FOREWORD BY JOSHUA MILLS

BEN HUGHES

WHEN GOD BREAKS IN

SECRETS TO A LIFESTYLE OF TANGIBLE ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION BY LANA VAWSER

ENDORSEMENTS

When God Breaks In is a guidebook from Ben Hughes that gives you practical tools to bring you into the same kind of breakthrough that he has experienced himself. Ben is hungry for God and has been patient enough to see God break in on a biblical level. His book is relevant for you because Ben takes you on almost a step-by-step journey into his process. He is vulnerable through his own stories so that you can really see a living example of how the Spirit of God can pour into your life as well.

I have walked with Ben and his family for years and I am so glad he wrote this book because it will be a helpful guide to you for your own life and process of experiencing breakthrough.

SHAWN BOLZ
www.bolzministries.com
Author of *Translating God, God Secrets, Keys to Heavens Economy*
Host of *Exploring the Prophetic*

If I was to imagine a theme for a book written by Ben, it would be about encounters with God. Writing an endorsement, therefore, becomes easy. The book is the man, the man is the book. Ben reminds me of the storm chasers who chase tornadoes; although in Ben's case, he is chasing God, encounters with God, and leading others into the same. I enjoyed Ben's journey as he has guided us through these pages. He is a friend of God, a friend of mine, and a friend of so many who will experience their encounters as a result of his life poured out. Ben writes and ministers the way he lives, with passion and with joy. This is a great gift for all of us as we get an insight into how Ben traveled the journey to where he is and how

we can get there too. Read it hungry and stay hungry. I know the man and I commend the book to you.

PAUL MANWARING
Bethel Senior Leadership Team
www.paulmanwaring.com

No one I know is more qualified to write this book than Ben Hughes. The highest recommendation I can give is simply that in these pages you will encounter the "encounterable" Father who loves to reveal Himself in an unending stream of creative ways. Revival, angelic visitation, signs, wonders, miracles…as you read, get ready to be transformed! You'll never be the same.

LARRY TAYLOR
Oasis of Grace Church
Global Outreach International Ministries

It gives both Daniel and me great pleasure to endorse this book, *When God Breaks In,* by Ben Hughes. We have known Ben and Jodie Hughes for a number of years and have watched their consistent hunger and an insatiable passion for God. We thoroughly enjoyed reading this book from cover to cover. It took us on a wild journey of varied emotions, each story earmarked with the amazing goodness and provision of a lavish God. I would find myself welling up with tears, other times giggling and laughing, other times wanting to jump up and shout with joy as lives were changed and collided with Heaven. These pages are saturated in the glorious presence of God, each story stirring in us both a deeper longing and hunger to personally encounter more of God. What a blessing you are to the body of Christ, the first of many books.

DANIEL AND CHELSEA HAGEN
Founders and Overseers of Fire Church
Ministries, Melbourne, Australia
Director of Awakening Europe & Awakening Australia

Ben's friendship has had a profound impact on my life. His huge heart for God and people is truly evident in his writing. I know that this book will challenge, inspire, and encourage you in a way you never knew was

possible. Thank you so much, Ben, for sharing this with the world. You, my friend, are a true revivalist!

DAZ CHETTLE
Evangelist
Global Gospel Movement
www.globalgospel.online

According to the Bible, knowing God is experiential (John 17:3; Colossians 1:10). It is not enough to know about God in our heads. God invites us to really know all the facets of His Personhood (Philippians 3:10). Ben Hughes takes us into his amazing journey of how the Lord encountered him, revealing Himself at ever-deepening levels. This book is an invitation into the heart of God.

STACEY CAMPBELL
wesleystaceycampbell.com
shilohcompany.org
gtransformation.org

There are people you meet who the moment you look in their eyes you know beyond a shadow of a doubt have been with Jesus, seen His face, encountered His touch, and live with an insatiable desire to see the rest of the earth experience the same. This is Ben's life. He is living proof that God not only likes us, but that He is looking for people who will go beyond the veil and see the King of Glory in His majesty. The supernatural stories and encounters in the pages of this book are pregnant with hunger and impartation that will take you on your own journey to discover the God who longs to break through the mundane and meet you. We guarantee you will never be the same.

