apart.

Only oneness with Jesus can do this; because to the world, it is an uncommon kind of unity. For His kind of oneness, we have to learn to see differently, with fresh Kingdom vision that sees beyond our own bias, opinion, comfort zone, or insecurity. That starts by looking at Him and finishes by looking through Him. We have to see through His eyes, and that is impossible without intimate oneness, the kind of oneness Jesus prayed forward on our behalf in His final prayer. Unity comes alive naturally—if not uncommonly—when we each come into our own natural alignment with the Head. His oil is released and He makes the unity of the Body come together in a shine that is brighter than ever before—causing the world around us to take new and special notice!

Look at how our individual body parts function with each other. They don't try to get along and negotiate with one another as to who is going to move where, when, and how. They don't argue whose perspective is closest to the head—that would be chaos! They each have His perspective, often the same perspective manifesting differently and flowing through them each in a different way. Why, because they are each connected to the brain, the head.

Often we can have the same perspective and not even realize it because we stop looking at or empowering one another's connection and simply look at the outward manifestation. This is where we try to get one another to bend or move in the same way we do. But even our arms, which look to be so similar, move and bend from opposite paradigms, the

left and the right. Why is it that we acknowledge different parts, but often still expect everything or everyone else to look and think the same? That is foolish on our part and lacking perspective. We would not have that perspective if we were living out Jesus' final prayer, to be *one with Him*. We should not try to control one another's unique manifestation of how the grace of Christ is released through our lives, but rather empower one another to have the best connection possible, leaving the external movement, method, and manifestations of such connection up to God and that person.

Many will say that we are to judge by the fruit, and that is true except for the measure that *we* often lean on to judge fruit —often measuring against our own perspective rather than the Head's measurement, expectation, and timing. Each part of our body connects to the brain, and as long as each part is in its naturally created, united connection with the brain, then it works flawlessly with the rest to *live out* our fullest potential. We must come into our natural, pure connection with the Head and empower each person to do the same. *Then* we will learn a unity that celebrates the diversity of Christ emerging through each person in a diversity of ways. When we put our eyes back on Him alone, the Head, we will naturally be led into a unity that begins to celebrate and reveal His glory that is in and waiting to come out of one another to the world.

JESUS' PRAYER

> *I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You,*

> *Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which you have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them* (John 17:20-26).

I personally believe this is one of the most important passages in the Bible for the time that we are in. It is important to God. It was important to Jesus then, the passion with which He speaks to the Father is clear. And it is important to Him now. I believe the Father is grieved for the ways we divide the splendor of His house. We *are* His house, and it is time that the world gets to see the oneness that expresses His love and glory and shakes the whole world to believe!

The Body of Christ flails about in different sects as if in a full blown seizure because we have failed to seize the *glorious differences* in one another through the Head's eyes. Our

division, pointing of fingers, and infighting inflicts injury on our own body *and* the world around us because we fail to see one another and self through His unique view from above. The arm certainly sees the leg differently than the Head does. Or does the arm even have eyes to see the leg at all apart from the Head and His view? The arm must look through the signal of the brain to see the leg correctly. So must we learn a new oneness with Christ, the oneness Jesus Himself, the Head, has prayed for. As we realize this renewed oneness with the Head, our perspective of one another will change to celebrate the different manifestations of life through every other part, rather than bring condemnation to those whose ways, fruit, and movement are actually *created* on purpose to be different. That is uncommon unity. Jesus prayed for it because He knows it *will* bring uncommon fruit—*the world will believe!*

Jesus prayed that we would be one with Him as He is one with the Father. Our freedom for such has been accomplished. As believers, Christ lives within us. We are full of His Spirit, revival Himself is in us—but we carry a piece, just like the person next to us. And we each see only in part, a blessing and a curse. A blessing because Jesus shines even brighter through the oneness and unity available to us; a curse because we often judge in full while only seeing in part. The opportunity is there for us. Christ is in us, the hope of glory! (See Colossians 1:27.) We can shine fully, but still only shine in part. We *need* those who are different from us. In Jesus' final prayer, He said, *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent Me…"* (John 17:22-23).

The fullness of such given glory cannot come alive apart from our oneness with Him, and the uncommon unity with one another that follows. His glory is in us, but it shines brighter when, through the Head, we reveal the glory in one another, even when—*especially when*—that person shines Him differently than we do.

REVEALING HIS GLORY

Jesus prayed that we would all be one in the same way that He and the Father are one. That is some pure and powerful unity right there. So pure in fact that it would seem impossible to achieve, and it would be impossible if it were about uniting with one another. But Jesus also said that He had given us the glory the Father gave Him *so that* we would be one in such a way. Glory is not just something we possess; it is also something we recognize in others and the world around us. We have received the glory, the fullness of Christ! But we often take the glory we each have received and begin to prove that the glory we have been given, or our perspective of such, is what everyone else must come into alignment with. Do we ever think that perhaps His glory is so immense that we have received but a small part? Have we received the glory of Christ only to demand that everyone look at proof that our way is correct? Or have we been given this glory in Christ, each of us a unique grace of such, so that our glory through Christ will actually reveal a different but equally special piece of His glory in the person next to us?

Jesus prayed that we would be one in the Father and the Son *that* the world may believe! We often pray with Moses, *"Lord, show me Your glory!"* I love this prayer and have

prayed it more times than I can count. But is it possible that that glory of the risen Christ, the glory that will shine so brightly that the whole world will believe, is actually waiting to be revealed from within those who are next to you, from within those who are different from you? What if we prayed, *"Lord, show them Your glory"* that they might see themselves as God sees them. Or, *"Lord, show me Your glory in them!"* We must be so one with the Head and His vision that we can learn to recognize the glory of Christ when He is revealed to us in different ways and through different parts of His Body each day.

One of the most difficult challenges the people of Jesus' time faced was to recognize the Christ when He came. His own people, the religious leaders, they all crucified Him because they could not recognize Him or the glory of the Father they had been praying for when it was revealed in a package that was different from their own experience or expectation. It is the most tragic of thoughts to think of missing out on Christ when He comes to us. I have thought often of whether or not I would have been able to recognize Him had I been alive back then. I have heard many others wonder the same.

But do we not face the very same challenge today, perhaps even amplified? Christ in all His glory comes to each of us every day through the people around us, not just in one disguise, but many! He comes to us in *the disguise of difference,* the same difference we often use to keep one another an arm's length away. Is our lack of unity not a declaration that we still haven't learned to see through the Head's eyes to recognize Christ when He visits us? How many different times has He come to visit us, to meet us, to teach us,

bless us, empower and love us, and we have rejected Him yet again because the manifestation of such does not fit within our experience or expectation?

There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus! I will say it again, because it goes toward how we see self and recognize Christ in our own lives, and how we see others and recognize His unique and different glory in theirs. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus! When we judge one another, we are actually acting to deface what Jesus did on the Cross. We are operating out of a spirit that is *counter* that of Christ. We are resurrecting condemnation and trying to put Christ back in the grave. Yet how often do we do this with a full artillery of justification from our own experience, failing to recognize the fresh experience of Christ revealed to the world differently through others. Many of us have become infatuated with discovering the person of the antichrist of the end times. But isn't this spirit of condemnation and division antichrist in its very nature and application? As Jesus prayed for such a special unity, are we failing to recognize Christ in one another in such a way and actually living contrary to His final prayer? But again, I do not want to focus on what we are doing wrong, rather on what Christ Himself prayed we would *do right.* We have an opportunity to live in an uncommon unity that fans the flames on the world's belief in Jesus, and it starts with how we recognize Christ and His glory in one another, through His eyes.

As believers, Christ lives in each of us. He died and rose again to live out of us each, and to live out of us each differently unto a *greater glory!* To experience the fullness of that greater glory—here on earth as it is in Heaven—we must

begin promoting the life of Christ within one another, *especially* when it looks different from our own.

There are two things that will radically change our ability to live out such an uncommon unity. First, we must approve ourselves to be different. We must approve what the Father has already approved. We don't have to strive, measure, or compare. We can freely be who He created us to be, approving who Jesus is in our lives, and thus approving our oneness with Him. Jesus prayed, *"I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me…"* (John 17:23). Jesus knew the unity we are called to, and He knew that it begins first from each of us being one with Him. When we focus on our oneness with Him, we enter into the recipe of being made *"perfect in one…that the world may know."* We set an example of freedom for others to follow. When we take care of our part, He will take care of the rest until we are ready to see through His higher "Head perspective" and join Him in the ways He is moving differently in the Body around us. If I am one with Him and you are one with Him, it does not matter how differently we see things; we will be found in unity together because we are both found pressed against the Father's heart.

Second, we must look for and promote the glory in one another through the perspective of the Head. We must see with the Father's eyes, not so overly focused on correcting perceived error, but looking to bless life! Look how Jesus interacted with Lazarus when He raised him from the dead. Lazarus was wearing grave clothes, probably could have been considered unclean and in need of some help before he could go forward in life. Even Martha, who so eagerly waited for the

miracle she wanted, couldn't help but focus on the stench of death. And how did Jesus respond but to point to the glory of God waiting to be seen: *"Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"* (John 11:40). Jesus didn't look at the circumstances of death, Jesus called forth the hidden glories of life! Jesus didn't first go to manage the unclean grave clothes, the bondage or smell that might have been upon Lazarus. Rather, Jesus called out the life in Lazarus knowing that death would be left behind as Lazarus began to live forward. Jesus spoke to the potential of life within him, *"Lazarus, come forth!"* (John 11:43). And he did! It was not until Lazarus came forward in life that Jesus called for him to be loosed of all that bound him and let go.

We have the opportunity to see and call forward the glory and life of the already resurrected Christ in one another. Jesus has taken care of the rest (see John 11:39-44). We have to leave behind our own grave clothes to cease from pointing at the grave clothes on one another, for doing so only highlights the stench of death. We can be like Jesus, point to the hidden or disguised glory of God in unexpected ways and call forth life! Seeing through Jesus' eyes in this way will paint the picture of unity, one person at a time.

PROMOTING HIS GLORY

Promoting the glory of Christ in one another is a little bit like the game Leap Frog that we often played as children. In order to play Leap Frog and move forward in the game, you must play with at least one other person, if not more. One person must get down on the ground and the other leaps forward over him or her—it is the only method of legal forward

movement toward the goal. Player 1 must get down and promote Player 2 to jump over him or her before Player 2 will get down and allow Player 1 to jump over and advance as well. It is not a game for pride or those who are easily offended. And the advancement happens that much farther and that much faster the more players you have working together. The more people working together in unity, the more jumps forward you get to make on your turn. So it is when we promote the unique grace that is Christ's glory in those around us, we promote Christ to an extent that the whole world may believe! The person next to us has a revelation of Christ that we don't have. They will reach people we will not reach. But they might not know that; they might be trying to hide their difference and waiting for someone like you or me to bless and promote that area to life!

Jesus was passionate in His prayer for unity, a special kind of oneness. He knew that the lack of such could be devastating to a house of people who are divided, but that it could be exponential in the fullness of His glory being revealed and the whole world coming into a place of belief. How often does Jesus reveal and pray for a *personal desire* in Scripture? In John 17:24 He says:

> *Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

Jesus earnestly desires for the whole world to believe and be joined with Him where He is seated. But He also knows that

this won't happen until we learn how to recognize and behold the glory of Christ when He comes to us in different packages. Are we ready to promote the glory in one another in order to promote the glory of Jesus' prayer and desire *to the world?* We must behold the glory in one another, that the glory of Jesus would be revealed to *every other!* I believe the Father is grieved over the divisions and sects among His people who all carry the same image and glory, but who through grace carry Him differently. But we have been prayed for and prepared as the answer for such grief, and the answer that is alive within us *now,* at this time.

As we each become one with the Head, His oil will break the yokes we still allow to divide us. Our oneness with Jesus will allow us to align and sync in with those around us. We will see differently and recognize Glory Himself when He comes to us through another, and we will begin promoting Jesus in one another, which together promotes Jesus to the world! Jesus is the answer to our prayers—***and together***, *we are the answer to His.*

CHAPTER 4

HONORING THE SPIRIT

It was 2007 and my wife, Destiny, our only daughter at the time, Mercy, and I had already been in Rwanda for eight days. This was our last day and our longest trip outside of the Rwandan capital of Kigali. Much of the trip had been spent traveling to remote cities and churches to speak to pastors, youth, and local communities. It was a Monday, and Mercy just had the most incredible experience of her life the day before at a church in Kigali when she personally received the Lord as her Savior. She was four years of age at the time. Now, the day after, she was once again traveling with us across the countryside.

To be honest, I was exhausted. Our local friends and partners actually told us that they were "exploiting" us. I had spoken multiple times per day, it was hot, and we were driving across bumpy roads and mountainous terrain some four to six hours per day. It was an incredible trip, but I was tired and was leaning on the Lord completely to show me what He had planned for the day. I had been seeking the Lord but still did not have clear direction of a fresh message for the day.

We arrived at the next village and found a large building

with a tin roof and red clay dirt floors. It was hot and humid and the tin and clay only added to such. I was becoming even more drained. What I found interesting about the location was that this church building was located on a local school grounds. I was going to speak primarily to a group of young adults and local leaders. It wasn't until about thirty seconds before I began speaking, when I grabbed the microphone, that I had clear direction from the Lord as to the message He wanted shared. I can remember few other times I felt so physically drained; but knew that this had often been a precursor to seeing God's presence revealed in an even greater power. So in a way, I relished such weakness.

I began to speak what I had heard that still small voice whispering in my heart and immediately saw the Spirit begin to move powerfully. There were several hundred people gathered, and I sensed an overwhelming reality of God's presence engaging them, moving them in the direction He had for each heart. As I looked out among them, I continued to grow more excited. As a large group we went to our faces just to be still, quiet, and see what the Lord wanted to speak into us that day. I was moved! And it appeared that others were experiencing the same. We came out of the time of stillness, and I continued to preach. It seemed we were at the climax of the message, a tipping point when the Lord was sharpening His Word in us when we suddenly received the most surprising but amazing interruption. Right at that moment, preaching into the climax of the time with this group of young leaders, approximately three hundred children from the local school flooded into the meeting within the church and "interrupted" our time. It was likely because of our presence as foreigners, seeing as they

had chased our car halfway down the road in the first place. However, the true reality was that it had everything to do with His presence drawing these precious children.

I was aware of the expectation of the people, yet at the same time knew that not all "interruptions" are truly *interruptions*. These children were not interruptions; they were on the Spirit's agenda. Immediately, while quickly processing, my heart sought the Spirit and His counsel. "Stop!" I heard. "Turn *all* your attention to the children." So we did. We stopped the meeting and the message, which seemed to be at a climactic moment in the message. But the Spirit was leading us to different plans—better plans! We welcomed the children to sit up front on the floor together, and we turned all our attention on them. I relayed the directive to our translator (who carried an incredible anointing for evangelism), shared with the group what we sensed the Lord was doing, and we began to speak directly to the young ones.

As I began to share Jesus with the kids, Destiny whispered for my attention from a chair just behind me. "Tell them about Mercy," she reminded me. *Great idea,* I thought. I called Mercy up to my side; she was four years of age at the time. She started speaking to the kids in their local language that our hosts had so joyously been teaching us all while we drove through the countryside each day. "Muraho," ("Hi") Mercy said in Kinya Rwandan. All the kids roared with laughter and joy. Then she said, "How are you?" in their language, "Amakuru." The kids loved it! *They loved her!* She was on their level and brought such childlike faith and innocence to the moment.

With Mercy at my side, I began to tell the kids about her,

and more specifically about what had happened in her life the day before when she believed and accepted Jesus Christ as her own personal Savior and received His love and grace. I shared her story, the translator continued, and I began to interweave what the love of Jesus meant to the children personally. I was moving toward inviting them forward and just as I began to communicate such a possibility, I was overwhelmed by their response. Not only had the Spirit directed us to change our focus and join His "interruption," but He had clearly gone before us in touching so many of these precious young hearts. Two thirds of the kids, approximately two hundred, began standing up; some quickly raised their hands up in the air; others started to scoot and even run forward. *They wanted Jesus!* And He wanted them! The Spirit was drawing them in; we just had to honor what He was doing as greater than what we were doing.

At that point, I did not even want to try to continue through translation, as these kids were eager and needed it straightaway. I turned the microphone over to the translator and his anointing in evangelism shined the rest of the way with the children, leading them into the Lord's arms of love, forgiveness, and joy!

We were on a very good path with the young leaders and pastors in the meeting, one in which we saw and sensed the Lord doing great things, even delivering what seemed like a great message. But sometimes the Spirit waits through our plans for us to join Him in His. He had something far better; we just had to honor His lead. We had to honor His interruption and following Him on the unseen path, trusting He had better fruit than we could yet see. We had to come into a fresh

oneness with Him. But without honor for His unseen lead, there is no oneness to be had. The young leaders could have gotten a good or even powerful message, but instead they were part of what was a life-changing experience for us all—watching the Holy Spirit show up and conduct something new right before our eyes. We saw two hundred children from the local school believe and receive Jesus that day because the Holy Spirit was given His rightful place of honor. Through such honor, He drew us into oneness with what He was doing.

ONENESS IN THE SPIRIT

If we will live out the same kind of uncommon unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17, there is no other path but through oneness with the Holy Spirit. Before the Spirit of God was given to us, unity relied on proximity and similarity. But in the Spirit, unity took an uncommon twist where those such as the apostles could be united even while being different and being launched in such different directions and uniquely powerful ways.

Such powerful, world-changing oneness is free to all who believe, but it only comes through honor. We must honor the still, small voice—even when we don't think it makes sense. We have to honor the beat of His heart that only comes through intimate oneness with Him. We have to honor the momentary conviction our heart knows is real—even when it is not our immediate desire. We have to be willing to look undignified for Him to be more widely regarded, and we have to be honorable with the freedom He makes available. To honor the Spirit fully and freely is to lay the foundation for a generation to be empowered to be one that the world may

believe. Our honor toward the Holy Spirit gives Him the submission of our lead. As we honor Him with this, He graciously opens the door for us to come into a deeper, more intimate and vitally powerful relationship with Him—a place where He often unites us in His ways with others.

This was the unity that became so uncommon for those disciples in Acts chapter 4. They were one with the Spirit they surrendered to and found themselves in a place of exponentially powerful oneness with one another. As we honor Him with the ways we see, hear, walk, etc., we will be amazed how He deepens, strengthens, and empowers our Kingdom relationships that wait to multiply His heart from within us to the world. But again, this oneness all begins with honor toward the Spirit so that we can truly show honor toward one another. Will we honor His ways above our own?

One of the first things I like to do in my own life, whether at home, at a service, or house of worship—especially when I am ministering elsewhere—is to offer the Holy Spirit His place of honor. I don't always give Him this place as fully as I should, but I am jealously seeking that He will always have that place and opportunity more fully and freely. As I pray, I picture a throne over the room and pray to give Him that place of honor among us. It may seem like a small difference, but I don't think it is enough for the Spirit to simply be acknowledged, I believe we must let Him hold access to *the place of honor*.

That was the case in Acts 4 in "that shaken place" before they were launched into a new mission and multiplication. This is the kind of honor we give to the Father and Son so readily. This is the kind of honor that allows Him to take the lead and that listens to Him direct in how to join Him. I don't think the

Spirit is given less honor than the Father or the Son intentionally. Rather, I think the Spirit has often come across from our perspective as the least tangible of the Trinity, and therefore our honor of Him often goes to one of two extremes. We either keep Him locked up in a box that we declare is honorable and for reverence and protection, or we begin to worship the freedom that comes naturally from the Spirit's presence (see 2 Cor. 3:17). Honoring the Spirit is not about subscribing to either of these extremes. To honor the Spirit is to come into such oneness with Him where He has the lead and we live life with Him in the river of His presence. We are not in control of the boundaries but not given completely to external freedom either. Rather, we are given to Him, the Unseen Leader, the One who leads us through the tension that flows in between the extremes of truth we often let divide us.

So I am asking that as you go through this chapter with me and we seek that place of oneness with the Spirit, that you would join me in this prayer at the same time: *"Holy Spirit, please teach me how to honor You in my life as You deserve and desire."*

HONORING THE UNSEEN

When speaking about this subject, or that which is similar, I will often begin the time by asking the participants a series of questions. I pose the same to you now.

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Your responses just might affect the way you honor His Spirit within you, and how you join Him faithfully and fearlessly on the path He has paved ahead for you.

I will never forget one particular day in 2005 during a season when the Lord continued to teach us about His faithful provision, and we learned how to keep moving forward with Him by faith. This learning curve with the Lord has often required us to hear His voice specifically, sometimes even in the small things we think should not matter. Oftentimes, God wants to surprise us in a big way in the littlest of things.

I was on my way to pick up Destiny from work and was worried about provision. I was not even sure if we had enough gas in our tank to pick her up and make it back home. God kept imploring my heart to trust Him. We had seen a number of miracles leading up to that time, and many more thereafter. But this one has always blown me away.

I was driving down a very busy but familiar three-lane road. I was traveling in the middle lane and was about to pick up the phone to call my cousin. Just as I reached for the phone I heard the Spirit speak very clearly in my heart to put the phone down and not to call. As far as I could see, there was no specific reason, and I definitely preferred to call. But I wanted to honor the Spirit. As soon as I put down the phone, I sensed a second prompting from Him, “Move into the left lane.” I moved into the left lane, and not more than ten seconds later a 20 dollar bill

blew smack onto the driver side of my windshield. I was floored. God was showing me something, teaching me again how much I could trust Him as my Provider. But in doing so, I had to honor the Spirit and give Him lead, even and especially in the little things that my flesh might tell me don't matter.

Each day that we wake up the Spirit of God is even closer to us than Jesus was to the disciples. We actually have a better ratio of personal interaction than they did. They were twelve to one with Jesus. With the Holy Spirit, we are one on one. This only further establishes the oneness that He calls us into. In the Gospels, the disciples followed Jesus. In the book of Acts, *they were one with Him*. That's powerful! Anyone will declare that they would have loved to have been one of Jesus' disciples. I agree. Imagine such a privilege! But what about the Spirit, what if we honored Him and were led by Him under the same honor we would submit to Jesus? We must look at this reality more clearly, as the only difference is that Jesus was seen, while the Spirit is unseen. We must learn to fully and freely honor He who is unseen. He might just have some special breakthrough waiting to fly directly onto your windshield. Honor the Unseen Leader, and suddenly we see the never-before-seen appear before our eyes.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN—FLIPPED

I first began pondering the word *honor* in regard to the Holy Spirit when I was praying about the well-known passage regarding what we know as the only "unpardonable sin." This may seem like an odd choice of passages to use in the form of encouragement, but sometimes it's all in how you see something—or Someone—looking to deduct possibilities

through the lens of God's nature.

> *Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come* (Matthew 12:31-32).

Unfortunately, many of us look at these two verses in Matthew 12 through the lens of fear. I know I did for many years. I would think, *What would happen if I did this? Would I know it if I did?* And then, all kinds of fear-based responses started to flood in. I know these kinds of questions are relevant to how we see this passage because I was asked these same questions by many others in the past as well. But God is always leading us in the renewal of our minds. He wants us to think according to love instead of fear. We're to think of what we can add or advance rather than what we must protect or are afraid to lose.

To the born-again believer, this must become our natural line of thinking. Instead of fearing what I could do to lose my salvation, I must look at this passage from a higher perspective and see the Kingdom opportunity waiting to be found. So I began thinking of this verse in that way. If there is only one unpardonable sin, this means it is the worst thing we can come into agreement with, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Essentially, I realized that the worst thing I could possibly do was to

dishonor the Holy Spirit. Instead of fearing the unpardonable sin, God showed me the call to honor that is hidden in this passage. In a Kingdom of love and advancement, there is always an opposite, an upside-down reality there for us to embrace and take new ground—if we are willing to look from a higher perspective.

If there is a worst, I must flip that area to realize how I can sow into love and the Kingdom opportunity within the same subject. If the worst thing, the only unpardonable sin in relation to such a loving, forgiving God was to dishonor the Holy Spirit, how much must it then bless His heart if and when we go out of our way to *honor* the Holy Spirit? Still today, that thought rocks me! I want to give Him that place of honor in my life, not simply to avoid dishonoring Him, *but to bless Him.* And when I honor Him, it makes me more likely to cede control, more able to come into my own true identity in Christ and walk, live, and love from that oneness with the Holy Spirit Jesus prayed for, and paved the way for. Dishonor toward the Holy Spirit is the only unforgiveable sin; but to honor Him opens the door of immeasurable oneness and opportunity.

EVEN THE WORLD

The Spirit of God naturally draws honor *even from the world*. Even those who are not filled with or led by the Spirit of God are found to honor who He is through His people. When we give the Spirit His full place of honor and leadership in our lives, the world around us cannot help but acknowledge and honor Him as well. In fact, they are longing for such. If we wish to see the world touched by the Spirit of God, it will happen through our lives. For such a touch to happen, we must

empower the Spirit in our own lives to be more than a known bystander, more than a helpful conscience, more than just an internal teacher. He is the leader we honor in our every thought and action, far beyond the spiritual arenas of our lives and extending everywhere we go. We will move forward and take Kingdom territory from the world because the world is compelled to yield to the honored place the Spirit has in our lives. Joseph gave the Spirit of God the place of honor in his own life, then the world took notice and followed likewise. The greater place of honor the Spirit has in our daily, even our momentary, lives, the more we will see the Spirit honored in the *worldly* places all around us. Worldly places will be transformed into Kingdom avenues.

> *So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"* (Genesis 41:37-38)

These verses in Genesis 41 blow my mind! I love them! Pharaoh was speaking of Joseph. This was during Old Testament times, before people were filled with the Holy Spirit as believers are today—which actually goes to show us how greatly the Spirit of God was honored in Joseph's life, even amid the world and even while trapped or hidden in obscurity. And we watch Joseph's rise to power to his Kingdom calling happen in an unlikely, worldly place—even in the palace, his bondage couldn't keep him down. Why? How? Joseph rose because even the world saw and recognized the Spirit's place of honor in his life, so much so that they felt compelled to

honor the Spirit of God in the same way.