NATE and CHRISTY JOHNSTON
Everyday Revivalists

Ben Hughes' new book, *When God Breaks In*, is a brilliant road map to a lifestyle of greater intimacy with God. Read this book and receive fresh oil for breakthrough in every area of your life.

JERAME NELSON
Elisha Revolution

Author of *Burning Ones: Calling Forth a Generation of Dread Champions* and *Encountering Angels*

When God Breaks In is not only a book—it is an encounter waiting happen. If you desire greater faith, greater glory, greater encounters, and greater intimacy with God, this book is for you! Ben carries a passion and the fire of Holy Spirit that is truly contagious. I dare you to read this book, receive an impartation, and see the greater glory manifested in your life. I highly recommend this book—I highly recommend my good friend, Ben Hughes!

TONY KIM
Senior Leader of Renaissance International
Founder of Roar Collective
US Director of Harvest International Ministry (HIM)

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And that's what this book is! When someone shares their breakthrough, it opens a way for you to enter into your own breakthrough. Ben Hughes, in his book *When God Breaks In*, shares powerful God encounters that not only changed his life, but will change yours as well. As you read, let your faith be inspired that the God of no limitations is moving on your behalf. This book will propel you into your own divine encounters with God!

MATT SORGER
Author, *Prophetic Healing Minister*
mattsorger.com

I have had the privilege of knowing Ben, Jodie, and Keely Hughes for many years. They are truly sold out to God with all their hearts, and their passion for revival and worship is second to none. It's an honor to endorse Ben's new book, *When God Breaks In*. The down-to-earth style it's written in makes it easy to receive the many nuggets of deep truth within its pages. Ben's story will inspire you; but most of all, his real-life encounters of the supernatural that have been the hallmark of his journey, will impart hunger to you. Ben and Jodie continue to see moves of God in their ministry, and I am honored to have played a part in their journey and to sit and drink deeply myself of the waters of revival life that flow through them. I highly recommend this book to you.

CHRIS HARVEY
Prophetic Evangelist

When God Breaks In will inspire you to break through to the next level in your spiritual walk. Ben Hughes has been my dear friend for many years now and I've witnessed his journey in life at close quarters. Without a doubt, Ben is a solid, mature believer who has fought the good fight of faith. Reading about his experiences in God is very refreshing to me. One of many experiences that Ben has written about in this book, which I especially relate to, is about how God commissioned his ministry with a "wakey wakey angel" as mentioned in Zechariah 4:1. I too have had this experience. I encourage you to buy two copies of this book; one for yourself and one for a friend. Ben, it is an honor to have you as part of my spiritual family.

ADAM F. THOMPSON
Prophetic Minister and International Author
www.voiceoffireministries.org

WHEN GOD BREAKS IN

SECRETS TO A LIFESTYLE OF
TANGIBLE ENCOUNTERS
WITH GOD

BEN HUGHES

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DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.
P.O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310
"Promoting Inspired Lives."

This book and all other Destiny Image and Destiny Image Fiction books are available at Christian bookstores and distributors worldwide.

Cover design by Eileen Rockwell
Interior design by Terry Clifton

For more information on foreign distributors, call 717-532-3040.
Reach us on the Internet: www.destinyimage.com.

ISBN 13 TP: 978-0-7684-5040-8
ISBN 13 eBook: 978-0-7684-5041-5
ISBN 13 HC: 978-0-7684-5043-9
ISBN 13 LP: 978-0-7684-5042-2

For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 / 23 22 21 20 19

DEDICATION

To my Jesus. Thank You for breaking into my life, again and again. It’s all about You.

And to my girls, Jodie and Keely. I love you with all my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my wife, Jodie, daughter Keely, and my spiritual daughter Lauren Darlington. You have been elbow to elbow in the trenches with me on this book, the whole way through. Thank you so much for your hard work, contribution, love, and for putting up with me through this process.

Thank you John and Jenny Evans and Larry and Carol Taylor for your support, wisdom, love, and generosity.

Thank you to Larry Sparks and everyone at Destiny Image Publishers, especially Tina Pugh, for really going above and beyond and making this an enjoyable journey.

Thank you to Joshua Mills and Lana Vawser who wrote the Foreword and Introduction. I'm so grateful for your amazing contributions and also so very thankful for your friendship.

Thank you to the many people mentioned in the pages of this book, and those who aren't, who played a part in my journey.

Thank you to all our family and friends, those who have prayed, loved, and supported us.

I am especially grateful to everyone who was involved with Summer Harvest, led by Youth For Christ in New Zealand all those years ago. From Bill Subritzky, whose altar call I responded to, Ian Grant who led the organization, through to every last team member and volunteer.

My fruit is your fruit.

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FOREWORD

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, JANET AND I MET BEN HUGHES AND HIS family, and we fell in love with them. Just like the psalmist David, they had a heart after God and were true worshippers of the Father who pursued His divine presence in all that they did. We had the great joy and privilege of ministering with them on a nationwide tour throughout Australia and then again later during the outpouring of God that happened on the Sunshine Coast. We always found these times to be encouraging, faith-building, and very supernatural!

Now we are delighted to see the inside story put into print for the first time. *When God Breaks In* recounts the struggles and the triumphs, step by step, that brought Ben to this point of ministry. This book provides a great look at what it means to be chosen, called, and determined to fulfill the plan of God for your life through encounters with Him. It will challenge you and stretch you to dream more, see more, reach farther, and step out onto the invisible waters of faith.

The many individuals who have been blessed through their ministry in many nations or through what has come to be called The Pineapple Revival on the Sunshine Coast of Australia will be thrilled at the detail of the exciting journey God has taken Ben and his family and is revealed in this book. And for those who haven't yet had the privilege of making this couple's acquaintance or of being in their ministry, you are in for a real treat. Ben tells it like it is, not hiding anything. His story is real, authentic, and moving. This is what has made Ben and Jodie Hughes champions of

something great in the Spirit and willing to flow with all that God is doing today all around the world.

As you read the pages of this book, open your heart and allow the glory to reveal Himself to you in a greater way. My prayer is that both the prophetic realm and the glory realm will become more visible for you. We recommend this book and encourage you to yield yourself for that divine moment *When God Breaks In*.

JOSHUA MILLS
INTERNATIONAL GLORY MINISTRIES
LONDON, CANADA AND PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA
WWW.JOSHUAMILLS.COM

PREFACE

AS I WRITE, I AM SITTING IN A HOTEL ROOM ON THE SAME street, The Esplanade, and only a couple of hundred meters (about 650 feet) from where I was born forty years ago. We are in beautiful Cairns in Far North Queensland, Australia. Jodie, my wife, and I have just spent the weekend here ministering. And although we have ministered all over Australia, including many regional and rural "outback" towns and centers, this is the first time we have ministered here in the city of my birth.

Also, this month marks exactly twenty-five years ago when I had the first and most significant God-encounter of my life. Twenty-five years ago, in a woolshed in the far north of New Zealand, I gave my life to Jesus and was truly born again.

Last month the Lord spoke to me while we were visiting Bethel Church in Redding, California, for the Fall Leaders Advance, to write a book about my encounters with Him. It was a very clear "rhema word" moment. The very next week we were visiting our friends, Jerame and Miranda Nelson, at the Fire and Glory Outpouring in San Diego. While there, Miranda prophesied over Jodie, Keely, and me. She specifically said to me, "I saw you writing a book…a compilation of stories and testimonies that's going to bring acceleration, hope, healing, and freedom into people's lives.…" Wow! What a confirmation to what God had spoken to me just the week before.

Then, after returning home from a month-long ministry trip in the United States, the Holy Spirit spoke to me. I was to look up a prophetic

word that another dear friend of ours, Lana Vawser, had sent me some months prior. I had completely forgotten about the content of the word she gave that day, so I was blown away to read:

> I also saw you sitting with the Lord and He opened a book with you and it was a book recording all the encounters you have had with Him; and He was reading the encounters with you and saying, "Oh remember this? Remember when I showed you this and you encountered Me in this way? Remember when I showed you this about Me?" And there was such joy in the meditating upon encounters you have had with Him in the past…

Wow again! I've had a lot of wow moments with the Lord. I had no recollection of what that word had said…and it was once again a sweet retrospective confirmation that the Lord was calling me to write this book. Of course when I got this word, it also never occurred to me that the book the Lord was sitting reading with me, was one that I had written myself!

So this is that book…a book of encounters that I have had with the Lord that have significantly impacted and changed my life. There are also smatterings of some of my favorite miracles and "impossible moments" that we have experienced.