We so often try to lead the world into the Church, but what about honoring the Spirit right in the middle of the world, watching it be transformed into part of God's Kingdom? That is what happened in Egypt through Joseph. Then God used Egypt to multiply provision to many nations. One person partners with the Spirit in an unlikely way and the ripple effects of such change the world. This kind of honor toward the Holy Spirit not only strengthens the Church, but calls back to Jesus' final prayer and causes the world to believe! The Spirit of God Joseph interacted with in wisdom, revelation, and discernment was so lifted up in his life, so greatly honored as the Unseen Leader, Pharaoh himself could not help but take notice and give honor, *even promotion*. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate witness that we are indeed children of God, as we are told in Romans 8:16: *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God…."*

If the world will believe and know *who* they are and *whose* they are, the Holy Spirit must be lifted up and honored in the worldly places for all to see. This is not to call for a big public gathering or demonstration; rather, for the Unseen Leader to be given the unquestioned lead in *every* part of our lives, *especially* in the world.

There is so much we can go into with Joseph and this story, but right now I want to focus on the place of honor Joseph gave to this Unseen Leader of God, and how this kind of honor even caught the attention of a worldly leader. Joseph became a bridge between a worldly leader and the Unseen Leader through His oneness with the Spirit of God. Joseph trusted in whom he could not see more than he trusted in what

he knew. He allowed such undefined subtleties as discernment and revelation to be more than additions in his life, but foundations. We can talk about the Holy Spirit and His lead in our lives all we want, but His place of honor does not come from talk, but from action and trust. The Holy Spirit's place of honor does not come only from how we honor Him in our services or ministry times. The Holy Spirit's greatest place of honor in our lives comes as we let His ways lead our ways in the details, in the seemingly mundane, in direction, desires, and decisions on a forward-moving path. The question is left for us each: what governs our daily directions and decisions the most —what we see or the Leader we cannot see?

> *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you"* (Genesis 41:39).

I believe *inasmuch* is a key word here. Honor and authority was bestowed on Joseph *inasmuch* as the Spirit of God had been given the lead in Joseph's life. The honor that we give the Spirit in the main parts of our lives determines the honor that the world will give Him through our lives. Pharaoh also recognized that *inasmuch* as Joseph heeded the Spirit of God, there was no one in the world as wise or discerning as he.

We often wonder or worry what the world will think if we live out the countercultural paths of the Spirit, yet this interaction with Pharaoh and his servants reminds us that the world is actually waiting for a person, or a people, who will honor the Spirit of God in such a way. *Inasmuch* as we honor the Spirit, so will the world. They are waiting. Wayward leaders

of whole nations are waiting to change the world *with* the Spirit of God! But the world cannot honor the Spirit if we do not honor Him in front of them. Only then will they be able to see that the unseen, faith-required ways of the Spirit are more discerning and wise than anyone in the world. If the world is waiting to honor the Spirit as Pharaoh was, then what are *we* waiting for?

For me personally, honoring the Spirit is something I want to live out in the most simple, but often uncomfortable parts of life. I remember being offered a job I really wanted during a first interview; but I said that I could not accept right away because I sensed in my spirit that I had to go home and pray first to hear from God. The manager did not know what it meant when I said it, but management learned what it meant when they watched the Spirit come alive in my life at that place of employment over the next several years. The Spirit was honored, and I had great favor that sprung up from that first moment on. Bosses who seemed to want nothing to do with God saw how I honored the Holy Spirit's lead openly before them, and consequently the more they honored Him as well. I watched how my oneness with the Spirit drew others in to look at Him for themselves, because they could not figure out any earthly reason for the sales or progress being made. When we are one with Him, the world cannot separate who they are looking at. They may have hired us, but as we become one with the Spirit in intimacy, they will find they have actually hired Him. Jobs in the marketplace were my special place to honor the Spirit in this way for quite a while. It actually got to a point during one particular season where I watched the world honor the ways of faith and the Spirit being revealed through my life

more than my local church could even understand at the time. We often save the spiritual parts of our lives for church, yet it is often the world who is most hungry and ready to partake of the Unseen Leader they are waiting for through our lives.

Similar occurrences took place for me at school. I found that the more I was led by the Spirit in a real, faith-living way that the other students who did not know God were drawn to the Spirit in my life. The people in the worldly places I lived in watched miracles happen in finances, health, family, and so many other parts of life that they could not explain other than the Spirit of God who they saw honored as my Unseen Leader each day. At first the world may not know what to think when we honor the Spirit so freely and fully in our lives. But the world is quick to change as they are thirsting for Spirit-led believers who honor the Spirit in *every* part of their lives. The world doesn't just want to hear our talk about God. They want what is real. The more we become one with Him and live out such in every part of our lives, the more real He will become to them.

> *"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word…." And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt"* (Genesis 41:40-41).

We will walk in the favor and authority of our calling, that which so many of us are waiting and wanting to do, when we begin to give the Spirit His full place of honor and are free do so openly *in the world*. We will find new harvest fields and callings come to life that had been waiting for us all along.

Missions and where such happens will take on a whole new meaning. Suddenly Joseph went from prison and bondage to his own place of honor as the world took notice of the honor Joseph gave to his Unseen Leader. Suddenly Joseph had the favor and authority to affect incredible change and new ground in the world, beyond that which was familiar.

How many of us are waiting for a breakthrough or honor from the church? How many of us are waiting to be lifted into the same palace of our calling as Joseph was? That palace is waiting for you too, but it might not be where you thought it would be. We must not be looking for honor from or within the local church, but we are to *be* the church who gives the Spirit His place of honor in the world. *Then* we will suddenly find ourselves in the palace of our calling with the Spirit leading us forward in ways we would have never dreamed possible. If we want to walk in the fullness of our calling with Christ, who has made the Spirit of God that much more available to us than was to Joseph, we must give the Holy Spirit significantly more honor and freedom to have a significant impact in the world.

RIVER-LED

> *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit…* (John 7:38-39).

I'm only going to dive into this briefly here, as it will be covered more later in "The Shaken Leader" chapter. It's an integral facet to the life that honors the Holy Spirit, coming into

such oneness that we can live as the answer to Jesus' final prayer. We have a Living Water—a Living River—inside us that is the Holy Spirit, and He gives life everywhere He goes. We have two choices once we receive this River of Life within us, ongoing choices from that day forward:

1. We c
take
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and filte
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secure,
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and
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2. We c
jump
and
upgrade
carried,
and led
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new
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life to
driest
lands.

The first choice takes the Spirit and brings Him into the boxes, programs, and comfort zones of humankind's culture, while the other joins the Spirit's path of fruitfulness and multiplication as He freshly flows forward, often in new and carnally challenging ways. Both these methods are frequently used to take His living water to the world, but which one gives the Spirit His full place of honor? Which one gives the world the fresh cup of pure, living water they are waiting for?

We are told that there is a River inside us that *flows* with *living* water! The very fact that it *flows* is what sustains its living nature. When you take water and make it stagnant, such as with a pond, though it is still technically water that can be shared with a thirsty world, it is also water that begins to grow fungus and disease from standing still too long. In reality, wouldn't the fungus and disease that grows on standing water be contrary to the pure, living nature of the water we are promised within us? Yet it is so easy to take the rivers of the Holy Spirit from within us and form Him into controllable ponds contained by well-meaning edges. When we honor the place of oneness we are called to with the Holy Spirit and His control and leadership in our lives, we empower Him to flow out of us like the river He came to be, always moving, always leading, us

in Him and Him in us. We become an ever-flowing river of life that brings healing and life to the world—*wherever* we go.

Ponds are an easy justification to fall into. It's still the Spirit's living water that we are offering. We are still giving it to a thirsty world. But with such standing water, with what other man-made fungus and disease are we contaminating His living water? Are we changing the way God's true nature should be revealed? Is our struggle to honor the Holy Spirit's lead adding our fungus and disease to what the world is tasting of Him? Does our fear of losing control remove the purity of water that could actually heal and give life to the world?

Why do you think the world, as with Joseph, is so ready to honor the Spirit when we honor Him fully? It is because they get a taste of the pure, living water they've been waiting for all this time! The water they were created to long for becomes available when we make His river more freely available through our lives. I believe God is a God of order. However, that does not necessarily mean that we provide the order. That is one of the ways we honor the Spirit, by trusting in His secure control, allowing ourselves to be shaken so that the whole world might know the One who has already made them secure. The world must not taste of any more ponds constructed to honor security and results, but of the pure life-giving river waiting to flow freely out of us.

The River-led life is not easy. It is a place of constant tension, but a tension that is eased the more we learn to trust Him. It's easy to say what we believe in, but it is a whole other matter to actually trust Him in this oneness that can look like an unpredictable, winding river. That is where honor comes in. We honor His unseen over our seen. We honor His eyes over our

eyes. We honor His control over our fears and wounds. We honor His shaken, winding movement over our own sure-footed, unshaken stance. The pond may look more secure from the outside, but its threat of disease growing over time while stagnant is guaranteed and *much more dangerous*. The River looks to move unpredictably outside of our control. But He is sure to always have His own bounds, always guide us over the right terrain, through the right seasons at the right pace, and He is *sure* to flow with living water that brings life wherever it goes.

When Destiny and I got married, we decided to choose a not-so-typical song for when she walked down the aisle. We wanted a song that represented our new life together, how God was making us one, and how He wanted us to live forward in oneness together with Him. We began to ask God to show us what that song might be. We wanted to know the life He was launching us into together *with* Him. That is when we found our song—"Find Me in the River" by Delirious. For us, the Lord highlighted it as an obvious choice because one thing was clear for this new life together we were about to start; we always wanted—*and needed*—to be found by God and by one another *in the River*.

This is where the apostles found themselves in the book of Acts—in the River. They were found in such oneness with one another because they moved in such oneness with the Spirit. They honored Him even while He was new and a mystery in their lives. It could not have been easy to jump into something so new and out of their control. But such honor birthed new lives of exponential power, fruit, and multiplication that were ripe to be lived. They freely and fully empowered the Spirit

within them to flow out of them, and they did not try to lead the River, but allowed the River to lead them. Thus, they became a shaken people who launched out and in turn shook the world. The River that poured out of them each led in different directions, through different seasons, across different terrains. He was, in a word—unpredictable. But so were the results! They saw fruit that had never been seen before as they honored Him and let Him lead them as pioneers in ways they had never been led before.

JESUS PRAYED

> *I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me* (John 17:23).

The more we honor the Spirit in our everyday dealings, the more we will taste of the Jesus we so love and cherish. The more we honor the Holy Spirit to lead us into the new and unseen, the more we will see the fullness of Christ reveal Himself uniquely and powerfully through our lives, and the world around us. Our oneness with the Spirit was the desire of Jesus' final prayer in John 17 as He prayed that we all would be one so that the world would know the Father's love. It's a prayer and desire we must learn to honor more completely, more freely—that the world may believe!

And He, Jesus, deserves every bit and more. He is whom I want to walk, live, and love like each day. He is whom I want the world to drink of from my life, one of pure, unadulterated

living water! All of us would have loved to have been led by Jesus every day, and each of us would have jumped out of bed and freely lost our control to follow Him into an unconventional life—if we could have been with Him. We can honor the Spirit the same way! We can wake up every morning and whether we see Him or not, honor the unseen oneness that has been given to us, a River that we must give ourselves to. He is asking us to join Him. He is asking us to let the River flow *out!* He is asking us to be led by the River, just as we would have wanted to be led by Christ. And He is asking us to jump from the banks we walk on and live life amid the world—*in the River*.

We have a vital, honorable, perfectly unseen, unpredictable part of the Godhead freshly available to us—in us—each and every day. But will we give Him the honor He so deserves? This is the oneness Jesus prayed for and called us into. Will we live this answer of honor that is so key to His prayer? The moment we wake up each day is when such honor begins.

CHAPTER 5

CHERISHING THE MYSTERY

The greatest proof of our weakness these days is that there is no longer anything terrible or mysterious about us. ...The Church has been explained—the surest evidence of her fall. We now have little that cannot be accounted for by psychology and statistics. In that early church they met together on Solomon's porch, and so great was the sense of God's presence that "no man durst join himself to them." The world saw fire in that bush and stood back in fear; but no one is afraid of ashes. Today they dare come as close as they please. They even slap the professed bride of Christ on the back and get coarsely familiar. If we ever again impress unsaved men with a wholesome fear of the supernatural we must have once more the dignity of the Holy Spirit; we must know again that awe-inspiring mystery which comes upon men and churches when they are full of the power of God.
–A.W. Tozer, Paths to Power

If we will be a generation who live out the same lives of love, power, and exponential multiplication that the apostles lived out in the book of Acts, it will happen largely because we as a people come together in an uncommon unity found in Him and

gelled as one in the hidden place of redefined mystery.

> *Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image* ***from glory to glory,*** *just as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

From glory to glory! To me, that sounds like a path of incredible mystery waiting to be cherished. The veil is gone, and He has given us an incredible pathway of unknown but rich opportunity. I want to keep this mystery alive; I want to stay hungry in pursuit. I never want to lose the mystery that fuels me to uncover fresh revelations about the Lover of my soul and move in Him from glory to glory. The deeper the mystery, the more possibility that comes alive!

The Spirit, the same One who uncommonly united the apostles together in the book of Acts—who led them and launched them into powerful multiplication—is the same Spirit today who leads us down this path of mystery, *from glory to glory*. We can only continue in the greatest mysteries of God through the most fresh, alive intimacy with God. His Spirit is waiting to lead us on such a mysterious journey. His Spirit is close, within us, waiting for us to honor Him with our trust and let Him lead us beyond the veil and down the seemingly dark and unknown halls of mystery where glory after glory continues to be revealed.

As A.W. Tozer referenced the Church as having "been explained," there is a simple way to rectify such. We must fall in love all over again, so much so that mystery comes blissfully alive! We must dive deeper into the mystery of the One we love and then, only then, will the world get to taste such an unexplained but desirable God through our lives. The veil being removed does not give us an explanation of what lies on the other side; rather, it offers us freedom to journey with the Spirit into unknown mysteries that want to be uncovered and known by us all. Will we give our Christian lives, our principles, and our securities back over to the mysteries of God?

The very prayer of uncommon unity Jesus so desired is found alive and breathing in these halls of mystery. The apostles allowed the Spirit freedom in their own lives to lead them into what must have been an uncomfortable mystery at the time, which we now look back on as a history with incredible glory. *We would not have their history if they did not cherish God's mysteries.* The same Spirit waits to be held in such regard by us to lead our lives further into the hidden mysteries of God where more of His glory can and will be revealed in and through us. We often want to stop at the veil and simply take in all that we can see or that which has already been explained. But God sent His Spirit to take us on a new journey, from glory to glory, where the hidden parts of God will come alive from their place of current mystery and be seen in the light through our lives.

The world will not know Him, and we will not know all He created us for with Him or one another until we begin to cherish the mystery that leads us beyond the veil of

understanding. The Spirit is leading us into the place where we are constantly challenged by glory after glory of hidden treasures freshly revealed. To cherish the mystery is to stay hungry, it is the removal of the veil from your bride only to romance her and know her far more even after the "I do's." To cherish the mystery, we willingly give up our need to know, our right to be secure, and our pursuit to explain. We go all in with God and therefore with one another to find the best and often hidden parts of God and begin to reveal them to the world together. We have rarely found the kind of uncommon unity Jesus prayed for because such uncommon unity is often hidden within the unknown. If we want the world to know, we must venture farther into the unknown.

REDEFINING MYSTERY

Many of us like a good mystery, but usually only if that mystery is found in a good novel or film. We tend to work hard at keeping mysteries out of our personal lives, families, and all of our dealings. I mean, how often are we actually looking to lose control, right? That's what mystery does; it takes us out of the driver's seat and requires of us a fresh journey. And we are even less likely to take a journey through that which is still mysterious to us because we have put an expectation on mystery that defines what is contained within it to be negative. We have come to a frequency in life where our mindset tells us that what we do not know or understand is almost sure to have negative surprises or hurtful results. But this is the fear-based form of mystery the enemy wants us to believe, for the enemy knows that if he can keep us afraid of mystery, he can keep us from some of the most powerful paths and some of the most

potential-filled people of the Lord.

We live in a Western culture, a church culture even, that tends to want our lives and all that is around us to be defined. We want to be able to know, to fully understand, and even label such things with a black and white type of definition—even people, or unfortunately perhaps, especially people. We feel more secure ourselves if we can define who someone is, what they represent, and put someone in a box we feel comfortable with. We lean toward removing mystery, and we might even try to refer to such avoidance of that which is mysterious as being prudent, wise, or cautious. There is certainly a huge place for wisdom in our lives, and God places a very high value on such, as I do. But these values should not come at the expense of God's glorious mysteries. We have too often become a people who want to fit a colorful, abundant God who is beyond explanation into *our* black and white, limited understanding. But what if we were meant to be a people who let our understanding dive deep into the depths of God's mystery where it is actually our understanding that loses its grip and gets consistently wrecked and redefined by who God is and the fresh growth that takes place within His mystery?

Mystery is to be enjoyed! But how often do we dive into a good movie mystery and try to trade in the value of the process of the mystery in order to know the answer we are being led toward? More than process, we want answers; we want to figure it out. I am as guilty with this as anyone. My first instinct when watching a movie with a great mysterious storyline is to try and derive the hidden mystery waiting to be revealed at the end. But I do so at the expense of enjoying the

journey the mystery allows. I forget that there is actually enjoyment to be had in not having the answers, but being on a journey that will lead me through them all. I get so caught up in trying to know the ending, I miss out on the immense value of the story as a whole and the treasures that were to be found in between. Why do I do this? Why do we do this as a culture? We want the mystery, but only for the sake of knowing the end.

Is that not the very power the serpent tempted Adam and Eve with in the Garden of Eden, to see, know, and understand like God? Did the serpent not convince Adam and Eve to believe in the certainty of knowledge and understanding over the mystery God had laid before them? Did Adam and Eve trade a life of complete trust in their Creator for a knowledge that would give them understanding and in their minds make all things explained? Did they trade in their trust for security and control? *Are we still making the same trade today?*

Mystery requires trust. Trust is what allows God room in our lives to bring forward everything we are believing Him for, and more! We have an abundant Father whose mystery is full of the good kind of surprises. He wants to take every glory we're afraid of losing and replace it with even greater glory. But we cannot taste His goodness in this way if we do not allow ourselves to trust Him through mystery.

> *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

This is such a "popular" verse of guidance within Christian culture; but I have to wonder if we truly know where it leads. It is one thing to celebrate a verse, it is quite another to live it out. This verse is so familiar and yet it points directly toward the halls of mystery.

This wisdom is coming from the storehouse God gifted to Solomon; and yet, it is wisdom that tells us to cherish mystery by trusting God with all our hearts specifically in ways that we do not understand. For a verse that is familiar to my mind, this utterly convicts my heart! How often do we as people want full understanding before we'll even begin to offer our trust? But this is Kingdom life, where everything is flipped upside down. And it is here that we are guided to trust God's halls of mystery with all our hearts, even and especially when we do not understand. We must not seek first more understanding, but more trust. The understanding will then soon follow.

It's one thing to have faith when we know we can still take control of that which is before us, but trust requires us to be okay with mystery. Trust is the feet to our faith. The feet of trust lead us to stand in, under, and on what we believe. Trust positions us to receive what we believe! Trust allows God to exceed our human parameters and reveal Himself in a way that absolutely cannot be explained. Our trust is a large movie screen waiting to reveal the mystery of God and His love to the world. How will the world embrace a mystery that cannot be explained absent of faith unless we the Church cherish the unseen mysteries of what the world needs revealed? If we want the world to believe in a God they cannot see, it is not in our best interests to try to explain Him. Simply, we have to learn to trust what we don't know and cannot control.

When we trust God, even in the mysterious, we allow the world to see His true nature come alive in our lives, revealing to the world that He really is a good and abundant Father. The world can experience a revived faith when they have reason, not through our explanations but through our experiences. These experiences come only while we trust God in the mysterious path His Spirit waits to lead us down. Then others can start to believe that not all mystery carries a scary surprise, but perhaps a hidden revelation of even greater love that has been hidden but waiting just for them. Mystery is too often regarded as a dark curtain hiding something expected to be negative in nature. But what if the mystery of God promises something even more awe-inspiringly positive, loving even, behind every curtain? We won't truly know this until we learn to trust Him with all our hearts. Therein lies the mystery waiting to be found.

If we will live in an uncommon oneness with God and one another, it will be largely because we have allowed mystery to come alive and have its course in our lives. If we will be a people who live out uncommon unity, who reveal and reflect the fullness of Christ to the world, we will find this treasure on the paths of mystery that are not frequently chosen. The truth is that without appreciating mystery, we cannot be led by the Spirit into that kind of fresh, uncommon unity Jesus prayed for to empower the world to believe. We must learn to trust what appears different, because that which is different is often mysterious and tugs at our judgments more often than we give it our blessing.

Without enjoying mystery, everyone and everything lives under our expectation, our experience, and our fear-bound need

to limit others to what or whom we understand. But as we allow mystery to be redefined in our minds and expectation, we will enjoy new glories of God and one another that are treasures waiting to be found and revealed to the world.

THE MYSTERY OF INTIMACY

> *I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that* ***you have left your first love.*** *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works…* (Revelation 2:2-5).

It is nearly impossible for me to get away from mentioning the Lord's place as our First Love, regardless of the format. I don't think I can ever remind myself of this enough. Jesus being my First Love is the very core of who I am and must remain the core of who I will always be. When you think of that first passionate love in your life, that's where you find the kind of mystery you rejoice in and can't wait to get to know. Destiny, my wife and first love outside of the Lord, teaches me to enjoy mystery every day. Because every day I get to look into her eyes, I get to look deep into her heart and see her spirit flood out in new ways. I get to dive in and experience who the Lord has created her to be—and even after twelve years of

marriage, there is still so much more mystery to enjoy. I have to guard against familiarity because it will rob the mystery that breeds new life. My covenant relationship with Destiny can be no greater in legal terms, but the depths of which we enjoy that covenant are the mysteries we explore together day after day. I find that the more we allow mystery to stay fresh and win out over familiarity, the greater unity and oneness we grow to share.

In fact, that is a compliment we have received frequently the past few years, pointing to the uncommon unity we share. As we have traveled the country and the world, we have been so blessed to hear that others see an uncommon unity in our marriage. I truly believe that special oneness is due to the mystery of relationship we continue to enjoy and pursue with the Lord and one another. Such mystery keeps relationships fresh and growing deeper. That is the beauty of a First Love relationship! There is so much mystery ready to be uncovered —never-ending mystery—that calls for our never-ending hunger and thirst. When we partake of this kind of fresh oneness—day after day—we live out a unity that multiplies our impact on the world around us.

MYSTERY IS CONTAGIOUS

Have you ever witnessed someone so visibly and passionately in love that it stirs in you a desire for the same? Why would the world as a whole be any different? They are waiting for us to passionately return to our First Love because in their heart of hearts, they long for the same!

There is something to be said for getting lost in our gaze

upon the Lord and all He means to us. It sounds simple, but there is power in the simplicity of looking up and not letting go. I once had a vision of myself standing in a field. I was worshiping with the song "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus." I was standing in the field looking up into the heavens, just staring at the Lord; I couldn't get my eyes off of Him. A row of kids showed up next to me, but we didn't speak. I didn't tell them who or what I was looking at, nor did I try to convince them to look at Him with me. I just continued to stare at my First Love! The kids were taken by mystery, wondering what or who in the world could capture my attention as such. So they began to look up at the Lord with me. Before I knew it, mystery had drawn them in and they couldn't stop looking at the Lord either. Another row of children came up behind them. No one said a word. This row of kids didn't know what was going on either. So their instinct was to look up as well and see what the big deal was. Now they were gazing with eyes unmoved from the Lord. Row after row of children started to fill the field. No words were spoken. No convincing took place. As one row of kids simply looked up, the mystery of such would draw the next row to look up and gaze at Him for themselves. Before I knew it, the entire field was full of children all with eyes and hearts locked upon the Lord. I realized, even without words, I was so engaged with diving deeper into the mysteries of the One I love, that it created a mystery that each following group of children wanted to seek out for themselves. And now, we were all looking up together, an entire generation was staring at the Lover of our souls in uncommon, unspoken unity.

We are captivated by what is mysterious. Behold and cherish the mystery of intimacy with Christ, and others will be

sure to follow.

> *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And* ***they realized that they had been with Jesus*** (Acts 4:13).

Acts 4:13 has always been a favorite of mine because it carries a mystery that breaks many of the boxes, labels, and expectations we seem to strive for. It is a reminder of the fruit that comes simply from *being* with our First Love. Before John, Peter, and the rest of the apostles were shaken and launched from that uncommon unity that sealed them in the Lord, we find this passage that reminds us of the oneness they shared with Jesus, part of Christ's final prayer, that prepared them to be part of the answer to our Lord's desire: *"...they had been with Jesus."*

Here we have two apostles out in the world being persecuted for the name of Jesus and the resurrection power that had begun to flow out of their lives. And despite all the wonderful or persuasive words Peter and John used, perhaps it was those doing the persecuting who said it best. They mysteriously looked upon them and saw a power that they *wanted to marginalize, but had to recognize* because, in their own words the two men, *"had been with Jesus."* They marveled not at Peter and John's gifts of ministry, they marveled because they realized these two men uniquely shined the Jesus they had been with.

Even those who try and refute Jesus have to recognize the

irrefutable evidence that closeness with Him leaves on our lives. That is the mystery of intimacy! Peter and John's words may have spelled out the gospel perfectly, acts of supernatural power may have flowed directly from their lives, but what these persecutors were really struck by was the mystery that led them beyond education or training, a mystery that caused them to marvel out loud—*"they had been with Jesus."* That mystery came from intimacy with Jesus, and it caused the world, even the opposition, to take special notice. It is one thing to witness to others about Jesus. But intimacy with Christ causes others to witness for themselves the presence Jesus leaves on our lives.