The Bible is full of what might otherwise be considered crazy signs and wonders. From gold coins appearing in the mouth of a fish, to floating axe heads, supernatural instant transportation from one city to another, walking on water, angels appearing and baking, oil jars that never run dry, talking donkeys, sticks turning into snakes, and so, so many more—and this isn't even including all the people being miraculously healed and raised from the dead!

In the context of the Bible, these signs and wonders from God are sometimes easy to accept, but what happens when supernatural occurrences happen to us today? The Bible, of course, tells the stories of over 4,000 years of ordinary people like you and me having everyday encounters with a supernatural God! If Christianity is anything, it is most definitely supernatural!

I sincerely pray that this book inspires you, makes you laugh, and provokes you to hunger and pursue the Lover of our souls like never before. Above all I pray that you, even right now as you read, would have powerful life-changing encounters with His love, power, and presence.

Go ahead…right now…close your eyes, put your hands out and say, "Come, Holy Spirit." After all, our God is encounterable—and as we declare to our church and congregations the world over, "If His glory is available to us, why would we pursue anything but!"

Enjoy and be blessed!

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

INTRODUCTION

THIS AMAZING BOOK BY MY FRIEND BEN HUGHES IS TITLED perfectly—*When God Breaks In*. You may be wondering why I say that. Well, it's because that is the God of the Bible. That is the Jesus I know. The God who bends down. The God who reaches in. The God who invites. The God who embraces. The God of John 3:16 (NIV): *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

God is the God of encounter. His heart is for you and me to walk daily in the place of encounter with Him, with His heart, His Word, and the reality of the supernatural. To see the reality of Heaven and who He is manifest in our lives.

Throughout Scripture, time and time again there are examples of the way God breaks into people's lives. The God of the suddenly! The God of the unexpected! The God of power! The God of surprise! The God who loves to reveal His nature, His love, His power, and His Word to His people.

As I sat reading the pages of *When God Breaks In*, my heart was filled with awe at the stunning ways that He manifests Himself to us, for us, and through us. I sipped my coffee with my eyes falling upon these truths that Ben has so clearly articulated. The God who breaks in and breaks through in our everyday lives. The God who hears the cries of His people, the God who sees the need for fuel to get from one place to the next to preach His

Word and minister and then suddenly shows up with provision. The God who manifests Himself "as we go about our daily lives," where He is not some "far off" God who, if you get things right or pray the right prayer, He shows up. He's the God who meets us where we are. He's the God who meets us on our journey of life and leaves us never the same.

As I read page after page of this wonderful book that thought continued to fill my head, "Look for Him everywhere," and that's something that I have lived my life by. Every day, I am looking for Him. Every day my heart is leaning in and looking for His interaction, His movement, His hand, His voice, His invitation for all to know Him more and partner with Him in all He is doing on earth to see His name glorified, to see His Kingdom extended and established and to see many come to know Him. The encounters that Ben shares are incredibly powerful, full of impartation and the activation of faith. Each of his encounters opens up this invitation from the heart of God to the reader that says, "This is available to you because I am the God of encounter."

The God of encounter who manifests Himself and situations suddenly turn around. The God of encounter who turns lives around in a moment. The God of encounter who breaks chains that have held us, whether it's for a few months or decades. The God who when He shows up *everything* changes. The God of encounter who brings transformation. The God of hope who breathes life, encouragement, healing, refreshment, fresh perspective, and revelation into even the hardest of situations. The God of comfort who comforts us in our pain and strengthens us in our weakness.

When He shows up, when the supernatural realm breaks into our earthly realm, however He chooses as we walk with Him, it creates a hunger in us to know Him more. The more we see Him, the hungrier we get. The more we hear His voice, the more desperate we are to live in that place of Matthew 4:4 (NIV): *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

There is a fire on these pages that will fuel your hunger for Him, it will fuel your expectation of faith to see Him show up, break in and break through for you. The power of testimony contained in this book will impart a fresh hunger to you and position you to see the God of the unexpected move unexpectedly.

As I sit here pondering our beautiful Jesus, my heart is filled with awe at who He is and my mind is darting from story to story in Scripture of how the Lord reveals Himself to people. I am filled with wonder that the King of the universe, the Lord Almighty revealed Himself to me in the person and life of Jesus Christ and continues to reveal Himself to me daily through His Word and the fun ways He chooses to show up—and it's all for one reason first and foremost, that I may know Him and know His heart. That you may know His heart and His nature, daily. That you would be marked by Him, His love, His goodness and His nature, day after day after day and be fully awake and fully aware of who He is and who you are in Him.