A few years back, while living in Ethiopia, Destiny and I had the opportunity to get away for a few days to a resort outside the city. We were in the middle of a very intense season of our time in Ethiopia and really needed this break. We booked two nights at a resort, an all-inclusive package with meals and other amenities included. It had been an abundant time and a true gift of refilling from the Father. I went to the main office late in the afternoon a day prior to checking out to see if we could get a late check-out time and maximize a little more of our trip. I was especially blessed when they offered us another free night, the only stipulation being that we would pay for our own meals that last day. We were going to stay and eat lunch there after check out the next day anyway, so that really wasn't a deterrent. This was one of those times when we were already feeling blessed, but God continued to re-reveal His nature as an abundant Father that much more. He really is a Milk and Honey God, and that extra night of rest was beyond the milk we needed, it was the honey that topped it off.

An interesting thing happened as I waited to fill out the paperwork for the extra night. A woman was checking in at the same time and just so happened to be moving into the room right next to ours. I was still overjoyed at the gift God had given us and was full of smiles. She appeared to be a prestigious woman of some sort, well dressed, and carried herself very properly. She was businesslike. She apparently noticed something different as I was interacting with the resort staff and started to ask me questions trying to dig for the source. At first I thought she must be a believer and wanted to connect. I later found that I was terribly wrong, but God still had another agenda. The woman continued asking questions about me, my family, and what we were doing in Ethiopia.

I was vague at first, shying away from talking about what we were doing and trying to focus instead on loving her and sharing our love for Ethiopia, the people and culture. She seemed to get more excited and intrigued. But then, suddenly, a surprising and almost intentionally divisive question flew out of her mouth. She quickly changed her tone, and her expression became very direct, "You're not one of those missionaries trying to convert our people are you? We don't need any more of that!"

On the inside I was looking up and thinking, *What in the world do I say to* ***that?*** The question was not posed in a positive manner, but with utter disdain as if it were her mission to rid the country of all missionaries. We were in a season of walking the streets and seeing many street kids and families come to know the Lord each week simply through love. I paused for a minute in our uncomfortable silence, smiled at her as lovingly as I could and replied, "No, not at all, that is not

why we are here."

"Good!" she exclaimed. She then wanted to know what we were doing in Ethiopia, so I told her the truth, "We are not missionaries here to convert your people. We are here because we love Jesus with all our hearts and we want to follow Him and His example. We want to love your people the way Jesus loves them. We are not trying to convert them—we are trying to love them." At this point, she was confused, borderline tense, as she was strong in her opinion against missionaries and couldn't decide yet for herself if we fell under such a label. So she continued to ask more questions right there at the resort's checkin desk. As much as she was against missionaries, I could tell she was still intrigued and searching by the love and light she felt during our conversation. It had nothing to do with the words I said or what we were *doing* in Ethiopia; it had everything to do with the mystery of Jesus she was now held by—the mystery that intimacy with Christ had marked on our lives was capturing her attention.

She was a very educated and well-trained woman and had an exact idea of what Ethiopia needed in place of missionaries trying to convert her people. But before I knew it, she actually wanted to talk more. Although the beginning of her conversation was somewhat heated, the woman eventually let her guard down and invited us to her porch later to talk further. She sensed a love and Presence that was mysterious to her, so much so that she who wanted to point the finger at us was now asking us for advice about how to help her country and her people. Destiny and I were amazed. Simple intimacy with Christ took away the labels that could have quickly divided us from this woman and instead enraptured her into the very mystery

of the intimacy we had with our Lord.

It was our intimacy with God that drew her into a place she never would have gone on her own or through convincing speech. She was looking to divide and conquer at first, and we had few words to share in response. But we didn't need words. We had Mystery! His name is Jesus and He is a mysterious fire that burns within us, a fire only fanned by simply *being* with Him. This mysterious oneness with Jesus took a potential enemy and brought an uncommon unity that had us brainstorming ways of change together. That interaction will always remain a mystery to me, and that's okay. It just reminds me to keep cherishing the mystery of intimacy and oneness with Christ, and from such, we will continue to see the answer to His final prayer come alive!

Beholding the mysteries of God keeps us growing in oneness with Him, not in knowledge, but in depth of experience with the innermost parts of His heart and Spirit. This place of oneness with God is where uncommon unity with one another comes to life! If I am one with Him, and you are one with Him, we don't have to try and make our lives or opinions match because we will already be found in the same place *in* Him. We will be beating with the same rhythm of His heart, but without the compromise of trying to change to be like someone else for the sake of an external unity. Rather, our oneness with God actually secures our uniqueness and establishes a diversity of unity that is incomparably potent! The available oneness with one another that the apostles displayed and were launched and multiplied from in the book of Acts was a unity established by their oneness with Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

When our oneness and intimacy with Christ becomes the

foremost and fresh focus of our lives, we will be aligned for an uncommon unity with others that will change the world. *That* is why mystery is so important. Mystery is what keeps our First Love first, it is what keeps our relationship fresh, not stale, and keeps us from falling into the trap of familiarity and division. The woman we interacted with at the resort was coarsely familiar with Christian missionaries. But she was unfamiliar with and even drawn to the mystery of Jesus' imprinted presence in our lives. Mystery is the opposite of familiarity and keeps us in a posture of hungry discovery, eagerly desiring to unfold new layers of the Lover of our souls and causing those around us to long for the same. The greatest power we possess to empower the world to believe comes from oneness with Christ and leads to oneness with one another. We must make a passionate plea with our own heart to constantly dive deeper into His mysteries.

The deepest and most powerful spiritual unity we can experience is found deep in the heart of God, and we are only led there or found there together because of the Spirit. Uncommon unity is developed in these deep Spirit-led places where opinion and past understanding pale in comparison to the reality of His mystery being revealed. It is the Spirit who bears witness to us becoming co-heirs together *with* Christ (see Rom. 8:16) The freshness of His heart wipes away all our divisions or reasons for such. Oneness in the deep, mysterious parts of God must be navigated by the Spirit and will mold us into a supernatural unity that cannot be easily explained.

We recently started cultivating a new community here in Denver based on living out an Acts 4 community. God had aligned us with a number of different people from this area, as

well as new relationships in other parts of the country with families preparing to come this way and join us. The first meeting we all came together from many different places and ways of life. We witnessed what I can only describe as a miracle of supernatural unity. It was a mystery to me, but I realized this "miracle of unity" happened because each person in the room, though a mystery to one another, was deeply committed to diving deeper into the heart of God. They were tired of the things of life or doctrine we inflate that easily divide us. They were each consumed with God and Him alone.

When you are diving into the deep places of God, moving into deeper oneness with Him, you don't have time to look side to side and insecurely compare or separate. Your heart is enraptured by the mystery of Him who is before you—your First Love. Within the first five minutes of our time together, despite a room full of people who had hardly if ever met, we watched walls fall down almost immediately as the Spirit gelled everyone in such a deep and unique love that would usually be cultivated over years of time and trust together.

Oftentimes we marvel at a supernatural miracle of healing or provision, as we should rejoice! But during that time of gathering, I marveled at a miracle of supernatural, uncommon unity being poured out over the new community like fresh oil that drew everyone together in Him. No one was sizing one another up; rather, each person was free to be unusually vulnerable considering all the so-called strangers in the room. God was doing something different; He was showing us something different. As each came from different places, we each came for the same reason—to dive deeper into the mysteries of Him we so desperately wanted to cherish. Many

came from *very* different streams or backgrounds in the Church, but the desire for Jesus washed all that away as we simply sought to be found in His heart. We had given up the shallow ways of self to be led into the deep mysteries of the Spirit. We each sought a deeper oneness in our lives with Him; therefore, we all found an uncommon oneness with one another. Like a miraculous healing, I watched that night and saw the Lord as being pleased. Rarely had I seen an atmosphere quite like the one we experienced that night—a miraculous unity!

For too long we have kept mystery an arm's length away from the most important parts of our lives. We do this out of fear, but this only keeps the world an arm's length away from being drawn into the desire of Jesus' final prayer—*that the world may believe*. Cherishing the mystery of Christ, especially within intimacy, causes the first part of the oneness Jesus prayed for to come to life, our oneness with Him. This is an uncommon unity that brings us into the mold of the apostles in the book of Acts, the kind of oneness with Christ that is a prelude to unity with one another. This is a supernatural oneness that causes the world to marvel and say with new belief, *"they have been with Jesus."*

CHAPTER 6

CARRIERS OF PEACE

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me ***you may have peace.*** *In the world* ***you will have tribulation;*** *but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

This is such a powerful, yet unique promise in John 16:33. In the same sentence Jesus tells us we will have two things, *two different things*, concepts that by our typical definitions contradict one another: peace *and* tribulation. Many of us know of the peace we are supposed to have despite the trials of the world, and many of us are fighting for such right now. But do we know that we are actually able to have more peace in our lives and throughout the world *because* of the trials we are passing through? It sounds about as contradictory as the promise of both peace and trials being found together, Jesus shared in the promise above. But the reality is we have a world searching for peace, of which we as Christians are not called to be pursuers of such peace, *but carriers.* How do we carry such peace to the world? We learn to profit from our trials, and that profit is peace. Every trial we face, every uphill battle, every tear or circumstance that just cannot be explained to anyone—they are the equation to peace, and we are the ones learning to

profit from such. In a world that seeks to unite for the sake of peace, we unite with Peace for the sake of the world.

> *My brethren,* ***count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*** *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing* (James 1:2-4).

I would not even begin to be able to understand how to *"count it all joy"* when encountering trials unless I knew that such trials were ready to produce a profit. In my Bible (New Spirit-Filled Life Bible NKJV), the subheading over the James 1:2-4 passage is "Profiting from Trials." This has become a theme in my life, not always a comfortable one, but life-giving. How many trials have we gone through without grabbing hold of the profit due to us? We do not have only to survive our trials when we can actually receive a potentially transforming profit. Jesus overcame the world for such profit, freely given to us to be multiplied out to the world. Through the Prophet of Peace, Jesus, and what He has finished, there is peace waiting to be taken, carried, and given from every trial in our lives. We may not find peace in the world, but the world can find peace in us! When we think about all we are battling right now through such a lens, it changes our perspective on the wealth at our disposal as well as our ability to give the world around us what they are so desperately longing for. Together, we can learn to profit from our trials, extract peace that has been paid for, and *count it all joy* while we are sent carrying such peace to the world. We don't need to fight for our peace anymore; we can

simply enjoy it and become carriers of a peace that the world is waiting to sign for.

It hardly seems possible to endure a season or circumstance in our lives that reflects very little of peace on the outside, yet to come away with more peace than we have ever known. However, such is the Kingdom of God; and as believers, we are one with the Prince who gives peace as freely as we will receive. I will never forget when my wife, Destiny, our daughter Mercy, and I took a trip across Africa covering seven nations in seven weeks. When we started the trip there was very little to be peaceful about. We were set to arrive in Rwanda in February, and we had tickets to leave from South Africa for home in April, but we had no tickets or provision for the flights in between. We had set appointments and trainings we were facilitating in each nation we were to visit but had no idea how we would get to each one. We were told by those who often traveled through these nations that we needed $3,000 expense money for seven weeks of food, lodging, and transport. We had only $500.

We were set to go to east Africa for multiple stops, then to southern Africa and the island regions of Madagascar and Mauritius before going back to South Africa. It was a big trip by any measure, and without flights or provision for such, the magnitude climbed that much higher. Those in our office told me, “Joey, it’s one thing for you to get stranded somewhere on the continent, but we can’t do that to your wife and daughter.” They were kidding of course, with a nervous chuckle among us all. The only peace we had was a word from the Lord, “Go; it’s done! As you step into the Jordan you will cross through the river on dry ground.” There are many more details of this

miraculous trip in my previous book, *The Life Giver*. We actually crossed the continent of Africa one miraculous provision at a time, being led by God's faithfulness. Our trust could not be in our circumstances or what we had in our hands —but only in Him.

By the time the trip ended, we were in full-on rejoice mode. But until that point, it was not easy. We witnessed God's miraculous provision daily, but such a journey does not always look or feel sensational when you're in the middle of it. In the middle of such tension, you are just trying to keep your eyes on the Lord without veering your attention to the thrashing waves of circumstance on each side. Waking up each day not knowing how we would pay for lodging or where we would get the next few thousand dollars for flights was tiresome to say the least. To put it mildly, there was not much external peace.

But when we finished that trip and returned to the United States, we had profited so much from the tumultuous journey. Each step, each nation, every provision for the next flight gave us testimony of God's unending faithfulness, a faithfulness in which we could find peace for the next storm, or pass onto others about to experience the same. The testimony through tribulation gives us a peace that God can and will do it again the next time we walk through stormy waters or even try to cross the Jordan River put before us in our lives. We left that trip with more peace than we lost, and we have been living off its profit ever since. The profit of peace we gained on that trip has helped send us and many others into new steps of living life and giving life.

Walking with God through times when peace does not appear to be present on the outside stores up faith in the Peace

who lives on the inside and His ability to see us through even the most impossible of circumstances. The world is desperately seeking peace in so many avenues of life and culture. If we will be carriers of such peace to the world, it begins as we learn to be one with Peace even when our circumstances, or the world, give us none.

THE MISSING PEACE

So many places that I look, I find that one of the biggest culprits robbing peace in various spheres of the world today is division. It has become rampant in too many parts of our lives. Rarely have we seen such polarizing opinions about so many topics throughout such large scales of the population. The gap of divisiveness in politics is staggering, and potentially robs us of seeing truth when digging into our own perspective. Churches, denominations, doctrinal opinions, and various streams of the Body of Christ are no exception. All I have to do is log onto Facebook to find heated and pointed opinions that make my head hurt, *or perhaps my heart*. Division has always been a primary target of offense for the enemy with the Church, but I have never seen it at such a volatile, opinionated pitch. It is the opposite of the person of Peace we have been freely given.

Jesus stated so clearly and eloquently, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"* (Matt. 5:9). In a world already lacking peace, how is it that we as children of God and co-heirs with Christ, are portraying such a contrary spirit to that of the Prince of Peace *who lives in us?* The Bible states that Christ is in us, the hope of glory (see Col. 1:27). Yet we as believers often experience and even contribute less

peace than the world does despite the reality that Peace lives in us. This does not have to be the case. In fact, the variety of unique differences that divide and threaten are often the very differences that *can* become our strength. What divides us is our very place of opportunity, *if we learn to abide in the peace already within us.* We become like what we behold. The more we learn to behold Peace, the more likely we are to carry peace into every situation, regardless of our differences. We must realize the indwelling peace we already have, operate from such a place, and carry that power to the world. Peace can change the world, but first it must get hold of us!

Where I really ache with what the enemy has stolen is for our families. Our families are too foundational to the pattern of peace we will grow up with. Too much has been robbed from our families and our homes as the enemy seeks to develop patterns of strife. We do not have to stand for such a missing peace. My family and I have experienced this greatly, *personally,* and it hurts. I reiterate the peace that has gone missing in these facets of life not to criticize or condemn, but to paint the picture of why we must rise up in the peace that we already have. Why would we not live and give out a peace that is so close and waiting to be tapped into? We have an opportunity.

There is a reason why we are called to be *peacemakers* more than *peacekeepers.* Jesus told us the world would have tribulation. Basically, He was telling us the world would need us to carry to them what He has finished. Peace is often found when something or some process comes to a conclusion. When you have a difficult task, there is a great sigh of relief and peace that comes as you near its end. Jesus said, *"It is*

finished," as He gave Himself on the Cross. He left us with a peace that *will overcome* every form of division in every facet of life. We often look to create an external unity to bring about peace. But such peace is often superficial as it acts only as a Band-Aid upon internal strife.

I see it the other way around. It seems that Jesus did as well. He brought us peace that we might be uncommonly united in Him. We don't have to sacrifice our differences, but celebrate such diversity, and be at peace with *who* God has created us and others to be. It is true peace that breeds unity. Our family has watched this peace come alive and breed a unity that seemed millions of miles, words, and smiles away.

In my previous book *The Life Giver,* a great deal is shared about our journey with our oldest adopted daughter, Anna, who is fifteen years of age and has been with us now for three years. A great number of her past wounds and difficulties have plagued her through fear, virtually paralyzing her from her place in the family, therefore contributing to a crack in our unity as a family, a division that had to be healed.

Recently amid that struggle, we began to talk to Anna about unity and Jesus' final prayer in John 17. She wanted unity—*badly!* It's not that she didn't love our family, she desperately wanted to walk freely as a daughter and sister in our home. But something wouldn't allow her to do so. She had no peace. We talked and prayed about a strategy for unity in our family. She was invested in this new idea and not only wanted unity in the family but would fight for such, even if that meant fighting off the fear that would try to cave in on certain moments. Despite her willingness, the unity we all wanted and needed still evaded us. There was a missing peace.

The dynamics of the home were at a breaking point. We needed a breakthrough in our relationships with her for her sake and the whole family's sake. But our desire for unity felt in vain.

The day after much of this particular circumstance "hit the fan" as it may have appeared, God intervened in a very cool way. Anna was with my mom, trying to talk and pray with her through this seemingly immovable wall she was up against. My sister, Jackie, arrived unexpectedly, and unprompted began to share with Anna powerful parts of her testimony, much of which my mom had never even heard before. Without going into too many details of my sister's story, much of it originated when our dad passed away on the mission field when I was sixteen and she was eleven years of age. She had battled various things as a child stemming from severe and life-threatening health issues early on, which caused a lack of peace internally. So when our dad died, it really ruffled in her much of what was already in turmoil on the inside. As you can imagine, it was a serious trial for us all to lose Dad so suddenly. Inside Jackie, the trial was amplified. But, through the love, counsel, and prayers of many incredible friends, family, and prayer counselors who fit in both of those categories, Jackie walked through this trial in her life and gained a huge profit of peace. It was the testimony of trial that not only gave her something to carry, but something to give away. She didn't just have a story of transformation, she gained peace that could be passed on, which is exactly what began to happen in those moments sharing with Anna.

Jackie took the peace she had profited earlier in her life and began to speak it out over Anna in ways my mom had never

seen or heard. As a witness to the transforming moments, my mom said it was like a cloud of something—Someone—powerful entered the room and just hovered over Jackie and Anna as they talked. Peace that Jackie had gained over the years was being applied and imparted, and it passed all understanding. Anna later agreed, saying that there was one sudden moment when the atmosphere of the whole room changed in an instant and her eyes were opened like never before. She was receiving a peace my sister had profited, a peace my sister was now learning to carry and impart. It wasn't just a powerful prayer time of deliverance or healing, but simply a passing of the profit of peace.

Unity had eluded our family in our relationship with Anna in large ways the three years before. We had seen small or somewhat temporary breakthroughs, things we were very thankful for at the times. But this time something changed dramatically—Anna. The moment she received the peace my sister had carried, immediately unity became possible and Anna became the aggressor of peace. She moved and even spoke toward such, which was a miracle in itself. She began to open up and bear her heart that had been so paralyzed and hidden even from basic points of conversation. Where she had been shut down, she was now free. The new peace in her began to breed a unity back into our whole family—to her sisters and her mom and me. It has been an amazing change! I well up in tears just describing it, even thinking back to a recent night and what a miracle it was to stand around the kitchen counter and laugh and talk so freely with her, to have such unity!

However, said unity was never possible despite our desires

or efforts. It was not until someone who had profited a supernatural peace from similar trials carried that peace to Anna that unity became possible in our family. Peace is a Person, a powerful Person, and He lives in us. If there is a missing peace in our lives, families, the Body of Christ, or the world—a lack of unity that Jesus prayed for—the answer is not to try harder or try and force our pieces to fit together any more than it is to judge one another for being different. No, the true uncommon unity that Jesus prayed for comes alive when we live as the peacemakers He transforms us to be while still celebrating the glorious differences in one another. How? When we are at peace with who God has made us to be and our oneness with Him, peace spreads and multiplies through us. Why? Because it is then, in Peace, that we take our expectations off our neighbors, we remove our measurements, and we begin to move forward and upward not holding on to our opinions or personal perspectives—but holding on to Him! We are holding on to the Prince of Peace Himself. If I am found in Peace, and you are found in Peace, we'll suddenly find that we are united there together.

Peace is a weapon, not a result; and Peace carries authority to change every situation or circumstance and destroy the works of the devil in our lives and world. The only question left is: will we carry Peace? Jackie chose to carry what was already inside her and release it to Anna; our whole family is changed because of such. Imagine if we do the same in relating to the family of God, in or outside His house, all around the world.

We are the missing piece of the peace that is lacking in the world. Peace has come and given Himself for the sake of the world, but the world will only know the Peace it is missing as

we learn to profit from the trials and tribulations of the world. We are not called to be comfortable—we are called to be peaceful. These are two very different concepts that we too often blur together. One is external, but the other is internal. When we apply our faith to the internal peace we already have, external will follow suit and the world will get to know the peace it is missing and seeking. The world is searching for the missing piece—peace—that is in us! Jesus has already overcome our trials, we simply must be willing to walk through them, keep our eyes on Him, and extract from those trials of the world a peace we *will* carry with us *to the world!* We are the missing piece to the world's missing peace.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF PEACE

When was the last time you asked someone how they were doing? When was the last time someone asked you how you were doing? More than likely you have experienced each of these recently, as they are common questions that we ask and answer. But when was the last time someone asked you this question and your answer was, "Peaceful"? It's just not a common answer. It's not a cultural answer. We're afraid to be peaceful because it denotes laziness. Instead, a frequent cultural response is, "Oh, you know, just busy." Or simply, "Really busy," maybe even, "It's been a wild few days!"

Culturally speaking, we get much of our worth from being busy rather than peaceful. To embrace, live in, or carry peace is countercultural to our results-oriented focus on worth and identity. Yet Jesus says it is those who are "peacemakers" that shall be called "sons of God." This is a huge battle! It is a cultural liability that too easily sneaks into our daily lives,

watering down our faith, and robbing us of one of the most powerful weapons for transformation that we have at our disposal.

Before we go further into some of the misconceptions of peace, I'd like to ask you to try something. The next time someone you don't see on an everyday basis asks you how you are doing, respond, "I'm peaceful." It will likely feel uncomfortable at first, but it is part of the Kingdom culture that we must take back by changing our patterns and thoughts.

Some of the misconceptions of peace are aspects we've briefly discussed or mentioned, or will cover shortly. However, I really believe it is necessary to give a full section to the misconceptions of peace due to the fact that "peace" has become highly *underrated* yet even more *needed* in and through our lives and families at a most important time.

The first thing about misconceptions of peace that comes to my heart is that it is passive instead of powerful. Similar to answering the question of how we are doing, we relate peace with stagnancy. But such is just not the case! Peace is not a state of comfort and passivity, it is a life-giving tool that takes and possesses new ground. It may not be sensational or as noticeable to the outward eye as far as fruit of the Spirit, but it is a fruit that transforms people and places and goes right for the root in regard to our calling to be like Christ, the Prince of Peace, and destroy the works of the devil. *"...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8).

Peace is a weapon that takes the enemy's footing in our lives and pulls the rug out from under him and all the strife he

tries to create. Peace is an offensive weapon, an offensive authority that is waiting to be picked up by the Body of Christ. He is waiting for us to rise up as carriers of peace, peacemakers who re-present the Son to the rising tribulations we see around the world. We don't have to go into spiritual combat mode for peace, but *peace is our form of combat!*

> *For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly…* (Romans 16:19-20).

Again, relating to the previous illustration regarding our all-too-rare response to others about being peaceful, I find it interesting, humorous even, that we spend so much time pursuing peace, yet so rarely refer to ourselves as peaceful. Something there just doesn't add up, and the world is lacking because of it. Our cultural reality tells us to pursue peace, yet our Kingdom reality empowers us to be *carriers of peace.* That is a big difference. If we are always pursuing peace, it means that we do not realize what we already have. And to top it off, it means that we are not carrying, let alone giving out, the peace that we have been sent by the Lord to impart.

To pursue peace is a huge misconception among us in the Body of Christ that keeps us chasing our tail for something that is finished and waiting to be given. This is not to belittle the battles or circumstances we are facing. Quite the contrary. Peace should not have to be fought for; it's a power that we can live from—and like Jesus, see storms made calm and

atmospheres changed. As soon as we flip these two cultural versions of peace and become carriers, we will quickly realize that peace is no longer something we need to pursue, but something people are waiting to receive from us.

> *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:7).

Why is peace so misunderstood? It is not as tangible as some of the other fruit we believe for, but that does not mean it is any less powerful. Peace is like a gas in the air, but in a positive form. You can't see it, but it has tremendous power as you live and breathe what is released. It becomes the atmosphere you live in and from. If natural gas is released in your home, you can't see it, but that is part of what makes it so powerfully detrimental. An unseen gas leak can be much worse than even a major fire, because it becomes an atmosphere you continue to live in.

Peace operates much the same way from within us, and then around us, but in a life-giving way. We give it less credit because we cannot always see it, and we may even take it for granted. It is so intangible that it really is beyond our understanding how important and valuable it is. When we are told of the peace of God that passes *all* understanding, we cannot lose sight of what that really means. Peace from God is so big, so powerful, that it cannot be understood or explained. That leaves us with two powerful choices: 1) we can discount what we don't understand or see, or 2) when we value it and believe, we bring to life something so big that there is no definition for it, and we reveal a part of God that is

supernatural. The choice is ours.

Peace is very underrated because of its intangible nature, yet it holds so much power waiting to be wielded for the change agent it really is. In a culture where we usually shy away from things we can't wrap our minds around, something that exceeds our understanding is exactly what the world needs. And we are the ones called to carry it to them as we allow God to renew our minds to the power of peace.

Forgiveness is one of the most vital aspects of such peace. Without forgiveness from God toward others or even your own forgiveness toward self, there is no peace to have or give out. Peace is not a stand-alone issue, but one that is made up of so many other more overt factors of our lives. But largest among them is forgiveness, which is the delivery of peace. When Joseph forgave his brothers for their role in his life, one of his defining statements was, *"Peace be with you, do not be afraid"* (Gen. 43:23). Joseph had profited a great peace during his challenging prison season, and he gave that peace away freely to those who needed it most through the power of forgiveness.

Peace is often defined as the absence of conflict. Forgiveness is the absence of offense. Without forgiveness, we cannot abide in the peace we are called to carry, and we're unable to give life to that which is dead or hurting. It was the Prince of Peace who declared, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"* (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness wipes the slate clean so that peace can become the new foundation; it is the launching pad of peace. So as we seek to take this intangible power we call peace to the world, we have a very tangible tool in our hand called *forgiveness.*

Many of us search for peace because we don't feel it, or we find ourselves in an uncomfortable circumstance. But peace is not a feeling or circumstance, peace is a Person found within you. This is a misconception of peace that keeps us cycling the wrong way, pursuing something we already have in droves, ripe for the giving. Circumstances give or take comfort, and our feelings are often the sum of such. But peace is not external comfort; it is strength to stand and walk forward amid great discomfort. Peace empowers our perseverance and makes us agents of change in the most un-peaceful of times, extracted from one storm to speak stillness to the next.

Peace is not a result to pursue, but a result of Christ that has already been given, which is now the answer we must live out toward the world. Peace must be redefined from our cultural definition to Jesus' Kingdom definition. True peace is countercultural, but it is also the very thing that will transform our culture as we live from its foundation in our lives.

SHALOM

Do you ever have those moments when you just don't know what to pray? It might be for yourself and your family, for someone else, a specific situation, or even for our nation or another. For me, when I just can't find the specific words, *shalom* becomes my go-to prayer. It is packed full, pregnant with the blessings of our Father's heart that Jesus came to reveal. *Shalom* is the essence of the Prince of Peace Himself.

According to Strong's Concordance #7965, *shalom* is defined by "completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness,

fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord."

Shalom is the most perfect and full form of peace. It is the Hebrew word used to greet someone, and it is what you leave behind as you say goodbye. It is a blessing that originated before Christ, which was, *and is,* fulfilled through Christ and now through us today. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is God's *shalom* to us and has freely given us every bit of the stated definition. In Christ, and therefore *in us,* we freely have wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, and the absence of agitation or discord—as much as *we choose*. To have or give these to the world, we begin simply by sharing an uncommon unity and oneness with Jesus, who is also called *Sar Shalom*, the Prince of Peace. God sent us *Sar Shalom* to overcome the world and dwell in us. As we are one with Him, the world will have the missing piece that makes them look up at their Father and believe.

The whole definition of *shalom* is very important because it is all one entity already given, instead of many parts that have to be sought out. When we learn to come into uncommon oneness with *Sar Shalom* Himself, we get the whole package! To me, that's very exciting! We often spend so much time and energy chasing, pursuing, even striving after different individual elements of the definition of *shalom.* We strive to achieve prosperity, but lose our health. We seek after safety, but are drained of our rest. When we seek after these things separately we might achieve one temporarily, but often sacrifice the others in the meantime. We do not have to sacrifice one for the other. God has given all of them to us in one gift of *shalom,* a gift that resides in us and makes us so

complete and full that we overflow and carry the same *shalom* to the world around us. If I want to know true peace and the world to have its answer of such as well, I must get to know *Sar Shalom* who lives in me!

SENT BY THE PRINCE OF PEACE

One of the most revealing confirmations to me of the power of peace goes back to how Jesus sent and empowered His followers. When we look at His life, it is marked by peace. He carries it and gives it even in the most adverse circumstances, and then He sends His followers to do the same. If there is a leader or transformer whose testimony we must follow, it is simply Jesus. So when He sends and empowers others, I take notice because that is what uncommon unity and a family structure of multiplication is all about, *sending!* It's about being a house of God where people are the walls and the roof is the Father's nature. God's house expands, covers, and embraces as far as we are willing to go or send. When Jesus sends the twelve, as well as when He sends the seventy, each time He gives them one mandate of what to carry to the people and place, then they go—*in peace!*

> *And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let* ***your peace*** *come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you* (Matthew 10:12-13).
>
> *But whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house." And if a son of peace is there,* ***your peace*** *will rest on it; if not, it*

will return to you (Luke 10:5-6).

When Jesus sends people, as we see in both of these passages, He sends them to carry peace out to their neighbors and the nations. Notice Jesus did not specifically or suddenly equip them with peace before He sent them—He expected them to already have a peace to give out. It is rare that we put much emphasis on peace as a powerful tool of transformation, rather than the result of transformation. But Jesus shows us that He saw it completely differently! Jesus saw peace the way we often now see love. It is much easier to say to someone, "Go to such and such a place and give them my love." Peace is just as powerful; and it is not just a defensive weapon, but an offensive strategy as demonstrated by Jesus Himself.

Jesus is sending us into the world to be carriers of peace. He led His followers through many trials where they had the chance to profit from such, a profit of peace. Many of us, even now, are in the middle of extremely difficult challenges in our lives and peace may seem a distant desire. But take heart, He has overcome the world! Whatever you are going through right now, demand a profit of peace; it is yours. This peace is yours to carry to your neighbors and the nations—wherever you go! Jesus has sent us, is sending us to reveal to the world He who has already been given to us, *Sar Shalom,* the Prince of Peace. As we become one with *Him,* we carry and release the whole package of peace, God's *shalom,* to a world desperately searching. Are we still searching alongside them, or will we carry with us the profit that Jesus already purchased through the greatest trial of all?

Peace—*that the world may believe!*

…Grace to you and peace be multiplied (1 Peter 1:2).

CHAPTER 7

A KINGDOM ECONOMY

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

The Kingdom economy is really this simple, summed up in this familiar verse from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus modeled all throughout His life how to live *into* a Kingdom economy, and how to live it *out* toward others. The apostles in the book of Acts, specifically in Acts chapter 4, demonstrated such a way of life as they lived into this Kingdom economy *together,* unleashing a fresh, needed testimony that multiplied all they had to the point that *no one had any lack* (see Acts 4:34).

Economics are too often reduced to money, the love of it, or the physical poverty we are battling. But poverty is not just physical but spiritual in nature, and it is this kind of poverty mindset (lacking in faith, not money) that keeps us from living into God's Kingdom economy. I'm not talking about a "name it and claim it" prosperity gospel; *far from it.* Jesus and His disciples show us and prove to us another way, a Kingdom economy that we can live into, *if* we will leave the trust in our

monetary economy behind.

The intention here is not to curse money or its role in our lives, but rather to give new vision to how we operate with what is in our hands—regardless of whether it looks like a lot or a little. I'm talking about a "live it and give it, freely we receive, freely we give" kind of gospel. Amounts are not the focus here, but our mindsets are vital. Such an economy comes alive and overtakes our earthly means when we simply and truly seek first the Kingdom of God together, trusting that all the other aspects of God's promises and nature will be added as well. However, this Kingdom economy does not—cannot—and will not just come to us, *because it already has.* This Kingdom economy is waiting for us to overcome the poverty we assign to God with our mindsets and live *into* what is available through His abundant, Fatherly nature.

For my family and me, this has been one of our greatest lifelong challenges, lessons, and testimonies. We have battled the line between these two worlds for years, living out of one and into the other, for the sake of the world we are in. We have had excruciating pressure, huge needs, immense deadlines, and countless miracles, often on a daily basis, and we've lived this way for roughly thirteen years. If there was ever an area of the Kingdom we have watched come alive supernaturally before our eyes and through our lives, it is the Kingdom economy God has made available to us all, *for the sake of all.* Jesus modeled it so effortlessly, and the disciples came together in an uncommon unity to take the baton and run their leg of the race. Now it's up to us. We just have to recognize the baton we are grabbing and the race we are building upon.

A KINGDOM-FIRST ECONOMY

> *Now the multitude of* ***those who believed were of one heart and one soul;*** *neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but* ***they had all things in common.*** *And with* ***great power*** *the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And* ***great grace*** *was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need* (Acts 4:32-35).

These apostles who lived together as part of the answer to Jesus' final prayer lived in a unique community. It says they were of one heart and one soul. As was mentioned previously, this literally means to be *"in sync or in tune"* with one another and to *"breathe spiritually together."* They lived together in a vitally powerful unity of community, and we learn that they themselves and the world around them were all the better for it. They walked in great grace and great power because of this uncommon unity. But what always strikes me is not just how they were united in Spirit, but also in the physical truths that were before them. In today's individualistic society, we welcome money, and it easily becomes our master. But within community, we can still appreciate money and resources; but here they become our servants to empower God's purposes

and one another.

The Word tells us that the believers *"had all things in common,"* they shared all things, and no one knew any lack. We are not talking so much about a pooling of resources, but about the liberality from which they lived together. Together they knew and believed that God was an abundant Father, a Father *they could not out give*. They trusted in the Father's love for them and for others. When we truly believe this and know God's nature to be so abundant toward us His children, we will give just as freely and sow into the Kingdom economy that God has made available here and now.

The believers in Acts 4 saw giving differently because they saw one another differently. They could act on their faith because they knew they were giving out of God's storehouse, not their own. They gave freely from a place of oneness with God and one another; and because of this, not only did their families know no lack but the whole family of God around them knew no lack. This is what we can expect all around the world when we too operate together in a Kingdom economy, our uncommon community of cared-for "family" will only grow that much larger. Through unity, God's economy always multiplies and never divides.

When examining the passage from Acts 4, we must see it first through Kingdom eyes. This kind of belief system is not meant to be applied on a political level. It is when we blend these Kingdom principles with the control of politics and legislation that we end up throwing the baby out with the bath water and fighting for the capitalism of the world to avoid what might appear like a politically negative system. The Kingdom is *not* a system, but a culture of faith we can live into because of

a love so perfect from our Father. I will make this very clear, this is not a "share the pot" system to be enforced or legislated. This is Kingdom economics, learning to see economics in a new light through faith in *who* our Father really is. This is not a foundation of beliefs that can or should be legislated, as faith must come out of freedom of choice, not force.

The kind of living that the apostles modeled is not a limit, but an opportunity to choose a Kingdom that still capitalizes, but does so at an even greater rate through community, rather than capitalist individuals. The Kingdom breeds a supernatural kind of multiplication that overcomes the division of building one's own. The apostles knew how to live in and out of an uncommon unity, in Spirit and in truth, even in their economics. We cannot keep our economics separate from our Kingdom, and Jesus prayed that His people, of His kingdom, would become one in an uncommon unity. Economics are not the exception unless our hearts are divided to let economics rule. Jesus said it, even commanded it Himself, *"Freely you have received, freely give"* (Matt. 10:8).

As I mentioned previously, we have personally seen this kind of uncommon, if not unusual economy lived out before our eyes, and not always willingly. We have been through some very difficult years and a lot of tight moments, but it has been in those moments when we have seen the Kingdom math of God's Kingdom economy multiply a zero in our account into enough to feed and care for our family, our spiritual family, and much of the community around us.

When my family and I first moved to Ethiopia, the Lord brought to us a young man named Alex. Alex was twenty-three

years of age at the time, and he had lived on the streets since he was just seven. Immediately, we saw a light over Alex. We didn't know what the Lord had planned, but we knew He had special treasures hidden within him. Right after we moved into the home we were renting, the Spirit began to speak to us about inviting Alex to live with us so we could embrace him as family.

Alex was excited about the opportunity and moved in immediately. We began walking the streets together where he taught me about the streets, the people, and the culture. I taught him how to abide in the Holy Spirit, how to hear God's voice, and join the Lord where He was moving, especially while walking the streets. Alex had lived with us about a week, and knew we were often living day to day financially. He was learning to trust God with us a day at a time, and how to join the Lord and move forward with purpose, regardless of what we did or did not have in our hands monetarily. If the Lord was leading us forward, then He would supply the seed. That is His nature, and that is what we were, and still are, living by.

This is when the Lord prompted us with yet another challenge. We felt strongly from the Lord that we were to take all the money we had and give it to Alex, regardless of what that might look like on the outside for our family. We had about $250 to our name, between cash and what was in our account, and already had the challenge of just starting to live in a foreign country. We didn't even know how we would afford groceries or day-to-day needs that week. Also, we were worried what such an amount may do to Alex, as we didn't know how he might handle such financial freedom. But all our earthly reasoning and circumstances did not matter, the Lord

wanted to lead us further into His economy, and we simply had to obey and trust God's nature toward us and the purpose He was leading us in.

We were amazed to watch the series of events that began to spring up after we went to Alex and put the $250 in his hands. He stood there trembling. You might expect someone who had lived on the streets most of his life to jump for joy at such a gift, but Alex was immediately gripped by the Spirit. He didn't take it lightly. We told Alex that God wanted him to have the money, that God loved him, trusted him, and so did we. We all prayed together and went on with the evening.

The next day, Alex took all the money to the bank and had it broken up into small bills. He bought himself a new pair of shoes, one new set of clothes, and then prayed over every single cent as he walked the streets freely giving out what he had been given. Alex bought food, clothing, or whatever was needed for people and families who lived on the streets, and he began to build many new relationships. That same day, Alex even brought home groceries for all of us as a family to share. Each bit that Alex passed out became a seed, and those seeds later multiplied throughout the streets to countless numbers of people and families.

Our $250 could easily be seen as barely enough for our family to live off of in Ethiopia, let alone give away. But God brought His Kingdom economy to life through living and giving freely together in uncommon community. Alex became part of the family; God wanted to give to Alex through us abundantly, where amounts didn't matter but the Father's nature did. By itself, that money may not look like a lot for a whole family, but when given freely with the Lord, it became

more than enough, not only for our family, but for Alex and many more on the streets who soon became like family to Alex and to us. Not only was that amount of money enough to care for our family, Alex, and many other families on the streets, but that $250 multiplied much further and became a foundation for what God is still doing there on the streets in Ethiopia today. It was all we had, but it was all God needed. We saw multiplication both in physical and spiritual terms. The amount was not overly abundant in worldly terms, but when given freely within God's Kingdom, family, and community mindset, God's economy multiplied abundantly!

JESUS' ECONOMY

Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came to give life and to give it *"more abundantly."* This abundant life is not only speaking of our eternal life in Heaven, but of God's heavenly nature and will that is also to be lived out here on earth, as it is in Heaven. This kind of life more abundantly is both physical and spiritual in nature. And one of the clearest pictures and examples Jesus gives of such abundant life being lived out and given here on earth is when He fed the five thousand. They had little but gave freely, and watched it all multiply abundantly!

> *When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."* ***But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them***

something to eat" (Matthew 14:15-16).

The dialog that goes on in Matthew 14 between the disciples and Jesus about the circumstances and the multitude is so intriguing to me. The disciples did exactly what we started to do when the Lord told us to take the little money we had left for our family and give it to Alex: they started reasoning according to the "only" things they had in the natural economy, rather than seeing with Jesus into the Kingdom economy that was ripe to come to life. While the disciples reasoned, Jesus prepared them all to *live into* that available Kingdom economy. Look how Jesus responds to them: *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."* The disciples continued to reason out the problem, as Jesus continued to see the hidden Kingdom answer waiting to be lived into and revealed.

> *And they said to him, "We have here **only** five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me"* (Matthew 14:17-18).

Jesus took the *"only"* food they had left among the entire gathered community, blessed it, broke it, and began to give it out freely. Why? It wasn't because they had enough, let alone enough to spare, He gave freely because He gave according to the Father's nature. What is important to see here is that nowhere is it said or even implied that a miracle of multiplication happened *before* they started freely giving out food. Had they waited for a miracle before they began to give freely, they may have stood there waiting with their five loaves and two fish for a long time. That's not how Jesus led them;

that is not usually how God's Kingdom economy comes alive.

God doesn't just do miracles *for* us—He does miracles *with* us and *through* us. Jesus led the disciples and the multitude to *live into* what seemed impossible. We do not read of a time where they had enough to feed the five thousand in their hands beforehand. But we do read that the entire multitude of people ate and were made full, making sure we know that *more than enough provision passed through* their hands on its way to the multitude. In God's Kingdom, abundance is not an amount, it is a mindset and lifestyle that we live in relation to God and His promises.

> *So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children* (Matthew 14:20-21).

The people didn't end up with just enough, they ate until they were full. And they finished with twelve baskets of fragments left over. Those twelve baskets were more than they originally started with, not to mention the multitudes who were now full. Imagine a poor community if you will. They are living under the oppression of poverty. Natural instinct would be to measure carefully and hold on to all you have to make it go as far as possible.

But now imagine that community decides to live differently. They are going to be the most free, joyful, and abundant givers possible not because they have enough, but because they know who their God is. The people decide they are not going

to subscribe to poverty's economy, which is clearly struggling. They decide to go all in on God's economy. Before you know it, the love and freedom they live by begins to take over and override their circumstances. No longer are they giving out resources to one another, they are simply giving out God! They become rich because their spirit cannot be broken. They have vision for more, so they live into more. Before you know it, resources are multiplying. One person's strength overfills another's weakness. That family is strengthened to go all in to overwhelmingly bless another family. This continues until the community is living in abundance. How? Grace! Grace becomes their currency; circumstances don't hold their love and freedom captive, and together they run with faith into God's fullness.

Basically, they know the nature and promises of God and go all in. The enemy cannot stop God or God in us. He can throw circumstances that we allow to pressure us into stopping ourselves. God's Kingdom economy is abundant, it is waiting to be discovered, but we must live into it like Jesus. We cannot only live according to what we do or do not have, but must *live into* who He is and His abundant promises. An impoverished community can be turned upside down simply by living into grace, by faith. When we live this mindset out toward one another, we bring to life a Kingdom economy so rich that it does not subtract but always multiplies. Promises are meant to be lived out toward the world around us.

THE STOREHOUSE MENTALITY

What does it mean to *live into,* and therefore extract to life this multiplying Kingdom abundance? I often think of the way

Jesus always lived into more than enough as the storehouse mentality—without ever depending on having enough in His hands. We know the promises of God, that He is our Provider, that provision is available, and that He will supply all we need so we always have an abundance for every good work (see 2 Cor. 9:8) We also see the needs that are all around us, needs that are abundant worldwide. So how do we come together and live into the promises for the sake of the many?

Often our human response naturally goes to wanting to help. I have both said and frequently heard the statement, "As soon as I have *this,* I will help and give to *that."* Or, "As soon as I *have* the means, *then* I will go do this." But we cannot wait until we "have" for "then" to take place. We believe the promise of what is in God's storehouse above us, and we can see all the needs for what is in that storehouse of promises in front of us. So we often wait until God's storehouse comes into our hands before we step into the need or a calling. *But* we are not called to be a storehouse of resources—that is God's job. *We* are called to be a storehouse of faith. Jesus purposely sent out the disciples without supplies or their money belts.

We too are called to step toward the need or calling regardless what we have in our hands. Because we know our Father's nature, we know what Jesus has finished on the Cross and through His resurrection, and we believe that as we step forward toward our purpose or call, God's storehouse of promise and abundance will meet us at the need. It's like a triangle. We often wait for the Kingdom to come to earth through us by living at all the "right angles." But the Kingdom often takes the route of the hypotenuse angle and joins us where the Lord has spoken to us to meet Him. That is what it

means to *live into* His abundance. If we truly know His promises are real, nothing will stop us from stepping into them before they are revealed.

This is the principle that Joshua and Caleb led the Israelites to live out across the Jordan River. They knew of their Promised Land; they wanted it terribly. And those who waited for such promises to come to them on the wilderness side waited in vain and died in the wilderness. The Jordan River did not part until the Israelites stepped into the water, and then what looked like a blockade actually became their path to abundance, fruitfulness, and multiplication. They lived into the promises of God rather than waiting for the promises to come to them. The generation that lived into the promises received all that was available and more.

Jesus knew this principle of life more abundantly and the Kingdom economy. He lived it before the disciples and taught it to them well. They began to live out a Kingdom economy together, amid an uncommon unity in Acts chapter 4, and they came out the other side revealing a testimony that the Father lives to give, *"Nor was there anyone among them who lacked…"* (Acts 4:34). Jesus showed them how to feed more than five thousand people one evening. Together, the apostles carried that testimony further, seeing how lack and poverty as a whole can be ground taken back. They lived *into* the abundance that Jesus showed them by faith; and the Father's Kingdom economy met them at the need with more than enough for them and for the multitudes.

We are often worried about having just enough in our hands, and what might happen if we step forward by faith—often fearing the worst. That might be true in the worldly

economy, but that's not how Kingdom math works in God's economy. You take what you have, live and give forward freely, and actually discover "abundance" has been waiting to be revealed. Jesus' economy, like the economy the disciples lived out in Acts 4, is not just an economy that demands we give up what we have into a community pool. It is an economy that calls for His people to be uncommonly united in faith—believing together that when one freely gives what seems like barely enough in the natural, the Kingdom comes and makes it more than enough—not just for the one—but for the community, the multitude, as a whole. *That* is math I want to live by! That is where barely enough for one becomes "life more abundantly" for many.

Scarcity of resources usually makes us stop our forward movement and refrain from community. That's the enemy's design actually, because he knows the multiplication available within the nature of God and the uncommonly united community who are living forward into that nature together. We have seen God developing an uncommon community learning to live this way recently. We have had a number of gatherings, feasts even, and a great many house guests recently. However, almost every time one of these events has been about to take place, our bank account hasn't even had enough in it for us to live off of as a family, let alone feed groups five times the size of our family.

Anyone's temptation would be to call off the event, but that is exactly what the enemy is trying to pressure us into doing. Instead, each time, we have taken all that we had left and used it to live and love even more abundantly toward our guests, incoming community, and the purpose God placed

before us. Each time, not only did each member of our family's needs get met, we were abundantly full. We saw community come together, each member was made full, and most of the time we ended up with enough left over to take care of our family for a whole week afterward. Not to mention, we still were able to walk in our calling and purpose as a community and join the Lord in the spiritual movement He is training us in; we didn't have to abandon purpose just to survive. God is an abundant, Milk and Honey God! Sometimes we just need to give Him the chance to show *who* He really is. We have to trust *who* He really is.

ABUNDANTLY

I love looking at the Father's heart for family and abundance through the testimony of Boaz and the way he lived toward Ruth. Ruth was poor, a widow, and a foreigner. All were stigmas that qualified her under the law to go into a person's field at harvest time and glean from their scraps, their edges, and their corners. Boaz was a field owner, and being harvest time, had a big job to do to take care of his field and his family. But Boaz didn't see abundance like many of us do. He didn't define abundance as an amount of crops or as agenda to strive to achieve. Boaz saw abundance through the Father's eyes—as people, as family. Boaz wasn't worried about multiplying his family income or surviving with enough, he was more conscious of the Father's abundance. When Ruth came into his field, Boaz could have been focused on what his house and family needed. He could have been focused on his agenda of harvesting crops. Instead, Boaz's eyes were immediately taken when he saw Ruth—who to Boaz was a different kind of

harvest entirely.

How many of us—when focused on a necessary agenda, one as time-sensitive as harvesting season—would take the time to notice a disguised harvest within Ruth when she stepped into our current agenda? Boaz could have simply ministered to Ruth by allowing her to glean from his field while still going about the agenda of his harvest. But Boaz saw God's abundance walk right into the middle of his earthly harvest. Many of us might not notice a Kingdom harvest for protecting our natural one, Boaz did. And because Boaz's eyes saw God's definition of abundance, Boaz reaped a harvest so abundant that it changed the world. Boaz's harvest was not only bread for his family, like his fields may have given him. Boaz's harvest reaped the Bread of Life Himself, as Jesus Christ was born out of his own family line of descendants, through Ruth.

See, Boaz took notice of the goodness in Ruth, *and he gave to her with abundant favor,* regardless what it might mean to his own earthly house's resources. He took Ruth in like family and even let her glean from the best parts of his fields, instead of just from the excess scraps. Because of this unusual, abundant favor, Ruth came back to Boaz and asked to become his wife. Boaz stepped toward Ruth as his wife, and they had a child. That child was Obed. Obed had a son, his name was Jesse. Jesse had a son, who was David. David gave birth to the line of Christ Himself, the *true* Bread of Life. Had Boaz protected his own earthly abundance, he would not have tasted the Father's true abundance. He gave abundantly of one kind of harvest and reaped even more abundantly of a harvest far greater, farther reaching—a harvest still multiplying and

feeding the world today. Our economy gives us bread. God's Kingdom economy gives us bread and also reveals the multiplication of the Bread of Life Himself.

Our definition of abundance has to change and come into alignment with God's definition. With God, abundance is not defined through money, resources, or earthly means. Abundant prosperity in God's terms is people, sons and daughters, who are literal, extended, and even spiritual family members—those we give life to physically and spiritually. Capitalism is a blessing that we must capitalize upon, but not necessarily in the ways we commonly think. All that we have freely received, we have the opportunity to take that version of abundance and sow it into true abundance, true prosperity, and give life to those whose spirits, whose destinies, whose hearts, and whose love makes us abundantly rich. When we value this kind of abundance with the Father, and live it out *together,* that is when we get to see barely enough multiplied into more than enough because the Father's true abundance is for the sake of all. We will step toward God's abundance and get earth's thrown in. But we have to be willing, like Boaz, to trade in our definition of abundance for God's definition. This means that we must do away with capitalism that has an individualistic, divided focus of self and *live into* a capitalism from a place of uncommon unity, where we see the world as family, just like our Father does.

When we take our focus off the harvest we are trying to capitalize on, we will see invitations of God's abundant life that come into our fields and we won't be afraid to step toward them with faith and capitalize on God's Kingdom abundance for an entire family line—*one that might even change the*

world! We can keep our capitalism. We just need to look at whether we are capitalizing for the sake of one, or through a *oneness* with God and one another that is for the sake of many. The worldly kind of divided, individualistic focused capitalism feeds one, but Jesus' Kingdom capitalism feeds the world. Both can be abundant, but one divides and the other multiplies.

GRACE BECOMES OUR CURRENCY

> *And God is able to make* ***all grace*** *abound toward you, that you, always having* ***all sufficiency*** *in all things, may have an abundance for* ***every good work*** (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Is money our master, or is grace our source? Money is supposed to be our servant, not our master. Yet how often do we allow money to be the blockade that keeps us from living forward into God's given promises? When money is our master, division, if not already present, is lurking close by. But when grace becomes our currency, we live into a life of fulfilled promises and inevitable multiplication.

Let's take a closer look at what Paul is saying in Second Corinthians 9:8. We are promised that because God makes all *grace* abound to us, we will *always* have *all* sufficiency for *all* things! It doesn't say anything about money or resources because money is the servant of grace. We are promised we will never lack a thing in anything according to God's Kingdom currency of grace, and that we will actually have an *abundance*

of what is necessary for *every* good work! That is the Kingdom economy, a lifestyle among a community that lives according to grace rather than money, knowing that money is at grace's command. This is the Kingdom economy that the community we see in Acts chapter 4 lived into. When we allow money to be the determining factor of how we live forward with God and into the lives of others, we will find ourselves lacking the grace that truly multiplies abundantly.