"He is within me—I am his garden of delight. I have him fully and now he fully has me!" (Song of Songs 6:3 TPT). To move with Him as one. To be completely abandoned to Him. The God of encounter.

Many, many years ago I was an intern children's ministry pastor working for a local church and I was having powerful encounters with God through dreams, visions, and through feeling "electricity" running through my body at times as I prayed and worshipped. Although I didn't understand what was happening, I was experiencing love, peace, and joy unlike anything I had ever experienced. I remember being so hungry for encounters with Jesus, to know Him so deeply, that I would do anything or go anywhere He led me.

So here I am one afternoon in a sports arena as we were hosting a children's school holiday program, and I'm watching the kids play basketball. When all of a sudden, suddenly out of nowhere a vision opens up before my eyes. I see this basketball stadium in the vision and all the lights go out. Then from the left-hand side of the stadium a spotlight appears and there I see Jesus. He walks into the middle of the room wearing a tuxedo. Another spotlight then appears on the right-hand side of the stadium and I see myself dressed as a bride. I meet Him in the middle.

Jesus looks at me, His eyes full of fire and full of love, and I'm mesmerized by His gaze. He whispers, "Don't look away! Let's dance." I remember thinking, *I don't know the steps*, and a knowing surrounded me that I didn't have to know where to place my feet, as long as I kept my eyes locked on His and rested into His arms, He would lead me.

We began to dance all around the stadium. Such joy. Such love. Such peace. Such ease. In that moment, nothing else in the world mattered. In that moment, I knew I was truly loved not for what I could do for Him, but because of who I was to Him, because I was His. The delight in His eyes filled my heart will joy and love—and in that moment, I was marked for life.

I was marked by His eyes of love and delight. I was marked by His smile of approval and acceptance. I was marked by His embrace that said, "I am holding you and protecting you." I was marked by His leading, that He was taking care of me and I didn't need to "work it all out" to get the dance right, but to rest in Him and His love.

That day, changed my life forever.

That's what happens when we encounter the God who breaks in. That's what happens when we encounter Almighty God, the God of love, the God of power, the God of hope, the God of healing, the God of deliverance, the God of freedom, the God of provision.

Encountering Him will leave you never the same.

The powerful encounters Ben shares from the smallest of whispers he heard, to the angel showing up in his bedroom, to the manifestation of supernatural rain, and so much more, left Ben marked forever. Left him changed. Ruined for the ordinary and hungry for more.

You will be marked by God and the impartation contained in these pages as a fresh invitation is placed before you to encounter God in deeper ways.

When God breaks in, everything changes.

LANA VAWSER
Author, *The Prophetic Voice of God*

Chapter 1

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

South Africa, March 2018

“In a moment, I am going to count to three, and on three, if you want to say YES to Him today, I want you to raise your hand….”

On “Three,” one of the most wonderful experiences of my life happened —about 1,000 teenage boys in a public high school in South Africa, raised their hands and then stood to give their lives to Jesus. This happened only two weeks ago—at the time of writing—and I am still in tears thinking about it.

I had fifteen minutes to speak that day, so I shared my testimony and preached the gospel with all my heart. I shared one particular severe “bashing” that I received at school when I was 11 years old that left me with fractured cheekbones. Seeing almost the entire high school, plus the headmaster, give their lives to Jesus, made that beating and every trial and difficult season that I experienced more than worth it.

A moment exactly like what happened that day in March 2018 happened to me twenty-seven years ago. I have learned in the past twenty-five-plus years of ministry that souls are their own reward. It was also an incredible and beautiful display of the redemptive power of God to take what can be the worst of our experiences and make something so beautiful from them. This is my story and what led to that moment twenty-seven years ago that changed my life forever.

Although I grew up almost completely unchurched and in a non-Christian home, there has never been a time in my life when I didn't believe in God. In fact, my belief in God has always been so firm that I strongly defended the existence of Santa Claus in the school playground one day by telling one "enlightened" kid, "If you don't believe in Santa, you don't believe in God!" It's not that I believed Santa and God were one and the same, it is rather that my belief in God was so certain that it was, in fact, the standard for all belief. It also reflected my five-year-old faith in Santa, who had delivered pretty well on his promises up to that point in my life!