But when we spend the grace we've been given, we discover the promised provision that we are assured is ours. Grace must become our currency! Yes, I understand it is not tangible within our hands. It does not need to be. Grace is something we take hold of by faith. Grace is the free gift, the free passage that favors us on the path to promise we enter into by faith. Grace is what parts the Jordan River. You may not see it, but there is an endless supply waiting just for you. Grace is our currency, and we must learn how to spend this grace for the sake of the world. That is the Father's heart. It has already been given to us by the finished work of Jesus Christ. What we do with it is up to us.

The Israelites learned this the hard way. An entire generation perished in the wilderness, wanting to possess potential promises but constantly lamenting the lack of resources in their hands, the giants they feared, and the Jordan that blocked their way. They saw what they did not have. Joshua, Caleb, and the generation that followed them had fresh vision for the promises God had before them. They were victorious because they didn't focus on what was in their hands. This leadership and generation did two things instead: 1) they saw what God had promised, and 2) they stepped

forward trusting who God was and is. They lived by that same "storehouse mentality" discussed earlier. They spent the currency of grace that was in God's hands because they knew who their God was, they knew His promises, and they would live into His nature of grace. They spent what God had offered.

> *And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off.... Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan* (Joshua 3:13,17).

We spend the grace God has given us by stepping into His promises, regardless of the water of the Jordan that seemingly blocks our way. Had they not stepped into the Jordan River until it was parted and everything looked ready, they never would have inherited what was given them. If they had relied on the typical ways of humankind, they never would have multiplied in such a fruitful Promised Land. They would have continued to toil and cycle in the wilderness. The priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant *had* to step into the grace that was promised them by faith, not after it was given *but before*. The Bible tells us, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"* (Eph. 2:8).

The Israelites had to live into the gift of God by faith,

before it was given to them. They stepped into the Jordan before the river was parted. We must step forward in our calling, in our purposes, into God's Kingdom economy *before* we have the resources in our hands if we will truly possess the fullness of what God has given us. Grace is the unseen currency promised us, that we may *always* have *all* sufficiency in *all* things and have abundance for *every* good work. Such a promise does not come alive through money. Such promises come alive because God has already made His grace abound to us. We have all the currency we need. God is waiting for us to live *into* His currency of grace toward the world around us—by faith!

This is not always an easy thing to do in a world that pressures us through a monetary master. The enemy does not want us to live by a currency that is so freely available, to be so freely given that the world might believe. We need one another. We need to live like the apostles in the book of Acts who lived into this Kingdom economy *together*. That which involves economy and money is often one of the hardest places to see uncommon unity come alive. But it is perhaps one of the most important mindsets we can learn and live together. When the apostles did it, they knew no lack and neither did those around them. They lived by a different currency. They lived by different economic rules. They lived by the currency of grace, which is always pregnant with abundance and multiplication!

LIBERALITY

Liberality is the last element of the Kingdom economy we will look at together; it is also the revealer of the secret of

multiplication within the Kingdom economy. Liberality is not in the amount given, it is the freedom in which we give. If we are living by the currency of grace, is there ever any reason not to be as freely giving as the Spirit leads us?

Liberality through the lens of fear appears as loss and decrease. But liberality through God's eyes spends itself on the oneness Jesus prayed for and begins to birth a multiplication that the enemy is desperately afraid of. Do not fear being called to give with such liberality, it is the enemy who should be afraid of this Kingdom truth. Liberality always reveals the secret of grace that God is waiting for us to truly live by.

> *Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that* ***in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.*** *For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing* (2 Corinthians 8:1-3).

Wow! Sometimes I find myself reading this passage in Second Corinthians 8 over and again, just trying to grasp the fullness of what is being said. In this passage, we are being told of those who lived out a Kingdom economy, those who knew the currency of grace that had been bestowed upon them to such an extent that *even their poverty* abounded because of their liberality. I'm going to say it again, "Wow!" Now, *that* is an economy I want to live into, because that is the kind of abundant nature of the Father that the nations are longing to

taste. This was a community who lived out a culture of liberality *together* where even their poverty was redefined. When we live out this kind of liberality within community and toward the world, we will find ourselves in a unity so uncommon there is no definition. When we strive to unite, we often fall. But when we see the mindsets that often divide us become renewed, the Kingdom comes alive and so do our dreams and destinies.

I look back and see a heritage in my family of living into this Kingdom dynamic of liberality. In my previous book, *The Life Giver,* I shared about my grandmother, my mom's mom, and the stories of how she freely received and so freely gave, even out of the very little they had. But I am also blessed by such a heritage from my dad's side of the family and the testimony of my distant uncle, R.G. LeTourneau. He is most often known as a forerunner and inventor in the earth-moving equipment industry. He used his success to make quite an impact in ministry and missions as well. LeTourneau University in Texas is named after him and his work and passion in these areas. In fact, he has often been referred to as "God's businessman." But what we must know from his life, a testimony I personally look to glean from, is that one of the greatest reasons for his immense success and impact was the fact that he knew the Kingdom dynamic of liberality. R.G. freely lived into this Kingdom economy that we can often be so hesitant to embrace. R.G. got to a point in life where, unafraid of what he might lose, he gave 90 percent of his income into the Kingdom, believing in what *or who* God might gain.

This mindset is what changed our ministry while living in Ethiopia. We rarely knew how much financial support would

come in each month to support our family and the movement God was raising up in Ethiopia among many of the young leaders and kids with whom we were working. We could not always plan what the month would look like, but we could listen to the Spirit, be obedient, and give liberally with Him each day as provision came in. The most fruitful months for our newly arising leadership team and the kids they were working with from the street were months I would look back on and realize that God had us give between 80-90 percent of what came in. And yet, we always had enough for our family as well. In fact, God wasn't growing a ministry for us or through us —*He was growing a family.* Our lives grew more abundant by the day! He was bringing us into an unusual kind of unity with those He had put in our lives—those from the streets and those who previously had to hold on to anything they could get. But through this lifestyle and Kingdom culture of liberality, we watched our relationships and our family oneness in the Lord come together in new ways. It even began to eliminate the age-old battle of dividing lines between locals and foreigners.

We experienced a lot of these dividing lines on a daily basis in Ethiopia, some more subtle, and some quite consistent and glaring. The two words we heard shouted in our direction most often as we walked the streets were *"ferenge"* (which means foreigner), and "money," which, well, you know what that means. That is how we were seen on the outside.

One particular young woman began to work with us in our home on a daily basis. She and her family are some of the dearest people to our hearts as they have become our family. But the first few months with her in our home were not easy due to the up and down, passive-aggressive view she had of

us. She was a believer before coming to our family, and she was very poor. She would not have said it immediately, and she did care for us greatly, but she secretly believed a lot of the divisive stereotypes toward us that we frequently heard yelled our way on the streets. Many days we watched the battle in her mind rage as she stared at what she did not have and what we did have. This caused the old dividing battles of resentment, jealousy, bitterness, judgment, and the like.

There are so many lies the enemy plants in our thoughts to empower the division he so desperately wants to maintain. Most of the lies revolve around money or physical resources. We often had no more than $100 for our family on any given day, which could sound like lack to some reading this, but that was much more than the woman had known. The mornings she walked into our home carrying that oppressive battle in her mind, we tried to pray with her and bring light. We often excused her work and gave her freedom to go seek the Lord in a special prayer room. We talked openly with her and gave her whatever we could. But the lines of division between our perceived lives continued to blur her perspective.

It was a tough, ongoing battle, but a worthwhile one at that. We learned together how to expose and break down the deceptive walls that the enemy wanted to fortify. With each day, regardless of her thoughts or expectations, God taught us to live even more freely toward her and toward others who were coming into our home. We were already giving so much of our lives and of the little we had, but that did not matter. God wanted to teach us the fullness of liberality. The more we gave liberally without measure, the more we saw walls come tumbling down. She realized that the walls were never real, and

the culture of her mind began to change. The more freely we lived toward her, the freer she was from fear, judgment, anger, and bitterness. The more we gave, not in amount but in liberal, free *measure,* the less dependent she became.

There were times we gave her more in amount, but because it wasn't done through a means of liberality, the battle and dependence would rage on. Yet there were other times when we gave far less, but through an openhanded, open-home measure we saw the greatest transformation take place, a transformation that led to multiplication. See, money was not the currency that changed her the most; *grace was.* Our liberality exposed the currency of grace that she too could live by and eliminated money from being a master of division. Liberality in nature, not money, broke down the walls and eventually created a great multiplication through her life.

We began to give without measure and watched previous measuring lines from the other people's perspective begin to fall down as well. Our family, house, and finances flowed freely into people's lives who came and went freely each day; and the lack of measurement never put us as a family in danger of lack, but instead multiplied our family through these precious, incredible lives. Liberality empowers uncommon unity, which in turn launches exponential multiplication. Without liberality, we have more measures. These measures reinforce lines of division the enemy has been maintaining for years between people, families, cultures, generations, and even churches. When we lose our measures to live and give *with* God, not recklessly but freely with Him, we will find ourselves doing far more than just giving a tithe or an offering—we will be tearing down the walls that the enemy built to avoid viral multiplication

happening through our lives. The more freely we gave in Ethiopia, the more we had, and the more we watched each life around us begin to multiply the same to their family, friends, neighbors, and community. Choosing liberality in the way we live and give toward the people and world around us is in fact choosing a multiplication of life that overcomes division.

The young woman I mentioned took the testimony of liberality she was witnessing in our home and was renewed from her battles of fear, judgment, and bitterness and began to open her home to her neighbors and even those from the streets. She opened her hands to everyone in need. Her poverty did not increase because of giving so freely out of the little they had. Instead, she watched as their family and home began to abound more than ever before *in the riches of their liberality*. She no longer lives by what she and her family do or do not have in their hands; rather, she lives by the grace that was brought to life by her newfound life of giving with liberality.

Liberality is contagious, and it releases the currency of grace to be revealed. But this is *not* about giving a certain amount or percentage. Liberality is giving with an open heart, never holding on to what we have freely received, knowing that God has prepared His grace to flow back into us with the same measure, often a greater measure. One person or community who lives out this kind of Kingdom liberality is in danger—not of experiencing lack—but of empowering a wildfire that just might sweep the nations. When one wall of fear comes down, many more are sure to follow. We only control the walls around our own lives and families. But sometimes the world is waiting for only *one* domino to fall, and

we know the multiplication that causes.

LIVING THE KINGDOM ECONOMY

> *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need* (Acts 4:32-35).

The economy we live by can be one of the most divisive or one of the most unifying parts of culture that we live into each day. Jesus, one person, lived this out before the disciples. This testimony from Acts 4 shows us that His example did not go unseen. Jesus lived into His Father's Kingdom economy and He lived out the currency of grace toward all He encountered. He always took on more, always moved forward—but still never knew any lack. He did not rely on what He had in His hands, but by what His Father held in His. Jesus said it Himself, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work"* (John 4:34).

Because Jesus lived this out, the disciples followed suit. This kind of Kingdom lifestyle brought them together in such an uncommon unity that we see poverty eradicated on their watch. They did not just live in uncommon unity in the spiritual, faith-based parts of their lives. These world-changing, exponentially-multiplying apostles even lived out the uncommon unity Jesus prayed for in something as tangible and worldly as their economy. Their example should not leave us the same. The currency of grace has been revealed! Jesus and these apostles have shown us a Kingdom economy and a path of multiplication that we have the privilege of living into —*together!*

CHAPTER 8

THE "SHAKEN" LEADER

...Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel (John 5:19-20).

Do you want to watch the world marvel at our God? Do you want them to have the opportunity to *know* their First Love? I do. And I believe we all will. First, we must learn and live the kind of leadership Jesus testified of and modeled. We must become shaken leaders if the world will ever be shaken from its unbelief. Shaken leaders are free to make the statement of Jesus (in John 5:19-20) the declaration of their lives and leadership —*regardless of perception*—and let it become the testimony for all the people they lead. We must be leaders so focused on what the Father is doing that we change the world's perception of Him, rather than other people's perception of us. *That* is a shaken leader!

They are leaders who are in and led by the river. And

though the world may think they are shaken from earthly sense and security, always winding freshly downstream in new ways, they are unmoved because they are *so shaken* by the presence of the One they are following. Like David, they are wrecked by their love for God, and they realize it is not only okay, but beneficial. They are leaders who are shaken from the governing of human perception, whose vision is fixed upon the Presence of heavenly reality. They are leaders who unite the most differing opinions not just because of their ability or negotiations, but because of their undying focus upon their *First Love*. They do not lead people together in their doctrine or opinions, they lead people directly to the Lord where all can be found together in an uncommon unity.

The shaken leaders empower God's children to be one, *that the world may believe*. It is not by their ability, but because they are so moved by their love for the Lord that they are unmoved by the perception of the world. Many leaders are being shaken in various parts of their lives right now—both current and emerging leaders. They are being shaken *from* the world that they might be sent *into* the world. They will not just be listened to for their leadership but will be followed because of the First Love whom they won't compromise in following. *He is their Vision!* They will teach the world a new way—and show us the contagious life of First Love leadership.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SHAKEN

Before we go any further in casting vision for this kind of leader, I want to address those of you who have gone through an immense shaking in recent seasons of your life. To not be moved by the world, we have to be shaken from the world.

When Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River, it was only his generation that he led. The previous generation died in the wilderness. They would not let themselves be shaken from the old vision or past mindsets. Because they couldn't be shaken *from* the world, they couldn't lead the way into the new. But I have a few questions. We know that Joshua's generation crossed over and inhabited the Promised Land, and we know that the previous generation did not make it. But what if two generations had crossed over instead of one? What if two generations had taken possession of their Promised Land? What if two generations had taken this new ground, been fruitful, and multiplied? Imagine how much more life would have been born of the Lord! The generation that did cross over had to be circumcised and roll back the old before they could move into the new. They had to be stripped bare to be ready to move forward and possess the new they believed God for, which reminds me of this verse from First Peter:

> *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ…* (1 Peter 1:13).

God desires for multiple generations to cross over into the promises He has set before us all. Look at Job. We so often talk of all that Job lost and everything that he went through, and I can't imagine what it must have been like. But to me, the key to Job is found here:

> *Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen*

> *thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters* (Job 42:12-13).

To those who have been shaken, consider Job who experienced a latter part of his life that was more blessed than the first. Those who have been shaken, those who are re-emerging, there is a call to rise up with expectation, gird up the loins and old ways of your mind, and believe in the grace that is being brought to you. It is difficult to be a shaken leader—unmoved on the inside but transforming culture on the outside—unless you have been shaken from the old. God is raising up *generations* of shaken leaders who *will* shake the world. You may have been stripped bare and hardly know how to step. Maybe you are just now starting to re-emerge. Maybe you are a leader who has gone before me, and now we will cross over together.

To those who have been shaken, I want to honor you. You have been chosen. I believe the latter part of your lives will be more blessed than the former. You will not only see what you lost restored, you will see it restored abundantly, and a new kind of multiplication will spring forth. You have been shaken so that you will be a new breed of leader who has abandoned the pressures of perception and expectation to live out a culture of leadership that Jesus Himself has set the course. You are part of a new breed of leaders who will not be moved by pressure, but who will move many others by your unearthly passion! You will bring forth promises of the Lord that could not come about without you. You are part of a generation who has been shaken of so much, and though it has been painful

and trying, you have been renewed to lead by new, fresh vision, against the grain, without compromise, fixed on your First Love and what *He is doing*, regardless of outward appearance.

So many leaders have been shaken from much of what they had once known, because God wants to see multiple generations cross over to inherit and multiply the promises of God. Two are always better than one. Together, in Him, we can become *one*. I can only imagine what would have happened had two generations crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land, but I believe we are about to find out!

FIRST LOVE LEADERSHIP

Picture with me a path if you will. On this path there is a community of people, and just out in front of the people is the Lord Himself. He is leading us and we are following. We are not standing in one place, simply being taught by Him right where we are. We are moving. We are following Him as He leads. Our path changes as His path changes. Change isn't bad in this scenario because change is relative. Your proximity shows change when measured with tangible location, direction, etc., but your path has not changed—you are in alignment with the Lord and joining Him wherever He moves, just as Jesus said when He declared in John 5:19 that He could do nothing of Himself except what He saw the Father doing and join Him in like manner. The Lord is always moving and we should be, too. It won't always look the same, it's not predictable; but when our eyes are on our First Love, it doesn't matter. He is our path, and His movement is our leading.

Now picture a few people amid this community of followers who begin to pursue their First Love passionately! Their eyes are not on the people; their eyes are not on themselves or measuring against others or the world around them. They are locked in, fixed and focused on their First Love. Such passionate pursuit causes these people to emerge from the pack. They are not trying to move ahead of the pack to lead, they are simply pursuing Jesus with all their hearts, letting nothing take the place of closeness with Him and moving forward with Him. From an objective perspective, if you were to look at this scene you would see these people separated from the pack, between the community of people and the Lord. They are only there because their eyes have not lost focus of their First Love and where He is moving. But now, the pack sees the potential of leaders.

From a worldly point of view, and not in a bad way at all, we call these few people leaders. All the merit they have for this place of leadership has been their passionate pursuit of the Lord. But now there is an expectation that can be taken on from the world. There is an expectation of responsibility to turn around and face the people they have been selected to lead. This is a noble calling, but a dangerous situation. Because now, while turning around to face the people, these new leaders have taken their eyes off of that which fueled their pursuit. Their focus is now divided from the One who they had been watching, following, and listening to so intently. They were hungry, but now they are looking at the people and feeling the expectation to feed their hunger. This is all too familiar and all too dangerous. One of our greatest battles as the Church is our tendency to place far too high expectations

on people and have far too low expectations on God.

These newly appointed leaders have now lost sight, even if only partially, of their First Love. If you are driving your car, how well can you see when you turn around to speak to someone in the back seat? Not a real safe or effective situation. Good luck continuing on your path. But there is an expectation in society for leaders to look at the people while leading them, instead of remaining fixed on their First Love. Our tendency is to place the burden of leadership on the leaders, rather than personally following the leaders' lead while they keep their eyes passionately focused on the Lord and how He is moving.

As a believing leader, our first responsibility is to keep our vision locked on the Person of Lord Himself. When leaders place their eyes on the people, or even on principles, they lose a large part of their freshness with the Lord and are now functioning off yesterday's revelation, not knowing as clearly how the Lord is moving today or the direction and timing He is leading us in ahead. Now the leaders have taken away from their own closeness with the Lord, starving themselves in order to feed others. The leaders have a difficult time seeing or knowing how to move with the Lord's path, which often moves like a river winding this way and that, making this turn and that turn. They have to lead based on surroundings and what is measurable instead of staying in the Lord's fresh wake.

The leaders have stopped their own momentum and now actually inhibit the momentum of the people and *their* fresh pursuit of their First Love. This is rarely, if ever, the desire of the people or the leaders. But it is the natural product of mixing the cultural expectations of the world with the Kingdom path we are called to join Him on. We must return to our First Love.

We must be First Love leaders. Only then will the people take their eyes off us and begin to passionately chase and follow the same One we are pursuing. If we don't lose vision, they won't either. Our leadership must not be expectation driven, but fueled by our own personal pursuit.

First Love leadership is rather simple. It is where we as people, as leaders, keep our vision and focus fixed upon and through the life of our First Love. It is the only way we will be able to consistently lead with both wisdom and revelation. It is removing the burden we often take on in an unhealthy way and recognizing that the best way we can lead is to keep our eyes on Him. This might be painful at first for both the leaders and the people, but it is the only way, through example, that we can truly empower others into the fullness of *all* God has created *them* for. When we stay true to keeping our eyes and focus on Him, instead of the people or the issues, the eyes and hearts of those we are leading will pursue the same and run with us, perhaps even pass us, and we will run in greater unity together.

When we focus on the people, self, or circumstance through expectations—whether positive or negative—we multiply that same horizontal focus to everyone we are around. Our eyes and our passion can show people leadership rather than relying only on capable teaching or impressive programs; we lead by where our eyes remain—upon our First Love—because in our heart of hearts we know He is the only Leader worth following *together*. The people will gain more from the focus of our hearts, vision, and passion than they will from our words, though our words, teaching, and shepherding are incredibly important factors as well, that all flow from our First Love focus. When we are First Love leaders, we become

facilitators who empower others to connect more to Him than to us. We become leaders who not only remain in fresh intimacy with our First Love—hearing His voice, seeing His ways, and moving forward to join Him—but we become leaders who connect the people to the very same. We take their dependence off of us and focus their eyes and faith on their own passionate pursuit of Him. They do not rely on our ministry; they know how to look up and receive directly from the Lord for themselves.

We too often worry about people finding the right path and nobly take on the burden of responsibility to teach them how to stay on it. But how can others know their First Love, who is their path, if we have lost sight ourselves and created distance? If we are looking at the people and they are looking at us, we have limited their experience of truly knowing the Lord and His nature for themselves. He is still moving forward and we endanger ourselves by becoming stagnant. When we seek first His Kingdom, the people will follow us there. But if we focus on the people, few of us will live out the Kingdom. *We must keep looking forward and keep moving forward.*

We must stay *proactively desperate*, proactively hungry for Him whose presence draws all unto Him. He is a living, moving God; but we will always be in danger of aligning ourselves and others with past experiences that create stagnant routines and programs if our consistency is not found in our focus on our First Love. We must long to know where and how He is moving today, gaining insight as to where He is leading in the days and years to come. The more leaders who begin to place their measurement of leadership on intimacy with and vision through their First Love, the more we will see

powerful multiplication take place from the people we are leading. The more we become leaders who are *kept* in their First Love relationship, the more we will be found in uncommon unity with one another. When we are found in the same place, in Him, unity becomes very simple.

As leaders, we often lose sight of these simple, foundational ways of God. It's easy to think we have them mastered; even if we would never say it with our mouths, we often say it with our eyes and our hunger, or unfortunately our lack thereof. But the further we go with the Lord, the more we separate from the pack and the more we need the passion and focus that started it all, the passion that drove us to our First Love! We must be so shaken by this first love relationship that we are shaken by nothing and no one else.

FROM PONDS TO RIVERS

We don't always want leaders who are led by passion, whose radical pursuit of the Lord challenges daily routines and worldly expectations. It's not easy; leading or living in this way is very uneasy. It requires that we live in the tension of the Kingdom rather than by black-and-white principles that we know. It requires that we allow Truth to come alive! We often want leaders and lives that are tested, tried, proven, and made into programs that will fulfill our needs and expectations: A+B=C. But we hurt the leaders and ourselves when our expectation is on them rather than upon our First Love. We don't always want the unpredictability that comes from keeping our eyes on our First Love, always joining Him where He is moving. Such can mean a change from the norm. But isn't that how Jesus surprised His disciples each day? Surprises

were almost a guarantee when being led by the One who always joined the Father where He was moving, which is a vital part of seeing the whole of the Father's nature revealed to the world.

We must let Him surprise us and trust Him with such—remember, He is a good God! With our eyes on our First Love, and that being our first measure, our path might wind and weave. But it doesn't matter what worldly perception says, or what our path looks like as much as Who we are looking at to be our path. Our path can *look* shaken when our eyes and focus are not shaken at all. This takes me back to what we talked about earlier in the book: the differences between being a pond versus a river.

The shaken leader is one who is led in and leads by the river. When we are led by our First Love and what He is doing, as Jesus did in regard to the Father, we are in danger of looking like a shaken river winding in unpredictable ways. We all have the River of Life within us, but letting it flow out in this way is oftentimes considered a lot more radical than taking said water and restructuring it within the boundaries and measures of ponds.

When you follow a path, it is something that has been walked before and has clear boundaries. But when you follow a *person,* his or her path is your path, regardless how it might look. How can we truly lead, *while following Jesus,* if we require such preexisting man-made structure and control already in place? There is control, but it comes through trusting Him. This is not to throw order out the window. I love order. I don't want a big pile of mess either. But I must realize that just because God is a God of order, it doesn't mean that we

always provide the order. Rather, our focus upon Him allows Him to do such. The shaken leader is someone who has given up the worldly expectations and necessities of a clear path, because the leader has a clear view of the *Person* of Christ. When following a person, *your* order is set by *his or her* order, rather than by a predetermined path.

It does not mean that there is no order; it just means that the person you are following determines such. You cannot choose to follow a *person,* let alone the Living God, and yet still be the one who decides the order. It is one thing to say that God is a God of order, but it's a whole other thing to trust Him to be such.

This is the way of the river. It is living, moving, and seemingly unpredictable and unexplainable from the outside. The only predictability comes from knowing the nature of God. The nature of God is *in* the river. A bird's eye view would show a river moving this way and that, without a controllable pattern. It doesn't continue in a straight line or the same continuous pattern. We talked about being river-led in the chapter titled, "Honoring the Spirit." But this goes beyond being *in* the river. Now it requires us to lead others according to the shaken state that the river creates—and being okay with that.

From the outside the river looks shaken, but from within the river, you're right in the middle of God's living, life-giving movement. It's the most powerful place to lead from, but the toughest place to stay. This is the very reason we must be so shaken by our connection *with* God that we are unmoved by worldly perception and the fear of man. Those two things compel us to climb out of the river and reshape external

appearance, putting our eyes back on people. But remaining in the river helps us learn to trust the people and perceptions to God and keeps us moving forward with Him. The river shakes our outward controls and definitions, and it is the surest place to be as we are going to the same place as our First Love.

Perception might prefer the determined boundaries of a pond. Worldly measure might want to count their ponds or measure their size or depth to gauge their results. Some might not want to lose the power that comes with staying in control of a still, measurable body of water. And most would prefer to have a defined understanding to live and lead from, or clear perspective from one of the banks of the river. Those are much easier than remaining in the tension of the river. To be *in* the river teaches us to trust the mystery of God and honors the Spirit to lead the way. In the tension of the river we do not rely on our surroundings, circumstances, or the opinions of people to make us stable, we are made stable by being *in Him*. In the river, we give up the need to prove ourselves. We allow the Spirit to prove His results, He sets the boundaries, guides our turns and timing, teaches us to multiply and empower other rivers, and we become one with a living force that always points to the vision ahead.

When we live by externals, we open the door for division and will see its reality too frequently in our lives. But in the River Himself, *we are all made one*. To live out the answer to Jesus' final prayer, we must become a new breed of leaders who always point forward, who get back into the River, and learn to trust Him through the familiar and unfamiliar directions He is leading, leaving perception and circumstances in His hands.

MEASUREMENTS AND RESULTS

Ponds and rivers both measure very differently in results as well. In a world, and especially in a culture, that is so externally result-oriented, this is a huge factor. When we take the flow of living water from within us (see John 7:38-39) and combine that with a results-oriented mindset, we become leaders driven toward the pond. We take that living, flowing, life-giving water from within us and repackage it in the man-made, often stagnant structure inspired from looking too much at man for approval. The water, though living, becomes stagnant from our fear and positioning. We all know the kinds of disease, fungus, and bacteria that grow on standing water. Without intention, we become leaders who pass out once-living pond water to a world that we are praying will know *new* life. We become an oxymoron in our living-water distribution system. And yet we lead this charge? To be a shaken leader unmoved by outward perception, our measure must be upon staying fresh with our First Love, abiding in Him and His river, and therefore bearing fruit that remains (see John 15). Only He can grow such impossible fruit, meaning we *must trust* the results to Him.

With a pond, we can much more easily measure, count, and broadcast our results to prove our significance. We can controllably make our ponds deeper, wider, plant trees, add fish, and count how many ponds we have made. But with the river, the results are far less easily measured. In the river, we are often downstream and around the mountain following the person of Jesus while our fruit is just starting to grow. A river gives life that bears green grass, which it might never see for moving forward with the Lord. A river gives life to bushes at its sides whose green might not be revealed until much later. A

river doesn't always witness the number of people who come and drink from its living, forward-moving stream. A river has living water that leaks out into its surroundings and gives life to tall trees it may personally never get to sit under. And the river might not ever know the fruit that grows from those trees, fruit that might feed generation after generation, seeds that might plant more trees as the river unknowingly multiplies while it stays focused on following forward.

The river bears different results—multiplying, life-giving results that we don't experience as often as we could. The only reason we don't experience such powerful fruit more often is because we take our eyes off our First Love to stare at our results and the perception of them. Without trying, we become a pond feeding self and others, rather than a shaken river giving immeasurable life wherever it goes. Shaken leaders unite God's people in a river of life that always multiplies as they become facilitative leaders sparking oneness among the people because of the passion, voice, and unrelenting vision of their First Love. They are so shaken by their First Love that they have lost sight of what results are even theirs. They have been shaken from worldly, results-oriented measurements and have abandoned the pond mentalities to return and dive into the river of their First Love. It is the First Love relationship that creates the most splendid multiplication!

> *I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My*

name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works… (Revelation 2:2-5).

FROM POWER TO EMPOWER

I have tasted a different, special kind of empowerment over the years. I was privileged to serve in Youth for Christ International under the leadership of YFC International President David Wraight. David became a special mentor in my life who lived out the immensely rewarding challenges of empowering young leaders. When I would hear from the Lord and come to him, saying, "The Lord is moving *this* direction, and I need to follow," even though it may have looked like unchartered waters at times, David trusted me to God and gave me the leeway to listen to the Lord and follow my First Love. He was not worried so much about the results as he was focused on being a leader, like Jesus, *who empowered*. We watched new trails and testimonies come to life, trails from which we are now seeing incredible fruit born.

Many leaders would have been worried or fearful about whether I would fail and how that failure would reflect upon them. But David trusted me to listen to God and be led by the Holy Spirit. His empowerment gave me freedom, and that freedom brought forth incredible fruit. I am forever grateful for such leadership, such trust, and true empowerment that came because David's eyes were more on the Lord than they were on himself, circumstances, the opinions of others, or on me.

My mom always taught and showed me the same. She facilitated my learning to hear the Lord's voice, and then she trusted me to God as she empowered me, blessed me, and believed in me to step and live by faith! Such empowerment doesn't often come from parents or other leaders. Not because they don't want to, and not necessarily out of any negative intention, but because we live in a culture that places results and perception on such a high measuring level. Our expectations of people more than God creates a culture where fear of man is allowed to rule. We must be shaken from that kind of culture; *we* must be a new generation of shaken leaders who don't lead from the culture we were born into—*but leaders who transform it!*

When following a person, we may walk on a never-before-taken path, yet hardly realize it if not for the outside world screaming at us. Often, we can't even see the new place we are "radically" walking toward because our eyes are so passionately and purposefully fixed on our First Love. We are not blazing a new trail just because we want to or erring off into the wilderness because of poor direction. We cannot always explain what is new when it is still in process. But when we are led like a river by our First Love, we will find that He has taken us off the beaten path to give life to new places, in new ways, and through new seasons. When our eyes remain on Him, He will use us, often unknowingly, to blaze a new trail and pioneer a new testimony that He will multiply to many more. He makes us into multipliers, and multiplication always overcomes division. We often have division with another over which route we should take. We become divided over not being able to explain to others the unique path He has us on. They are not

familiar trails. Such paths may be misunderstood, but they are necessary to be pioneered if we will be leaders who transform culture beyond the ponds we too often live.

A shaken leader empowers people to put their eyes on the Lord in such a way that they follow Him more so than the leader, even if it takes that person on a path that is new and unfamiliar to the leader. The shaken leader empowers people to be multipliers. When something new is uncovered, many more can and will be impacted by the same. We don't get this kind of multiplication unless we empower people to walk in what is beyond our control or experience. We must empower people to be empowered directly by their First Love. We must empower people to jump in the river with us, even if that means they leave what is familiar to us because they are being swept away by a new current of the Lord. We must empower people beyond *our* understanding so that they can be multipliers who are blazing new testimonies and revealing *more* life!

When we have people who rely on our leadership, we hold the power. But when we use our leadership to be facilitators who empower people outside of our power, *to be empowered directly from the Lord*, we increase our multiplication as well. Multiplication can't be as easily measured as addition, especially when we fear subtraction from our ministry or reputation. But when we are shaken from the ways of perception and the leadership of man, we will find hidden paths of multiplication in never-before-seen places, from never-before-seen heroes of the faith. They are often those who are right next to us, and they are waiting to be empowered not just by us *but by Him.*

FROM DIVISION TO VISION

When navigating and walking through a tight, narrow place, balance is kept by holding your eyes forward fixed on what is before you and the object of your affection. In fact, the best balance comes from locking your vision onto one specific place in front of you without breaking your focus. The same can be said with our First Love and the vision we receive through Him. We are often trying to bring compromise and balance to situations to navigate differing opinions. However, the best balance will come as we keep our eyes not on either side of the chasm but on the vision directly before us. We cannot compromise our forward vision for the people but must actually sharpen our focus on Him in order to teach them to do the same.

As we stay in the river and keep moving forward, we will draw people off the side of the river bank. Instead of stopping to negotiate the two varying opinions, we call people back into the river by the vision we refuse to deviate from and teach from there. Leadership must not become an influence that in fact leads us out of the river to solve problems to keep our influence in those lives. Rather, as leaders, we must stay the course, keep our vision, and point back to Him who we are following and joining. We must use our influence to point back to His vision!

I have been continually tested in this regard. Even during the period of time I have been writing this chapter, I have had an increased number of small divisions put before me and am being strengthened in my resolve not to bow my focus to either side. Sometimes I have more success at this than other times. Each time, the temptation is to negotiate between the

two or to get out of the river and answer the perceptions to bring truth and clarity. But each time, the Lord has reminded me to keep pointing forward. The more drama or distraction that tries to grab our attention and pull us in, the more we need to grab hold of those around us, not for focus on the issue, but to point forward to the vision ahead where His answers always seem to trickle down and bring clear perspective to the problems we face and the people wanting us to face them. It is much like the promise in Matthew 6:33: *"Seek first the kingdom of God…and all these things shall be added to you."*

The enemy will always distract us with molehills that he waits for us to make into mountains. What starts to grab our vision will quickly become something big enough to *block* our vision—and our path. This is why as leaders, when the enemy wants us to focus on pressures or people, we must *keep our vision* even more focused on the Lord.

> *Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law* (Proverbs 29:18).

Another translation of this verse reads, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."* The "tension" of the river is one of the most difficult places to remain. It requires that we rely on daily revelation and fresh wisdom to navigate us forward with the Lord. In the river, I might find two different answers for two different groups who are going through the exact same situation. It's not about the answers we give, it's about *Who* we are pointing to and the fresh vision *He* gives. Yesterday's answer is not always the same for today, no matter how alike the situation may seem. As leaders, we often feel the

expectation to have the answers and bear the burden to negotiate between the people. But we must be shaken from reliance upon the knowledge we have and prefer to know the Person who has fresh direction for today. When we operate out of a fresh focus on Him, we breed revelation that strengthens people to stay in the tension of the river themselves. If and when I am looking at my First Love, *my vision will become their vision*.

It can be much easier to rely on knowledge alone, understanding the ways we have been or seen before to fully determine how we will handle the same situations today. We often want these black and white definitions for clarity. However, it is also these black and white definitions that bring so much division among people. Vision of the *Person* before us and revelation of how He is currently moving will give us greater clarity than knowing for ourselves, though perhaps not greater ease or predictability. We relate this kind of predictability with safety, and therefore wisdom. But is it truly wisdom if it keeps from being fresh with the Lord in the river and going where He is going?

In worldly terms, it's easier to know and to let down our guard based on that knowledge we possess from yesterday. But with the Lord, it is *best* to remain in the tension that requires us to see and hear fresh for today, the only vision that will sustain us. Without vision and fresh revelation, the people will perish. It will be a slow death, but it will start the moment we take our eyes off of our First Love because of the people's eyes upon us. We will face them and negotiate between their divisions, all the while creating a pond-like structure that inhibits fresh, forward movement with the Lord. We will too

easily begin to live off yesterday's water, which has now become stagnant and is slowly growing disease. We must not allow this anymore.

If we will lead people to life, and even more so become leaders who *multiply people* who *multiply life,* we can no longer rest in our good intentions, upon yesterday's knowledge alone and negotiate the division that confronts God's family and the world. Division will not be truly overcome by us or even the best of leaders around us. Division will be overcome by the vision in front of us, vision that breeds multiplication. *Jesus is our vision!* We often want to negotiate differences. Instead we must embrace the Lord's vision for how differences seamlessly come together in the river of His path where we become the answer to Jesus' final prayer—*that the world may believe!*

A friend of mine, Jim, shares a great illustration of this. He talks of two objects tied on different sides of a string. How do you bring them together? *Lift up* the string at its middle to a high point of tension, and the two objects on either side will come into alignment with the point and will quickly be found *together.*

> *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints* (Ephesians 1:17-18).

The greatest leader I know, my First Love, is out in the river just before me. I have heard and seen Him lead through the greatest of tension, keeping the old law while creating God's new. He couldn't create a new thing while living the old, but had to walk in a place that wasn't well received at the time, nor understood. Many of us want something new, especially compared to the season we may have just passed through. But the trouble with something new is it usually requires us, *personally,* to live into something new. New things often sound great, but the process involved isn't always as well received. Jesus wasn't living a life of balance that was pleasing to the people, but actually held the balance in His hands as He looked upward and forward with the Father.

The only way to lead through the impossible and see it become possible is to be leaders who continually follow our First Love through unchartered waters, down the river, and trusting perception and results with God. Like Jesus, to walk the shaken path put before us, we must hold the balance in our hearts. We must live in fresh wisdom and revelation, not in the knowledge we possess, but in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of our understanding will continually be open, always remaining hungry learners, intimate pursuers, and we will know and multiply to the masses around us the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance *in* the saints.

We must become First Love leaders, shaken from our ways of old and the natural expectations of leaders in our culture, so that we can lead the way in our own lives, and for others, into something new. We can allow ourselves to appear shaken to the world's perception, as it means we will become unmoved in *our* passion, *our* focus, and *our vision*. When we keep our

vision of and through Him, we will live *from* that shaken place of passionate pursuit, we'll draw others into the river with Him, division will be overcome by multiplication, and the world *will* believe! When we become shaken leaders, the world will marvel at their Father and the multitudes will finally get to know *their* First Love for themselves!

> *...Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner* (John 5:19).

CHAPTER 9

MULTIPLY:
FROM SONS AND DAUGHTERS TO FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And ***he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers****…* (Malachi 4:5-6).

This promise in Malachi has stayed at the forefront in my life over the years, and for good reason. In Chapter 1, I shared with you the story of The Father's Blessing that so revolutionized and empowered my life and perspective. But the story was not complete, and still isn't. The year following my sixteenth birthday blessing was incredible, probably in far more ways than I even know. Through the blessing, my dad and mom set me free and trusted me to God. They empowered me to live beyond their control and prepared a new foundation that their ceiling might become my floor.

Setting others free is difficult to do as parents, as leaders, and as brothers and sisters in Christ. We worry what will happen if we empower people with that kind of freedom. *I*

might lose them, we often think. We worry that they will make the wrong choices, and even that their choices will reflect on us in a negative light. But I venture to say that when we truly empower someone, with God, from a place and motive of true freedom, that freedom will not cause a division between us but will actually go on to be strengthened and multiplied. That was the kind of freedom my parents empowered me with, and that's the kind of freedom that led me forward into new directions and decisions in my life. True freedom doesn't just come back; it multiplies.

My dad often feared that the lifestyle he and my mom led in ministry, of walking by faith and trusting God through fundraising and missions, would make me resentful toward him and that lifestyle. My passion growing up was sports—playing, watching, analyzing, just about anything having to do with sports. My dad wasn't so much concerned that I follow his path in ministry and missions; he simply didn't want me to resent God because of not being able to provide some of the worldly luxuries others had. To be honest, I was more than blessed growing up—spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. I was given much and am incredibly grateful. But he often feared that I would run hard after other things because he couldn't provide as much as he wanted to. Despite such a fear of me going in a different or opposite direction, my dad still brought me before the Lord with my mom and gave me that Father's Blessing. They empowered me regardless of their concerns.

Later that year, some months after the blessing, I was in a season of pursuit of the Lord like never before. My passion and love for the Lord had only increased; I was hungry,

beyond hungry! One night about midnight or 1 a.m., I felt as if I received a clear word from the Lord. He was calling me to full-time ministry, just like my dad. I ran upstairs and burst through their doors. "God spoke to me tonight," I exclaimed. "Dad, God is calling me to full-time ministry—like you!" As quickly as I burst through the doors, I ran out and back to my room downstairs. I got on my face again and continued in my time with the Lord.

Upstairs, as my mom later shared, my dad had simply rolled over toward my mom and began weeping. Not only had his fears of my resentment toward him and God been quelled, but the most extreme opposite had just occurred. I actually wanted to *follow* him in his footsteps. I wasn't running the other direction; in fact, since they empowered me with the freedom to be who God created me to be at the blessing, I actually ran much harder in the same direction they had long been going. God turns the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. For this to truly come to life, a certain freedom and empowerment must be in play.

However, it didn't stop there. It was about four weeks before my seventeenth birthday and my dad was preparing for a trip to Vietnam, the primary nation where he worked. As he was preparing to leave, my mom and some close intercessory friends of the family were preparing a prayer time over my dad at our house for a few days before his trip. Beginning earlier that year, I missed a lot of school for prayer times such as these. So as we considered the option of me staying home from school this time, though it was strongly considered, we felt I had missed too much school already and needed to go. That decision didn't last long.

I was sitting in my second period Economics class when I heard the "beep" over the loud speaker. Then, "Joey LeTourneau to the office please, he'll be going home for a family emergency." However, the "family emergency" didn't worry me. I knew that for this day, in our household, the family emergency constituted prayer. Immediately my spirit locked into focus with the Lord, knowing that He was doing something strategic and that I needed to know how to join Him. I didn't know what would take place, but I knew God had an agenda in the prayer time over my dad that I was to be part of. I prayed the whole way home, asking God for wisdom and revelation. When I walked in the door, they were engaged in a time with the Lord over my dad, and I stepped in to join them. They had called the school because they heard strongly from the Lord that it was very important I be there. That's not what they told the school office of course, but God was doing something I couldn't have imagined, something I still hold on to today.

Soon after I joined them, they felt from the Lord that I was to pray a blessing over my dad. They peeled off into intercession around us, and I sat there with my dad. I laid hands upon him, and also held his as I began to bless him. This was more than a prayer of blessing, something unusual was happening. The freedom my dad had empowered me to walk in through the blessing he and my mom gave me was suddenly returning to *multiply back* to him. We were a living picture of that powerful passage from Malachi 4:5-6 of God turning the heart of the father to the son, and of the son to the father. Even today as I look back at the image of this taking place, I still weep as my heart knows that something greater than my words

could explain what was taking place.

As a son, not only did I honor him as my father during this time, but I found us to be engaged in God's presence in a very uncommon unity. Suddenly it was more than a father and a son. I wasn't just blessing him because he was my dad; I was blessing and approving *who* he was as a dad, *who* he was as a person, and I was blessing him toward all he was walking in throughout his calling in these other nations. We were being united in a seamless embrace that holds the power of generational revival. I will never forget that prayer time, blessing him as we sat there for nearly an hour, hand in hand, weeping together in a new way—*like brothers*. A supernatural unity took place from one generation to another: from the blessing he gave me to seeing the same multiply back to him. God was fulfilling something. Any division in our relationship was overcome and something new came forward. This prayer time of returning the blessing *to* my earthly father was one of the greatest miracles I've ever been part of—it was a transition in my life, learning to take the blessing as a *son* and return it, or multiply it forward in a spiritual sense like the ways of a *father*.

It was less than a week later when I heard the news that my dad had passed away on that trip to Vietnam. While my heart was broken and though I still miss him, because of the blessing he passed to me and the blessing I was able to pass to him, I am still living out the miracle of multiplication that came to life as generations were uncommonly united. I will never be the same. By *receiving* the blessing *from me,* my dad empowered me to be a spiritual father—even while I was still a son.

ONE WHO MULTIPLIES

Just like that, I watched my life change between my sixteenth and seventeenth birthdays in drastic ways. I began to more fully walk in the blessing of a son and the inheritance set before me as a co-heir with Christ. Then I learned to take that inheritance and role as a son to begin giving and multiplying life out, to my dad and many others, like a spiritual father would. I believe we often create too big a gap in our journey from walking with God in His Kingdom as a son or daughter, and when we walk in the same like a spiritual parent.

As we come into our inheritance as sons and daughters of God we must learn to transition from children to fathers and mothers. This is not to say that we are to come into the role of a wise spiritual father of the faith; rather by spiritual parent, I refer to the way that we begin to release the inheritance we're walking in to give life and multiply to the family of God, many of whom are called to be in our line of spiritual descendants. There is no striving that should take place in this transition, and it's not a hierarchy or a pursuit of power or authority. It should be a rather smooth transition to living as someone who looks to multiply life wherever they go. To live as a son or daughter of God means that we have learned to walk in right relationship with the Father according to His perspective and His nature, and with the inheritance He has freely given us through Christ. If we know His nature as a Father, it is this "Father's heart" that we begin to take and multiply everywhere we go, revealing His nature to the world and "giving life" to His children.

> *Philip said to Him* [Jesus], *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long,*

> *and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* (John 14:8-9)

As sons and daughters of God who have received the blessing and inheritance He has bestowed upon us, we should be the revelation of the Father and His nature to the world. Jesus, as the Son, said it Himself. Even though He was the Son, the Father should also be seen in Him and through Him. This is the same transition we are called to walk in—from sons and daughters to fathers and mothers. We are not merely sons and daughters who are only receiving an inheritance of abundant life, we are to live and walk as fathers and mothers who are always multiplying out all that we receive. The world must see us living lives as sons and daughters of God who reflect our Father by being like Him and constantly giving our inheritance to the world. God made us family by loving us like family—and we have the opportunity, the authority, as a father or mother, to love and multiply to others the very same.

As we mature in our faith, oftentimes we find a role in ministry. But it does not require a direct ministry role in a church or an organization to take the Father's DNA within you and begin to unleash it through love, joy, peace, and life wherever you go! You can begin to freely give of the inheritance you have freely received, and you begin to multiply. When we come to know His nature, we will seek not just to teach about Him, but to live out and reveal His nature to the world wherever we go. We become life-givers co-laboring with our Father, living toward His family (and ours) in our neighborhoods and across the nations. Like Jesus stated in

that final prayer of John 17:20-26, we become one with the Father in an uncommon unity and live with the faith that when the world sees us, they will also see their heavenly Father, empowering them to believe!

Having our minds renewed to think and live like sons and daughters is one of the most powerful transformations that can happen in our lives, the very point of salvation. It wasn't the extra added to our salvation—it is the measure of salvation. We are not simply saved servants; we are reborn as children with His likeness to live and let Him be seen through our family resemblance. The moment we begin to realize this is the moment we begin our transition to being a spiritual father or mother who reveals Him in a new and powerful way.

Since the beginning of time, we have been called to multiply. In the Garden of Eden, their purpose was to *"Be fruitful and multiply."* Abraham's great blessing was to multiply to a line of descendants that was greater than the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore. David wanted to build God a house for His presence to rest, but God told David, "No." Instead, the Lord responded to David and said, "I will make *you* a house." God wasn't saying He was going to build David some sort of palace or mansion, He was saying that He, the Father, was going to make David into a house. David would become such a carrier of God's presence that he would empower a multiplying line of descendants, a different kind of "house," a family structure. This was fulfilled to such an extent that Jesus Himself came from David's "house."

Then, there is Jesus who came to bring God's house back together by redeeming us from sin and multiplying out to the Father's family, His children, drawing them back into the family

as sons and daughters, co-heirs with Himself. Our calling is no different. The moment we realize *who* we are and *whose* we are, we begin to think and walk as a son or daughter who is transitioning into a life-giving spiritual father or mother who reveals the Father and becomes a house that multiplies out their inheritance here on earth as it is in Heaven, creating new family lines in God's family tree.

A FAMILY REVIVAL

Family is among the purest pictures of unity we have *in* this world. *Family* has many definitions, but its diversity only strengthens the unity that can be displayed as a knit-together group of people who often share DNA that comes out uniquely in each. The different definitions of family make its unity so uncommonly powerful, which is why the enemy places such strategic attacks on the family level. If the enemy can divide families, he can take away our strength and at the same time cause tremendous weakness, often more than we know. We know this truth that a house divided cannot stand. But what can a house united do *or be? A house united can become the answer to Jesus' final prayer.*

When the hearts of the fathers turn to the sons, and the sons to the fathers, we will see a revival begin in actual families, in generations, and among the family of God. This is no small revival. It is a foundation that will bring increase to everything that has already been built upon it. The world is waiting for such a family revival, and we have the opportunity to join the Father in this way, in the uncommon unity of His house. It starts with us! It starts with our own families. And it grows through the family of God learning to see everyone in

the world in the same way—*as family*. In God's eyes, they already are.

Just as we often divide and label different compartments of our lives, we often divide our families and generations with good intentions in mind. Many of us are looking to mentor others, to make disciples, to have a powerful ministry or church; but what about our families? What if revival hit your family before it hit your church? What if you took your children into God's presence with you and let them learn of the Father's nature as you learn? What if they connected to the same source you connect to, at the same time? What if they not only learned *from* you, but *with* you? When this happens, revival won't need to be taught through the difficult passing of one generation to another; they will be raised in a culture of revival, and the passing of the baton will become very smooth and natural.

One of the greatest blessings I have personally experienced came during that year between the blessing my dad and mom gave me and the blessing I returned to him.

During that year between sixteen and seventeen years of age, I spent time each week with my mom going to her intercessory prayer group. I learned how to go into the throne room *with* them. I learned how to hear God's voice *with* them. I learned how to bless people through healing and the prophetic *with* them! They didn't just teach me, they showed me the way and let me experience God and revival *with* them. If the world will taste the revival that is possible in families, households, and throughout the family of God worldwide, we must begin to remove the dividing lines between generations and give life to what *and who* is directly before us. We must value the children

and the new waves of God's movement they bring the way Jesus did. Jesus welcomed the kids into His arms and blessed them. Jesus knew the new thing the Father was doing in that season, and in each life, and led the charge. He didn't simply teach them, He let them experience revival *with* Him.

We are ripe for a family revival, when the possibilities of generations uncommonly uniting are resurrected and the world will believe because they see. In our houses, and across the world, generations have been softened to come together and experience the best parts of God together, a fresh unity that will create more multiplication of life and His Kingdom than we know what to do with. Before the last days, we will see a unity in God's family, among our families, where generations come together in a new way, experience Him together, and multiply together! Everything that has come in and out of my life has come through intimacy with God and this uncommon unity among generations.

We will be and live out the answer to Jesus' final prayer, and it will happen when we see fresh revival spring up among generations in the model of family, a structure that's already in place but is waiting to be revived! We must place our eyes back on our families and the family structure that's alive and waiting among the Church. The same way we lay our hands on someone for prayer, healing, or blessing, we must lay our hands back on the family structure God has entrusted to us, which is right under our noses, and speak life into the largely untapped potential of what God is waiting for us to experience as *family*.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and

when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).

As I write this, our daughter Mercy is nine years of age. She is a great example of how we multiply the blessings of revival from one generation to another. She has experienced more than I can even remember and has grown quickly because of it. We have learned she is ready and capable of a lot more than we might naturally place before her. God's grace has been more than evident. But He wanted us to put her in position to experience Him for herself at a young age. It is not simply the places she's been to or having lived overseas; many children walk through such with their families without ever truly experiencing the living nature of God for themselves. It is not enough for our kids simply to be "along for the ride"; rather, we need to empower them to be active participants!