I remember another time, at the age of 8, riding with my mum along the Great South Road in South Auckland, New Zealand, not far from where I grew up. I was in the passenger seat and my mum was driving. She turned to me and asked, "Do you believe in God, Ben?" My response was immediate and just as emphatic, "Of course I do! How else did we get here?!" My 8-year-old mind had already well considered the origins of life and the meaning of the universe and had come to the only logical and possible conclusion that still holds as much water today: God's existence was a certainty and any such questioning or doubt otherwise was pretty much foolishness.

Any account of my early experience and exposure to Jesus and Christianity, would not be complete without the mention of one of the most powerful forces in all the universe—a praying grandmother! From the youngest age I remember, Nana said bedtime prayers with me every night that she was visiting or we were visiting with her: "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon this little child, and keep me safe to morning light, in Jesus' name, Amen."

My grandmother has prayed for me, and our entire family, my whole life, and continues to do so to this day. In fact, just in writing this, I felt

prompted to text her and thank her! My text:

> Hello Nana, how are you? I was just thinking about you and wanted to tell you that I love you so much and am so grateful for every prayer you have ever prayed for me. Right now I am in the middle of writing a book and was just writing about the prayers you prayed with me when I was young, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild…” as well as those few times you took me to Sunday School when I was very small. Nana, I have seen literally thousands and thousands of people saved, healed, and delivered around the world, and I know much of that is fruit of the early prayers you prayed with me and have continued to do so throughout my life. Thank you, Nana!!! Your fruit and reward that await you someday in Heaven is great. All my love and blessings, Ben

Her reply:

> Dear Ben, I didn’t know I had a scribe for a grandson. I wish you well and the Lord will give you much inspiration with your book. I have had you very much on my heart lately and I feel that the Lord is trying to reveal something to you. I love you heaps xx

So apart from Nana and Grandad taking me to Sunday School a couple of times as a young child, I did not grow up in church or around Christians.

When remembering my childhood, two very different and separate experiences come to mind. On one hand, I have wonderful memories of a childhood with my family. My cousins lived close by and we grew up with long New Zealand summer evenings, having many adventures exploring the beautiful reserves and beaches where we lived, playing spotlight, bull rush, and being called home for dinner only when the sun finally set. It was glorious!

On the other hand, however, I have terrible memories of a childhood being constantly bullied at school and experiencing rejection and social exclusion. My first memory of being bullied was when I was that Santa-defending, 5-year-old little boy. A classmate was climbing up a pole at

morning teatime recess, and I thought I would give him a helping hand and tried to push him up the pole a bit. Well, he jumped down off that pole and pushed me over, grazing my knees and elbows on the rough concrete playground. But what was worse, I spilled all my baking-paper-wrapped krispy cookies all over the ground. I'm pretty sure I cried, from both the hurt, shock, and, of course, the grief of my lost snack!

Unfortunately, being beaten up quickly became a regular part of my school life and experience. I can remember literally being greeted day after day throughout my school years with a punch in the face or in the stomach. At the same time as being bullied, I was also really good at rugby and played all the way through my childhood. I remember many occasions when ten, twenty, even thirty kids would chase me around the schoolyard, completely unprovoked, to beat me up. This lasted for some time, until I used my rugby skills to duck, sidestep, fend off, and run for my life.

Looking back, the scene would probably have been like watching something on the Discovery Channel, where eventually even the most concerted and nimble attempts of escape come to an inevitable sad end. Like the innocent prey, I would fall down from exhaustion and then it would be "Stacks on!" I would get pummeled and mercilessly punched and kicked.

While most of these beatings happened on the school playground or before and after school, the worst of them actually happened in the classroom.

One day when I was 11 years old, the teacher left our classroom for about fifteen to twenty minutes. During that time, a few of the bigger and tougher kids in the class started pushing me and another boy into each other, trying to make us have a fight. The other boy was the captain of my rugby team and had been for some years; his father was the coach. Well, there was no way I was going to fight him, as he was my captain! However, somehow my head came down and I was held, bent over at the waist. It was then that my captain uppercut punched me in the face, eleven times. I don't know why I counted, perhaps it was just the shock that he was actually doing this to me, but it was eleven times.