Mercy first believed and received the Lord as her Savior in Rwanda. She passed out school supplies to kids across Africa, and when she ran out of supplies, at age four, she opened her own personal backpack as fast as she could. Mercy walked the streets with us throughout Ethiopia giving love, meeting needs, and praying over the people right next to us. Our first formal ministry outreach in Ethiopia—after a 40-day fast of only walking the streets—was a program of the "Father's Blessing" over Mercy, a blessing she helped us pass out to child after child from a local orphanage. She has actively been part of many miracles of God's provision as we have learned to walk and live by faith *together as a family,* never wanting to burden her with the needs, but *always* wanting her to experience the closeness and goodness of her very real Father. Mercy has sat in on all the trainings for leaders we were

empowering in Ethiopia and taken her own slots when the movement started a 24-hour prayer chain for the streets. She has always participated in the "adult" prayer and worship times we facilitate to lead people into God's presence, and someday I believe she'll be facilitating the same! *What we have experienced, she has experienced.*

I am so proud of her for the grace she has walked in. Mercy is not only learning *from* us, but right alongside us. And she is teaching us. These are not always things we include children in until they are at an age we deem mature enough. But oftentimes, I believe their "childness" offers maturity to areas that we are lacking. It is all about learning to walk *with* God, and children are able to do such at a very young age. They want to grow in purpose, so they must grow with us, walking forward together with the Living God. Rather than simply describing the tastes of God that we experience, we must let our children taste how alive and how good He is for themselves, with us. Too often we leave behind a recipe card for our children to follow when they could be tasting it with us right now! Because truly, no matter their ages, they are innately hungry for the same God we are learning to experience ourselves.

God is reviving His family worldwide, and it begins with the revival our families will experience *with us* in our own homes. You may want to help light the fire of revival in a church, a city, or a nation—but please let your children strike that match with you. Let them carry that revival with you. Let them be that revival with you. Then the fires of revival will burn that much longer into generations to come. That's multiplication.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US

As I was led to bless my dad, I now bless you! Thank you for your faithfulness and perseverance. Thank you for standing through hard times, through misunderstanding, and standing for truth and love. Thank you for co-laboring with the Father to pave the way for each one God is raising up even now. You have had far more impact and fruit than you have been able to see. I honor you; we honor you and the incredible piece of God's heart that you carry. We honor you because of *who* you are, and we honor you for each and every way you have believed that may have gone unseen; but believe me, it has not gone unfelt. Many have been impacted, blessed, and given life through you just because of who you are. You light up the Father's eye, and you have prepared the way through much more than you know. Thank you!

But as I hope you know, you are not finished. You are needed, you are full of power by the Spirit of the Lord; and even though a new generation is arising, that only means you are more necessary. When you see them, see them through God's eyes and empower them with faith to dream God-sized dreams, to hear His voice, to join Him in the fresh ways He is moving, and show them the immense and unconditional love they are to live by.

Bless them to be different! Bless them to be who God sees them to be—not who you or the world want them to be—but bless them to know *who* they are and *whose* they are! Bless them to be unique and to let Jesus flow out of those uncommon places in their lives. Bless them to literally *live* by faith, to go forward in their own experiences, carving out their own unique testimonies, even if it's a path you may never have

walked or may not understand. Trust them to God. You may think you're not needed in order to trust them to God, but you very much are! You are necessary. Your active trust in their lives will fan the flames in their hearts that God is waiting to reveal to the world!

They need you—*I need you!* We want to cross over into the fullness of God's promises—together, *with you*. Let go of the old and ask Him to renew you; He is willing, and a whole generation is waiting. You are needed. We honor you; and we ask you: please, join us on this journey together *in Him.* We want your blessing that we might all walk in the Father's best blessings *together.*

TO THE ARISING GENERATION

As we have talked about, only one generation of the Israelites joined Joshua and Caleb by going into the Promised Land. The other, sadly, perished in the wilderness. Arising into the new things of God gives you one particular advantage—there are not as many old mindsets from which to be unentangled. But we must not use this advantage simply for our own advancement into the new, but to also honor those who have gone before us and call their generation across into the new season of God with us. *We need them*. As asked previously, what if two generations had crossed over into the Promised Land? Many of those who have gone before you have persevered through a stripping season in their lives, not unlike what Job went through when so many familiar with him criticized. Stand with them, fight for them, and keep pointing to that singular vision of the promises of God He has created us to walk in together. Do so respectfully, giving honor, patience,

and love. Give them the same patience they have given you and me. Multiply back to them the blessing that their generation has bestowed upon us.

You might have been hurt by some of those in the previous generation, limited or judged, but so have they. This is exactly what our vision must learn to see past if we will be united uncommonly to become the answer within Jesus' final prayer. We have an opportunity arising with us to call forth a generation of weary warriors who are wise and tested in their faithful perseverance. You were not subjected to the entanglements we so often judge them for battling, perhaps struggling to embrace what is new or move forward the way *you* see things. See from their eyes. Even more, see them from God's eyes. Develop a love for them that will fight for them, with them, and will not fail! Bear with them until they cross over the Jordan River *with you*. Cast vision with your love and your life, show them the faithfulness of God that is bursting out of the vision ahead. We must battle for them so they will battle with us. Together we will experience a greater multiplication and a greater victory cry as we cross over *together* to the other side.

As we enter the days ahead, we need one another more than ever before. We need to live out that last promise of the Old Testament in our own lives—Malachi 4:5-6—and be part of God turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. Many of the fathers and mothers who have gone before us are just trying to hang on, with little left in the tank to pursue us any longer. Might I issue us a challenge? *Let us pursue them!* Let us run to them and then *with* them. May we who are arising rise up not just to fulfill our call or

destiny, but may we arise to fight for the *fullness* of destiny, life, and multiplication that still lives and breathes within *all those* who have paved our way! Bless them, and then walk in the same.

THE PRODUCT OF UNITY: MULTIPLICATION

When we the Body of Christ live as a family without division, we give the world something—*Someone*—to believe in. As a family, we come together and we multiply. *From one generation to another*. We cannot lose sight of the power of generational unity, which is an honor and empowerment that must come alive. This kind of unity fights the chasm of division not just by filling the gap, but by division's antithesis and archrival, *multiplication!* Multiplication is the product of unity, especially on the generational level as God is reforming His house by multiplying it out across the nations. This house doesn't have walls; we are the walls, meaning that the house is always growing as we are always going—and multiplying! As we come together as *generations*—note the plural nature of the word—and cross over the divide *together,* we will multiply in a way the world has not yet seen, with a fullness and wholeness that fills our Father's family house. This is true in the biological sense of family, and it is true on an even higher level in the spiritual sense of family. God makes *us* into a house, a family structure who *can* stand and reveal who our Father really is. Each of us is a temple of the living God, a home for His indwelling Spirit. As we come together in Him, God's house gets that much bigger and broader to house the world. We are built not by walls, but through the unity of the Spirit who resides in us each. A house divided can't stand, but a house

united is destined to multiply!

When Jesus prayed that we would be one, *that the world may believe,* He did so knowing about you and me, and those all around us. He knew our moms and our dads, He knew the circumstances and difficulties that would divide us, and He knew the time we would live in. He knew the battles of perception between the generations; and even more, He knew the potential His prayer was tapping into. When He prayed that prayer in John 17, Jesus knew that you would be one who is ready and able to come together in Him with the generation next to you in an uncommon way. He knew that together you could and would live out the answer to His final prayer.

God is turning the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to the fathers. He has blessed us to go forward in a new way. We are transitioning into life-giving parents who love the world like family and multiply the family line of Christ! When the generations come together and cross over together, *we will multiply together!* The world will never be the same. They will see an uncommonly united family and a rock solid, undivided, growing family house where they can finally find shelter and comfort knowing *who* their Father really is, for they will see Him in us, together—*and they will believe!*

CONCLUSION

A FAMILY STRUCTURE

In Acts 4:29-35, in the place where "those who believed" were assembled, the walls were shaken. No longer did a physical structure hold them or separate them; the shaking that was happening in their lives was empowering and freeing them to go out! As discussed previously, the meaning of the word *house* is twofold: a physical structure or a family structure. The Father has created us to be uncommonly united, a house without walls, where beams and boards don't have to intersect. We are a family structure where we as people are the walls, who are waiting to be extended out in and to the world. The Father's nature is the roof or ceiling, and it extends as high and far as we will allow His true nature to come alive through us and toward one another. With such a family structure, the Father's house will extend out into new parts of the world, ripe harvest fields too rarely touched. It will stretch out over all those God sees as His children in the world as far as we are willing to go, or He will unconditionally send and empower others.

A family structure is uncommonly united as we each go out to the deep places of the world in different directions to different places, living and giving life in different ways. Our

oneness comes from our intimacy with the Lord, empowering us to freely overflow His nature while living out our unique and different identities. We become united by the Father's heart and its steady and loving beat for the world. In the family structure, different isn't something to be avoided; rather, it is the uncommon unity acting as an exponent over our lives ready to launch us out and multiply. It creates so much multiplication that we could not even begin to go the same direction or do things in similar ways. It is time we stop trying to get other people, other streams of the Body, to conform to our ways. It is time that we bless and empower others to be different, to live differently, and to allow the different parts of God's image and the life of His Son to uniquely come alive through one another.

The Kingdom is based on the Father, His Son, and His family of sons and daughters who are uncommonly united by His Spirit who lives in and through them. It is the simplest form of the Kingdom—family! Is there any wonder why the enemy has sought to divide, destroy, and distort the concepts of family? The enemy knows that a house divided cannot stand. Our answer to such will come as we change our perspective and emphasis of what a "house" is supposed to be: from a physical structure that must match and stay in one place together to that of a family structure where multiplication has its opportunity to overtake division running the other way in a landslide. We build so much of our kingdom here on earth as we major in the physical and organizational structure and minor in family. When we live with family as our major and the other as our minor, we will see a greater manifestation of the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in Heaven. When we try

to unite our differences under one roof, our differences often work against one another. But when we empower differences to go out to the world, we are uncommonly one.

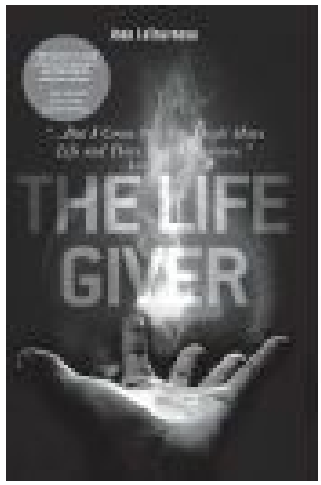
If you picture one large source of water with rivers flowing out, each and every river will flow at a different pace depending on its terrain. Each will move in different twists and turns depending on the needs of the lay of the land. Each will pick up different nutrients along the way to pass to the specific needs of the dry ground to which it is sent. Each will pass through different seasons at different times. But all will carry a fresh, moving, living water to a world in need. They are united by nothing but the one source, and therefore they are one in all their glorious differences!

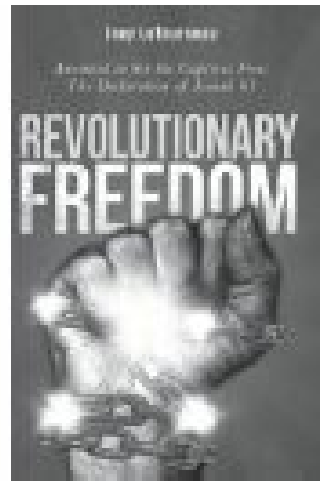
If we will be a people empowered to be the answer to Jesus' final prayer in John 17:20-26, we will begin to see one another differently through the eyes of the Father. We will begin to live differently, by the river-like path of the Spirit, and we will love differently like the Son who lives inside us. Uncommon unity is a different kind of unity, but it is the most powerful sort. The world doesn't need a common answer—of those many have had their fill. The world is waiting for the uncommon answer living within you and the person next to you. Unity carries a great and often unrealized purpose and power when difference is allowed—and empowered—to live and go in uncommon ways. We will be a "house" uncommonly united, and *the world will believe!*

May we be the answer to Jesus' *one* desire.

ABOUT JOEY LETOURNEAU

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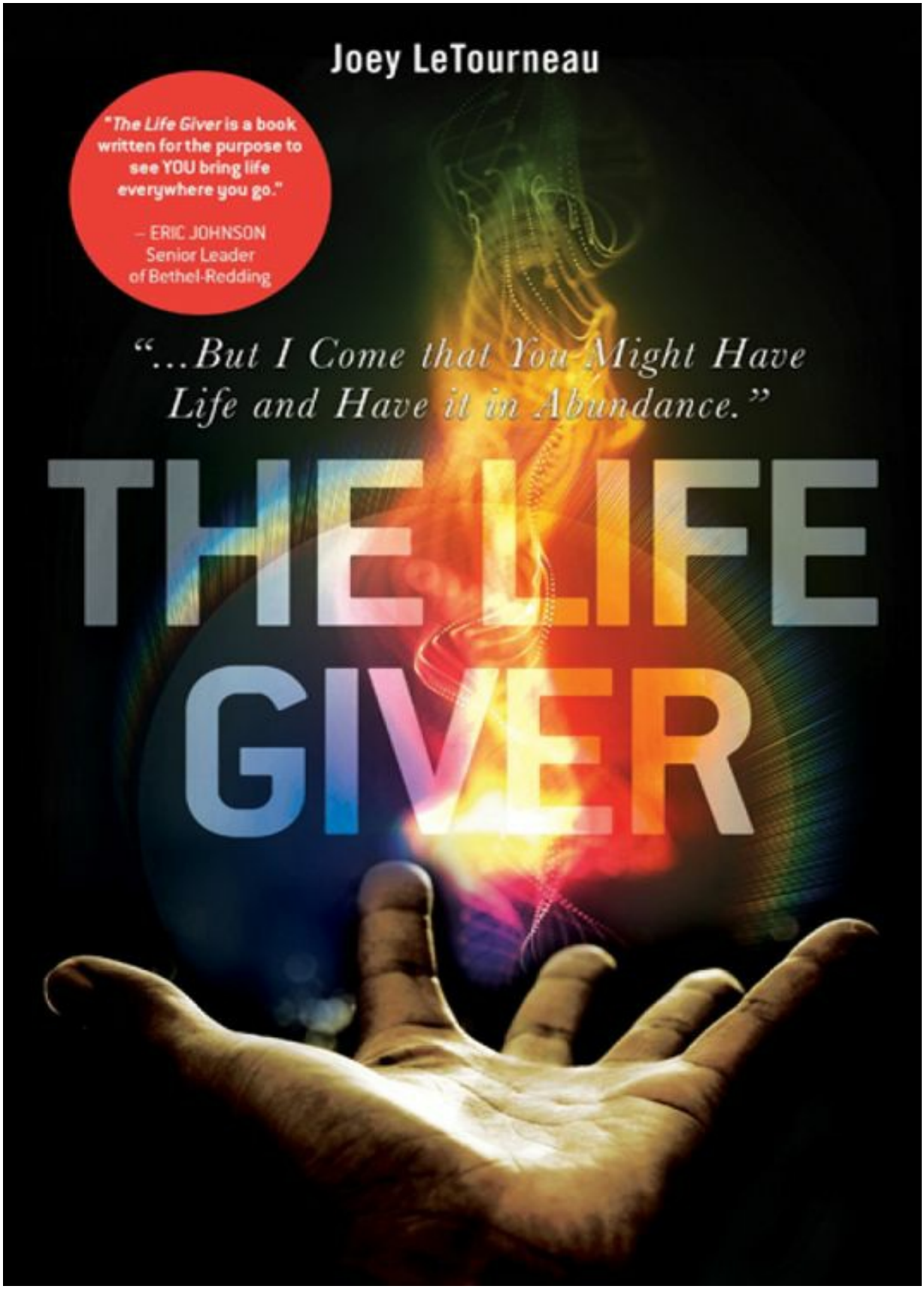
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THE LIFE GIVER

INTRODUCTION

> *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly* (John 10:10).

WE serve and follow a creative, life-giving God, and He has created us to be creative, life-giving people. He gives physical and spiritual life in an abundance of ways, and He has called us to tap into that life, receive it in abundance, and freely give it out to a world that is waiting, longing, and in need. We must remember that our Father has not only given us life to live, but He has given us life more abundantly to transform. This has left a cry in my heart—and I hope in yours, too. I want more! I want more of Him and the revived life He brings in me. I want more for my family, for my community, for our nation, and I want more of my Father and His life for the world. Life is created to multiply. Our Father gave this life more abundantly, but He has called on us to move forward and pass it on.

I love the above verse, John 10:10, where Jesus reminds us why He came: to give life and to give it *more* abundantly! He is once again reaffirming the mission He announced for Himself from Isaiah 61:1-3, when He began His ministry here on earth (see Luke 4:16-21). Jesus fulfilled His calling from Isaiah 61 to

release the captives not just by setting them free, but amidst the process of setting them free, He did what He always saw His Father do: He gave life!

> *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will"* (John 5:19-21).

Jesus saw what His Father did at creation. Jesus saw the Father give life to the world, and to humankind, simply by speaking a word. So, is it any wonder that when Jesus began His ministry here on earth He gave new, more abundant life to someone through healing, simply by speaking a word? Is it any wonder He gave life and delivered the oppressed, simply by speaking a word? Is it any wonder that Jesus told His followers that they would do greater things than these (see John 14:12), after His Father had made the same known in regard to the Son's ministry? (See John 5:20.) Jesus picked up the mantle of the Father and used His life and His whole ministry to offer the world the same life-giving power that He always saw the Father operate in. Why would He give anything less? And since we are called to carry the mantle that Christ has left for us, why would *we* give the world anything less?

God is a creative God, and He has never shown us anything to the contrary. He has always given life in creative ways. He led Elisha to use an ax head and empty vessels to reveal the Lord. Joshua and the Israelites were to let out a great shout to topple a massive structure. God answered Noah and his family with a rainbow of color and promise. Jehoshaphat won a physical battle through praise and worship. The New Covenant Church saw healing come through shadows and handkerchiefs. Jesus used dirt and saliva for healing and turned water into wine! (See Second Kings 6:1-7; Joshua 6:15-20; Genesis 9:12-17; Second Chronicles 20; Acts 5:15; Mark 8:22-25.) Where has our creativity gone? We often live in a black-and-white world desperately in need of colors that our human eye has yet to see. We need new life! We need more life and life *more* abundantly. We live in a world absent of power that needs to see God's nature as Life Giver known and His Kingdom revealed. We have often lost touch, but we were created by and still are within grasp of God's life-giving power. The thief has come all around us and stolen, killed, and destroyed—even in our own lives!

We must pick up the mantle that Jesus took from the Father. As co-heirs with Christ, we must answer and overtake the thief and all the life he has stolen. If we will connect to the Life Giver Himself, He will reveal in us creative colors the world has not seen. And by faith, we can paint the dark, dreary, and oppressed with the fresh, creative, and life-giving word of God! The world is in need of more than we can tell them and is secretly wanting something we, the Bride, can show them.

Oftentimes I would get up and prepare to go out into the heavily populated and hurting streets we lived among in

Ethiopia. But before I could be of any positive affect, I had to begin by seeking the Lord's perspective and hearing His voice so that I could see through His life-giving legacy. When I go out into the world each day, or even spend time with my family, I must not just see people as plain sight would show them. I want to see them through God's eyes and see what has been stolen from them or what has been killed and destroyed in their lives. Through my own eyes I may judge incorrectly, but through His eyes I see the injustices the enemy has inflicted upon the Lord's children, and through His voice I hear how to give that life back and how to give it more abundantly.

How amazing it is that God does not just stop at restoring life! His promises go even farther because Jesus does not come just to give or restore life back to where it *was,* but He comes to give life *more* abundantly! Every person and every place where life has been stolen or destroyed is an opportunity to take that ground back and to see each person flourish instead of fall—to see a place where life has been transformed to a place where life is now restored and even overflowing.

The Lord has brought many such needs or opportunities to *"give life"* into our lives, and He has brought them in a variety of ways. Each one has been a lesson for us in how to join the Lord in His mission of releasing the captives (see Luke 4:18) and how to do so through giving life! He is Life, and He is the Life Giver. God has created us with a life-giving power; it is innate within us. He has made this same creative, life-giving power available through us to give and create more for others.

If we will connect with the Life Giver, He will reveal to us the creative, life-giving power that is needed for every situation. He will give birth to new life through our lives and

raise up spiritual sons and daughters who carry that life on to many others. He will fill the empty places and breathe life into the dry bones. We will begin to fulfill the mandate from the Garden of Eden to *"be fruitful and multiply"* (Gen. 1:28). If we will give life to those around us, like they are our very own family, we will see the Spirit of adoption come to life (see Rom. 8:15). We will give life, by His Spirit, to *more* family.

The family of God is hurting. Many of the children of God are lost and broken. We, as sons and daughters of the King, must connect to our Father, the Life Giver, and allow His seeds of grace and love to flow through us and give life to the children and the family He has been waiting for. My own family has had one very personal example of this recently.

Our daughter Anna is 13 years old. God gave us the privilege of adopting Anna (previously named Kelemua) from an orphanage home we worked with frequently while living in Ethiopia. It was a small orphanage run by our Ethiopian home church, and it was set up much more like a family home. After we met Anna in July 2007, we met with her almost every week until she officially and miraculously joined our family in January 2010.

During these years, we had a very good, if not great, relationship with Anna while she was at the orphanage. And actually, much of our relationship was built through prayer and time in God's presence together. Our hearts felt an immediate tie to Anna, similar to but in a different way than with our other adopted daughter, Aynalem.

For lack of space, I won't go into our entire adoption story and the miracles God did, as He did a lot. God moved

mountains to answer prayers and bring our family together during the whole adoption process. We have much to be thankful for. But the most powerful part of Anna's adventure into our lives came when her relationship with us changed—the day she arrived in our home. God prepared our hearts for some of what would take place, some of which we are still working through. We knew some of the places the thief had stolen from in her life and her past family. But we had no idea of all the relationship challenges that were ahead.

The day Anna moved in, something new began to happen. Her relationship with us started going backward, reversing the course it had been on for more than two years. This happened immediately. Suddenly, right before our eyes, she was drowning in depression. Her attitude and moods of defiance were ones we had never seen in her before. And most difficult of all, Anna was running away from us as parents in communication and relationship. This was no teenage thing; this was a spiritual wound, a "theft from the enemy" kind of thing that began the very moment she moved in under a new authority.

Anna had known us and been very comfortable with us for years, even staying with us at our house for whole weekends with the group from the orphanage home. When told of us being her adoptive parents, she was exceedingly happy and wanted to come. It was her choice. But something spiritual was happening, something from her past wounds and hurts that was trying to yank her back from living new life. And it was stealing much of the life that was already there.

Anna had a very difficult upbringing. She and her sisters lost their parents at a very young age, and she bounced from

home to home until God brought her to the Covenant Church Orphanage family. She had been horribly abused: physically, mentally, and emotionally. The abuse came from those closest to her, from those who were in a position of authority, and probably from those who previously had life stolen from them as well. Promises were made to her by many of her caregivers, but they were promises not kept. Every time she might have thought new life was going to be given to her, more was stolen away.

Until she reached the Covenant Church Orphanage home, Anna was losing life by the day. Physically she was moving forward, but in all other ways the "thief" was having his way. God used Covenant Orphanage to restore life to the places it had been taken. Anna found the Lord in the home and discovered an unbridled passion for her King. It's where she came alive. I will never forget the first night eight kids from the orphanage came to stay at our house with us. We went to pray over and say goodnight to each child, but were awestruck when we saw Anna (10 years old at the time) on her face in deep relationship with her Savior. God was restoring life in her, and she was enjoying it as much as possible!

I think this was why we were so surprised at the changes we saw in Anna when she officially joined our family. There was such a strong foundation of the Lord in her from her time at Covenant Orphanage: such character, morals, love, appreciation, and even relationship. But now, it felt like all we had seen restored in her over those years was being stolen away at the threat of moving past the old life and into God's new. We were aware of the changes and difficulties for any child in this situation, and we knew that a patient kind of love

was even more necessary than usual. What we found was someone whose past was suddenly present again. Fear brought the thief's previous workings back before her eyes and paralyzed her from moving forward. The thief was trying to steal from her again. This time it came not through reality, but from a fear so strong she could hardly look at us long enough to blink, let alone utter a word in our direction.

In every form of communication, fear paralyzed her from relating to us in the most basic of ways. This was just the beginning, and fear's control over her only seemed to strengthen. On most days, neither my wife, Destiny, nor I could get more than five words from her for the whole day. Maybe a "yes," a "no," or something simple like "good," in response to a question. The moment we became her parents, her fear of rejection began to steal the hope of new life together.

It wasn't about us. We knew she loved us. We knew that deep down she genuinely wanted a relationship with us, probably to the same great extent that the fear controlled her. But she could not move. And no matter how much we tried to help, connect, or patiently love her through this transition, we were met with resistance and avoidance.

It began to get more difficult to watch her build new comfort levels with others and walk right past us each time into their arms. It was hard not to get to love her openly and outwardly, to have that love rejected because she was so afraid of rejection herself. We would pull her aside many times to talk and pray, and we tried a variety of things to get closer, to help us understand, or to help her walk past the line drawn in the sand. Nothing worked. We began to find that now it wasn't just about an inability to connect or have a relationship; now

she was beginning to act out in ways we had never seen in her before.

Anna displayed new attitudes and new instances of defiance and rebellion that we did not believe were really her. The bottom line was that she did not know what she was doing, nor could she help it. Over and over we tried to remind her of who God had made her to be and of the love, faith, and light that was in her heart. She agreed, and sometimes we could tell she wanted to try. But each time she would reemerge even further from relationship, deeper in a pit of darkness as if a cloud cover joined her wherever she went. Through this, her tension and frustrations seemed to increase. She was bottled up with what was being stolen from her. She wanted a relationship so badly, but she could not have one due to fear of rejection and her past. So she just kept deciding to reject the relationship to prevent an even worse pain. The cycle was getting deeper, and it was affecting her and our other daughters more and more each day. It was becoming a crack in the family that no effort could fill.

One day the situation at our house was hitting a boiling point. So many difficult and negative things were coming in through this division and through the fear that was present. It was tearing us apart. Anna had so much life being stolen from her that it was now affecting our whole family in a way she couldn't help. She didn't want it to be that way, and we knew she was hurting terribly through it all. But she didn't know what to do and was paralyzed by the thief, his fear tactics and lies. We wanted only to give her life, whatever life the Lord wanted to give her. Instead, we were seeing it stolen away from us all. Every way we tried to give life back to her was met with

resistance. We were truly at a breaking point and did not know what to do—only to keep waiting on the Lord to listen for His fresh answer.

The same day the house and family was about to boil over, God gave us revelation. It seemed simple at first, but we had only to be obedient and give it a try. We would trust Him with the results. The Lord spoke to us about using a notebook with Anna to start over in seeking to have a relationship and communication together. We had tried to have her write to us before, but it didn't work. But God put this idea before us, and we had to try by faith. We brought her the notebook and began to reaffirm our love for her, as well as our desire to have a relationship. We told her that we were going to leave this notebook in one place for her, as well as for Destiny and myself. The notebook would be for conversation back and forth, to express the words that could not, would not come out from her mouth. She could tell us anything, ask us anything, even empty her heart if she wanted to. This notebook could be all of our voices, and it could be done safely in her own time. With the way the house and family felt, it seemed like our last shot.

Anna nodded in agreement to the relationship notebook, and we showed her where it would be waiting. After this conversation, we left the room and continued in prayer. I checked back on the notebook a little while later, but there was nothing. Another half hour went by and still no attempt. I had written the first note to her, something very small and simple. I wasn't sure if she even felt safe to seek out the awaiting notebook on her own, so I decided to take the notebook up to her. I went in, and we sat on her bed together. I took the pen

and began writing to her while sitting side by side. “Anna, do you want help?” Then I wrote the words “yes” and “no,” so she would only have to circle one for an answer.

“Yes,” she took the pen and circled it slowly.

“Do you want the fear and the bad things gone?” I wrote in response. Again I finished with the words “yes” and “no,” so she could circle her response.

“Yes.”

“Will you help try and make them go away?” I wrote next, believing that if she wanted the thief gone from her life, she had to take the authority to tell him to go.

“Yes,” she circled.

Then I wrote one last question, a question based on the passage in Luke 11. Jesus says that if we cast out the enemy, but do not continue to take authority over our house, the evil spirit will try and come back the next day with seven more like him to steal, kill, and destroy even more from our lives (see Luke 11:24-26). So I wrote this final question: “If they go away, will you try to keep them away every day?”

“Yes,” she circled.

“That is wonderful!” I answered out loud. I actually got a smirk in return. At this time I spoke and asked her if we could have a prayer time later to see God give life back to these places. She nodded yes. I asked her permission for who would be involved in this prayer time, and received it through a nod. Then I left the room and put the notebook back in the place we had agreed upon.

We were almost at the prayer time when I went to check the notebook, just in case. I opened it up and there it was—a full page note to Destiny and me communicating so much of what had been welling up inside of her. Her voice was being stolen from her by fear and her past, but now life was starting to reenter. We couldn't believe what we were reading or even that we were reading something from her at all. A relationship was beginning, and an avenue for new and abundant life was opening up.

We gathered around Anna and took her through several Scriptures in Luke 11 to help prepare her. She had been around prayer times such as these with the church people who ran the orphanage home and also amidst our family. We went over some principles Jesus spoke of, then went into a prayer time of love, healing, and deliverance, and then we all began speaking forth new life! The prayer time went on for more than two hours, and by the end, Anna stood there in the middle of us all full of light, arms outstretched to the heavens and rejoicing before the Lord. She took authority over her life, sent the thief away, and received new life in those places. Anna was beaming, she was singing to the Lord, and we were all ministered to by His presence.

Since this prayer time and the new, unique avenue of relationship and communication, Anna has walked around like a brand-new person. The frustrated and tense demeanor she had shown is now gone. She had been so bottled up with the life the enemy was trying to steal; it had been causing her to act out in ways she never had before. Conversation has yet to take its full place verbally, but she has opened up with full bloom on paper. Every day, morning and night, Anna started

writing to us. She began sharing her feelings, her past, her questions, and even her love for us. We have communication now. After more than a year together, there is life in our relationship, and there is life again in and out of Anna.

Within days of life being restored in these places, we found Anna praying freedom and release over several others in need. God was not just giving her life, but through this 13-year-old girl, He was now passing it on to others. The thief tried to steal because that was his entry point to try to kill and destroy life in the family, especially in Anna. But God gave us revelation—revelation that gave life—and opened the door for life more abundantly. God did not just redeem Anna from a hurting or broken place; He grew our family and gave life to a daughter we had not yet been able to know.

The Lord has a simple, creative answer ready for any and every situation where the thief has been or is taking life. God has fresh revelation ready to give us to help breathe life into others in need and grow His family. He has power like a bottled-up dam, waiting to flow through the authority He has given us. But it is not until we remember the testimony of the Life Giver Himself, open our eyes, and listen for His voice that we can know His creative, life-giving power and be ready to pass it on to the person or circumstance in front of us. Our faith will only grow when we remember what a big and creative God we are loved by. All throughout the Bible, God creatively answered the impossible. Just as He used Elijah, Moses, and the disciples before us, God wants to reveal Himself to the world in this same way through us and through His creative, life-giving power.

Today, allow the same creative, life-giving power that has

been breathed into you to breathe through you to a world that is gasping for fresh, heavenly air. It can be something as simple as the solution of a notebook for communication, an act of love and service, or a powerful time of healing, deliverance, or prophetic blessing. It may be a specific word of encouragement God gives you for someone you see on the street or an email declaring prayers of faith over a friend in need. Jesus has placed a great opportunity before us, and the devil's thievery only increases our opportunity to join Jesus in His life-giving ways. We must take this opportunity, tap into the Life Giver Himself, and begin to give life more abundantly to all those He has entrusted into our path. Life is waiting! And the whole world is our family in need.

Chapter 1

VISION OF THE PROMISED LAND

SUDDENLY, amidst all of our needs, defying the battles and long odds we were up against, the vision came to life! I was still on earth—still in my own living room for that matter. But my heart, my eyes, and everything within me were in a new place, a heavenly land! I stood there gazing in circles all around me, spinning as if on a turntable. But I was not in a parade, and there was no podium, just fields. It was beautiful and beyond breathtaking. I was surprised by this place, yet at the same time completely engaged. God obviously wanted me to learn something. I breathed in with a deep breath while I tried to set my heart to understand. It was a land of unmatchable freedom, a freedom that was blowing across me like a refreshing wind. And everywhere I looked seemed to surpass anything and everything I knew. It was a land of life-giving promise, *a promised land*.

As far as my eye could see, the land appeared as an

orchard, a place of fruit and lush, unmatchable greens. The vision and the promises I had received and believed all these years looked as if they were right before my eyes. "My Kingdom come, My will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." I didn't know where the voice came from, but I could hear it in my heart as clear as the trumpet will someday sound. What a fruitful land! Full of life!

Am I in Heaven? I had to question. *Is this my eternal land and home?* My feet still stood on earth, so I did not know for sure. But this was just as real, like I was in two places at once. But I knew where I was: I was taking possession of the heavenly answers I would one day live in, the same answers that, for the time being, needed to flow through me to the difficult, and even impossible, circumstances that were in my life and the world around me.

On earth, we were in great need in a variety of areas. We were waiting for answers only God could swoop in and provide. In Heaven, God was showing me the answers: the land I was not only to ask for, but the land I was called to own, use, give, and multiply for His glory. It was as if all our prayers and God's stored up answers were in this "spiritual property" I was just starting to understand. On earth, I was receiving emails, phone calls, and visits every day from those in great need who were standing faithfully or struggling mightily amidst dire physical circumstances. But there—here—in Heaven, not knowing how I was connecting, I was inheriting the answers of God: His fruit to sustain and grow, His milk and honey to bless, and a land I was being given for the direct purpose of seeing it come to life on earth. But how? I felt like a volunteer in a magic act, with my body cut in two and the box separating each half

into different places. My feet were on the ground, but from the waist up, my surroundings were beyond description. It was bigger, more divine, and more expansive than I could give credence to. This place was, simply, heavenly.

A PROMISING ENCOUNTER

Just then, a man began walking my way. I was speechless. *Was this who I thought? What should I say?* He reached out his hand as if to shake mine, and instead I reached for a hug. "I'm Adam," he said, without an ounce of prestige. Like a regular ol' guy, he acted as if he was coming to "hang out."

"I know you must have many questions," he spoke calmly. "From the look in your eyes and your mouth agape, you seem a little surprised."

All I could muster was a nod.

"As I believe you are somewhat understanding, this is your promised land. This is a piece of Heaven that God has passed down to you through Jesus. However, this is not only the place for your heavenly dwelling; it is the place you are to operate, live on, and give from for the rest of your time on earth. Your heavenly inheritance, though eternal, must first be used to bring fruit to earth. This land, just as the Lord gave me in Eden, is a land of promise that you are to take dominion over. I lost sight of that. I let self and worldly deceptions creep in to steal my God-given vision and purpose. I had everything I needed in the land the Lord gave me, but I acted as if it wasn't enough to sustain self, let alone pass on fruit and the taste of Heaven to others. I had the opportunity of Heaven on earth in my very own hands, but I missed it. I was given a land like this

but did not understand how to use it, how to own it for the benefit of all, or how to harvest it and pass its free and powerful blessing on to others. I was given so much, but I did not recognize what I had been given. This is why you are here. You must recognize what God has given you and do with it what I did not. You must see the purposes and power it holds and learn how to be *of* this land, even while you are still *in* the world.

"Your promised land is not only an eternal home. But neither is it something to be rained down only for your blessing and comfort on earth. You have a promised land that you may take hold of now, by the inheritance of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a land of fruit—lots of fruit—and a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a land where you as a "son" and heir with Christ must take what you own here and make it known, tasted, and distributed on earth as it is in Heaven. You must take this promised land the Father has graced you with and begin to live out a promised life."

I couldn't help but pause while he was talking. I was overwhelmed. Not just by his words, but by looking at all that surrounded me. I saw high, eternally peaking mountains that simply glowed. They didn't just glisten, but had the glow of everlasting life. Rainbows danced through the air like peace and promise had come together for a night at the ball, and the skies were ever reaching. The magnitude of the atmosphere was almost more than I could handle. I was nervous to talk because I felt my lips could do nothing but quiver. "This was, this will be…*is* life more abundantly!"

I must have said the last part out loud without recognizing it because that's when I began to hear Adam speak again,

answering what I had unknowingly declared.

"This is life more abundantly. Absolutely! And it will be here waiting for you and many more for many, many years to come. But, if you will recall Jesus' own words, He went down to earth because of the thief who was stealing, killing, and destroying. Jesus came to visit the earth, and all humankind upon it, to give life more abundantly. And while that abundant life will be experienced here someday, it is also meant for earth. God's Kingdom is life more abundantly, and it must be given out through you now—there," he said, while pointing below.

"When Jesus arose from the dead, He rose in a resurrection power that is now within you by the Spirit of God. Truly, you are full of power by the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus rose on earth and went to Heaven so you could take what is of Heaven and remodel, restore, revive, and reform life on earth. He rose with resurrection power, knowing that in Him you would have authority, as the Father gave me originally in the garden: authority to rule, be fruitful, and multiply *His life* on earth as in Heaven. Jesus became a life full of resurrection power, distributed for the sake of all, that none should perish and miss out on the life more abundantly that you see all around you. But, this means that you must not simply partake of this fruit God is giving you. It means that you must not just live in this heavenly land the Father has entrusted to you. It means that you must take what you have freely received here and freely give it there. As the Lord spoke to me, I speak the same to you. Be fruitful and multiply."

More quickly than he arrived, Adam was gone. But I was still there—wherever *there* was. I looked all around, still taking in what surrounded me, still trying to understand this feeling of

being in two places at once. I had often heard the phrase that we can be "so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good." I never gave the statement much credit, and this confirmed my opinion. I had to be more heavenly minded, as long as my feet remained on the ground. God was stretching me to experience His promised land now, so my feet could carry me across the earth to take this fruit, this lavish, soothing milk and honey, and give it freely to the world in need. With all the practical difficulties that those on earth were going through, the practical solutions had run their course. We needed Heaven! We needed our promised land now! Earth, and all of God's children across it, were in need of answers that only the fruit of Heaven could give. They had wounds that only the promise of honey could soothe. They had weakness that only the sustenance of milk could supply. This place was amazing, and I could hardly wait to explore and learn more.

I walked over toward the trees to my left, about 20 yards or so. I could see and feel myself in both places at once. It was very odd, an almost indescribable feeling. At this very moment, I could see many of the people and issues around our lives, yet at the same time, I saw the fruit within reach to help answer them.

No longer was I praying from earth to Heaven hoping for a downpour of answers. No, this was different. Now, I was taking hold of the fruit from my very own trees, from my own promised land I had inherited from my Father. It was fruit filled with answers and with the very life of God Himself. I was simply, with authority, distributing and imparting God's promised fruit over those in need. I wasn't just asking anymore. Now, through prayer, I was co-laboring with God to

see His promises come to life, distribute life, and transform life! My prayers were aligning with His grace, and I was giving according to faith. I was releasing the fruit to those in need, giving it as freely as the Lord had just given me. It really was just as Adam had spoken: I was being fruitful, and I was multiplying. However, it was not my earthly fruit or anything I could produce. It was all free! It was all God's, and He had made it available to us. *It had been growing this whole time!* All these years I had been asking for it to come, to fall upon our needs or upon the earth. I realized fruit falls at a much slower rate than it is picked. But taking ownership and having possession of my promised land allowed me to receive freely and give freely.

As I then began to receive this place He had brought me into as my own, I could not help but fall to my knees. The magnitude of what this promised land represented, and the immense stewardship that comes along with it all, was dawning on me. It was a humble privilege, and now even my knees could feel it. They sunk into the strong, receptive ground in complete and utter dependence. "With great authority comes great responsibility," I remember hearing that phrase so often over the years. It was a phrase I always tried to live. But never had its words come to life quite like this moment. My Father had not only brought me into a new land, but He had given this land to me. Right then I knew full well that this promised land was not only a promise for me, it was a promise that had to be revealed in Spirit and in Truth through me to the earth below.

I couldn't help but wonder, *How?* My feet were on the ground, and on the ground they had to stay. But my land, God's promises, and the produce of such a land was right

before my eyes with full access. *How do I live in the world but not of it? How do I keep my feet on the ground while living by faith from this new land God had given me? How do I steward the fruit of Heaven to answer the yearnings of the Father's family on earth?* However it would happen, I was dependent. That in itself was reassuring. There is no more refreshing feeling than being totally and wholly dependent on Him, yet still empowered to live and give on my own. Something new was beginning. A place I had often longed for was opening up. But how?

TEACH ME HOW!

I dropped further to the ground, from my knees to my face. The soil was so rich and full I could smell it! Who knew that even dirt from the ground could smell so heavenly? The scent of the Father rushed through my veins, and I settled into a peaceful, necessary rest with the Lord. I stretched out my hands ahead of me, still prostrate on the ground. I took another deep inhale, like taking in fresh mountain air, turned the eyes of my heart to the Father, and let go. I could not even pray. I just needed Him. "Father, teach me." I muttered under my breath. It was all I could manage. I needed direction and strength that only God could impart. I needed the parts of God I didn't even know to ask for. I needed…

Suddenly I felt something lift me off the ground! Hands underneath my shoulders lifted me to my feet. "My love is better than wine," whispered its way through my ears, or perhaps my spirit. "My love is better than wine," a gentle voice whispered again. Before I could see who it was, I saw a hand reaching out past me, pointing to what lined the fields just

ahead and to the right. It was a vineyard, grapevine after grapevine, like never-ending lines of life. “My love is better than wine,” He said again.

I turned, knowing now just who it was. “My Lord,” I said with an uplifted smile. His presence caused me to glow—not just His presence, but His nearness.

“My love is better than wine. This is My vineyard, and these are the grapes of grace. They are life-giving in nature and full of My love. My love, in its perfect form, is the freedom and wholeness everyone needs in order to be the son or daughter and the life-giver that I have called them to be. My love is an impenetrable force, like a perfect multi-dimensional sphere, forever surrounding those I love, perfecting My love in them so that they may give it out freely. My vineyard is one of grace, poured out with My new wine. One cannot give life to another if one is not full and, therefore, surrounded by My true and impenetrable love. My life-givers are full of this new wine of love, and they know how to give it to the world around them because they are secure in My love for exactly who they are. They are secure in being My children whom I love.

“This vineyard,” He spoke while pointing across the outstretched land it covered, “I want you to take of what is Mine and declare it to the world.”

When saying this, He spoke to me with such faith. I received equally as much from the way my Lord spoke to me as from His words. He spoke to me with such confidence and trust. He clearly trusted me and believed in me to steward the best parts of His promises and freely pass them out without measure or condition. He was not just telling me what to do; He

was imparting the courage I needed to do it! I had never felt more chosen in all my life.

"What you are feeling and receiving from Me is part of the aroma of My grapes of grace and is the effect of My new wine. I want you to be free. My grace is sufficient to set you free from any and all limits. See, My child, the limits you have been living under? You have limited the amount of love you think I am allowed to love you with. This has broken My heart. There is no floor on Heaven, nor My promises meant for My children. And there is no ceiling to block you from tasting and giving out the best parts of Me. *I AM a milk-and-honey God!"*

Before I could even realize we had moved on, we were already in a new, amazing part of this land of promise. I obviously never really understood what a land flowing with milk and honey meant. But it was right there, lived out before my eyes, and it was not at all as I expected. There was no river of milk, and I half expected to see honey whisked around on the type of honeycomb wand the cartoon bee uses on Honey Nut Cheerios. No, this was different. It blew away my context of milk and honey, yet the smell of such promises was unmistakable.

"Taste and see that I AM good," the Lord said with such hope. "Taste and see for yourself how deep, how lavish and unendingly expansive My love and promises are for you. Taste and see what life more abundantly really means. Many know the words, but do not know how abundant of a God I AM. I am calling them to live in the world, but to give the life of Heaven to those who are parched, hurting, and hungry. But how can one give life more abundantly if they do not know firsthand how abundant I AM? My love and life cannot be contained in

mere words or human understanding. And one cannot live, let alone give, what one does not know. Your ceiling has become My floor, and I never modeled My house with a floor where only drips would spring from Heaven. I made My house open and free, so that as you are one with Me, the whole world would believe in Me and receive My abundant love. Taste and see the life I AM calling you to live in Me. Taste and see what I have brought you up here to know. Taste and see that I AM good."

I reached out and grabbed a piece of fruit. What was funny was the piece of fruit I picked seemed at first to be out of my reach. But without even the slightest strife, grace brought this piece to me. I had never seen fruit quite like it before. It was virtually exploding with what could not be seen, but what the Lord wanted me to taste with Him.

I wrapped my mouth around the fruit and sunk in. It was alive! The fruit juices of Heaven not only filled my mouth and invigorated my taste buds; it dripped excessively down my chin. The only word that gave it fair description was *abundant*. It was sweeter than honey I had known, but it carried the sustenance of a rich, creamy glass of milk. I took another bite from the same piece only to find it overflowed even more than the first time, like the juices were alive and regenerating themselves. The taste was even more powerful! It was even more alive! How was that even possible? When I eat a peach, it shrinks pretty quickly, more so in fact than I usually prefer. But this, this was awesome! It was fruit that kept on giving. Every bite exceeded my greatest, wildest expectations.

For far too long I had expected way too little of God and limited His ability to be bigger than life. I had to know this new

life so I could give new life to everyone around me. For too long, I had limited how juicy, full, and abundant His love really is, even when communicated through something as small as one piece of fruit. I looked up, still daydreaming about the abundant taste and capability in this one piece. Only now I wasn't looking at my one piece; I was looking at tree after tree, row after row, orchard after orchard. One piece felt like enough, even more than enough. Yet I could not see as far as His fruit of Heaven reached. And each piece was exploding and overflowing with the sustenance of milk and yet still with the blessing, almost like dessert, of honey.

I looked over and the Lord was laughing. So then I started laughing. "Lord, I have often lived like You are Lord of the beans. I'm sorry." I looked to Him with tears streaming down my face and soul, but I still had a smile on my face that could not be tamed. "Lord, You are a milk-and-honey God! Life! *And* life *more* abundantly! Thank You!"

The honey still trickled from the corner of my mouth. Eating that one piece seemed like I had eaten for four. This one piece of fruit gave me more of a taste of Heaven than any knowledge I had ever gained. Oh, how the world needed *that* taste!

A PARADE OF LIFE

I began to worship the Lord, crying out in every part of me with praise! Suddenly, my new heavenly perspective had joined me down on earth. I was in the middle of an impoverished but crowded street. People lined the streets on each side like they were awaiting a parade of floats. Needs were apparent. Pain and hunger were blatant. The depth of longing

was unmanageable for my earthly capabilities. I was in the middle of the street and had to do something. “Lord, help me!” I cried out. I was surrounded by close family and friends who were sharing this worldly impossibility.

I looked up through the heavenly promises and perspective God had just shown me. When I looked back down at my hands, I had one large picnic basket. It was full of bread, the grapes of grace, and the fruit of Heaven that had just been overflowing in my mouth. I was so excited that I just—*started to dance!* I began twirling in praise and thanksgiving. I whirled around in circles from side to side of the street passing out the cherished heavenly provisions as quickly as my hands could grab them. I looked over and my family and friends began to do the same. Their hands were full and a celebration began to break out. Praise and worship filled the air like a celebratory rain quenching a drought. The atmosphere was electric.

The people who were once downtrodden and bound by poverty were now rejoicing. Their weeping turned to joy; their mourning turned to dancing. Our baskets kept refilling and multiplying. There was bread and fruit. Even new clothes and other provisions were suddenly pulled out like a rabbit from a hat, except this was many rabbits from many hats. The multiplication seemed to continue. The people were transformed into children of light. Now they could taste and see how good He is! I remember one man’s face, forever ingrained upon my internal sight. He was older and tattered from the years, his face dry and leathery, but he was wearing a giant smile. He let the juices of the milk and honey flow out the corners of his mouth when he erupted with joyful laughter. What joy! We started singing it together:

"Taste…

and see…

that the Lord…

is good to me!"

Over and over we continued to sing in one accord. The life juices of Heaven weren't just in the fruit anymore. They were in us! Our lives, even those once held by poverty itself, now overflowed with abundant life, joy, and the juices of Heaven. Everyone got a taste. Everyone was overflowing. I could taste the promised land just looking at the people who were partaking of this fruit. They were new, transformed, very different people. The people were alive, and their life was abundant! Heaven had invaded earth and I was overtaken. This was merely a taste—but a mighty good taste at that.

Looking up from what had truly become a parade of life, I found the Lord. Suddenly it was quiet, like He and I were in our own personal, vertical tunnel. "Thank Yooouuuuu!" I cried out, literally sobbing tears of overwhelming thankfulness. "Thank Yoouuuuu! I love You, Lord. I love You, Lord. I luu-uhh-uhh-vvv You, Lord." I continued to whisper out loud. Like yelling a whisper. Like Heaven on earth.

Right then the Lord caught me up to a higher place. I felt like a bird perched on a cloud. I had a true bird's eye view.

"Look there," the Lord said to me. "I want you to remember the way you gave life in that parade. The more life you gave, the more you had. It was not about the food or resources that you were passing out. You were giving life. From your closeness with Me, abiding in My abundant life, you took the

life that was Mine and declared it to the world around you. Needs will be met when you give life. Joy will return. As you give life, I will cause that life to manifest in people exceedingly and abundantly above all they could ask or think. I AM the Life Giver, and as you connect with Me and live life more abundantly yourself, you will pass out life more abundantly. The two go hand-in-hand. Live and give! Freely you have received; freely you must give.

"Down there," said the Lord, "are the empty places and the dry crevices that need to be filled, oiled, refreshed, and revived. I look upon the earth and see all that has been stolen, killed, and destroyed from and within My children. I look upon the world and see My lost sons and daughters, many of whom blame Me for what the thief is stealing from them. They are all My children! They have these empty places and dry crevices in their lives, much like the dry bones I showed Ezekiel. So I ask you the same question that I asked him: these who are so empty, so dry, can they live? You have tasted of My life more abundantly, and that is My promised land that is meant for all My kids. To those who are empty and those who are dry, I want them to come back into the life of My family.

"I have died for each of them. I gave My life so that you may give My life. I rose to new life, from the grave to resurrection life, and it is that new resurrection life I want you to give them. To give them life means to give them more than what you have in your hands. You must speak and declare life over them according to My storehouse of Heaven. You have done well to give what you can give. But I am calling you higher. I want you to give that which can only come from Me. You must give from My grace. More than what you have in

your life, you must give of what you have in Me. Take of what is Mine and declare it to the world. Take of what you have tasted of Me and speak it, show it, and prophesy it out loud over the empty places and dry crevices of My people. My kids must know what an abundant Father they have. They must know that My love for them reaches beyond the earthly standards of love. My love for them is one only a Father, a family, could give. It is unconditional and beyond religion. My love for them must be shown in a new way. They must know from you the love I gave to you.

"I left Heaven and became as a servant on earth to bring life and life more abundantly. I went from one land to another, no matter the cost. I want you, My Bride, to do the same. I have provided the life and love more abundantly, but who will wrap that love around the broken? Who will venture into the lands of the lost and become lost alongside them just to show them I love them? Who will speak words of life and love over those who are dry, spiritually parched, and wanting? Who will live in this world but give of Mine? Will you?

"Tap into the promises of Heaven and overflow on earth. Keep your head in the clouds, but your feet on the ground. Give life, and give it more abundantly. Give life according to who I AM. Give life from the oneness we share. Give life, give it again, and again, again, and again until that life reaches all My children, all nations, and every generation. You have tasted and seen My abundance. Now, live according to who I AM. I AM the Life Giver, and I have created you to be one, too. I love you."

I understood that I had a calling on earth, but that I had to keep coming back to this place. I had to keep tasting of this

heavenly fruit and distributing it on earth as it is in Heaven. The world needed more. More was clearly available. God's definition of life clearly included far more than mine. I had to give life on earth according to Life in Heaven. The parade of freedom God had allowed me to experience was the parade my life was to be wherever I go, whomever I am with. My life has to be a parade of life, carrying, declaring, and giving out the fruit and life of Heaven to the dry and empty places on earth. No longer could I give out man's version of God and of Heaven. If earth would experience more, I needed more. I needed the "more" parts of God. I needed to reveal Him as He truly is—abundant. Then it will become a family feast of life!