As I reread this chapter, getting ready to send this manuscript to the publisher, suddenly tears flowed as if for the first time. It hit me that I was

11 years old and I got hit eleven times. Somehow I knew that, but never knew why I counted. One of the things that my wife, Jodie, and I are known for is how God speaks to us through numbers. And 11/11 has always meant *resurrection* to us!

God spoke to me many years ago about the Scripture verse John 11:11 (NIV) when Jesus said, *"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."* This story of being beaten in the classroom and bashed eleven times at 11 years old was the very story that I shared in South Africa that led to 1,000-plus boys being saved. God took my story and truly brought an 11/11 moment out of it—of *resurrection life!*

I had been punched in the face many times before, but never like this. My face immediately swelled up terribly, my eyes were blackened, and I was bleeding. On top of that, I was in shock and just couldn't believe that he had turned on me like that. The beating was so bad that my cheekbones had been fractured and I needed to have a consultation with a plastic surgeon. Thankfully, the doctor said that the bones would heal naturally without surgery.

Being bullied, rejected, betrayed, and excluded became somewhat of a pattern of life for me, one that followed me from school to school. I clearly remember one day walking around our school playground during a break and thinking to myself, *Out of a thousand kids in this school, I have no one to talk to*.

Later, at the age of 14, we moved from South Auckland, which was notoriously violent, one hour north to the beautiful beaches of the Hibiscus Coast. There I joined the local Surf Lifesaving Club and very quickly became involved in all the club activities and started spending whole weekends there, staying in the bunk rooms. On the surface it looked like I was part of an almost Boy Scout-like organization, and my parents were happy I had found something that I enjoyed and finally felt part of a community.

For the most part, that's what it was. However, the club had a very seedy culture of partying and heavy drinking, including very much encouraging underage drinking. I don't recall ever paying for a drink, as all night other clubbies would buy me drink after drink. One night I remember them giving me a whole jug (twelve shots) of tequila and orange juice. Of

course, I desperately wanted to fit in and be accepted, so, needless to say, I spent every weekend getting very, very drunk and consequently very, very sick. At only 14 years old I was binge drinking and abusing alcohol.

The consequences of this behavior peaked when, at the age of 15, I traveled away to the regional surf-lifesaving championships. This was the first time I had traveled away by myself unsupervised directly by an adult. I'm sure I had given my parents the impression that I was supervised and was traveling with the whole club, who at this point were still viewed as "responsible" surf lifesavers.

Well, the first night I drank so much alcohol that I literally lost my sight. Everything went black and I could not see anything. Not too long after, I passed out. The next day I woke up in the early afternoon, only to discover I had slept through all the events that I was there to compete in! I knew something was very wrong, and I felt the shame of what I had done. On the other hand, within this club, drunkenness was considered something to be proud of; and missing my events because of it, well, that was just "expert level."

Ultimately and ironically, it was this "pride" and corresponding bragging rights that came with my foolishness that was the precursor to my being delivered completely out of this lifestyle and certain destructive future that lay ahead of me. I am always astounded by God's willingness and ability to take the very thing that was meant for our harm and destruction and turn it into a place of victory and purpose!

To a 15-year-old kid, desperate for acceptance, attention, and affirmation, what good were all these bragging rights unless I expressed them?! I had to tell someone, so I wrote a letter to one of my favorite surf-lifesaving coaches, giving a full, detailed description of all that had taken place that night at Waipu Cove in New Zealand's north.

However, I didn't send it—I left it in my high school English folder. I'm sure you are starting to get an idea of what happened next. One day I came home from school and to my total shock and horror found my mother reading this letter that I wrote. She had been looking through my English folder at all my work and discovered it. Well, as you can imagine, that was a dark night for me, and of course for Mum and Dad, learning all I had been up to. They immediately grounded me for three months, and I mean

grounded! I did nothing for three months except go to school and go straight home.

Summer Harvest

The three months of being grounded was coming to an end and with it the end of our school year. In New Zealand and Australia, our school year runs the same as the calendar year. I had no social interaction or fun for what felt like forever. So when the opportunity came up for me to go to a camp over the Christmas holidays that involved 1,500 young people and plenty of surfing, I jumped at it—and thankfully my parents agreed to let me go.

The camp was called Summer Harvest and was run by a Christian organization, Youth For Christ (YFC). The camp took place every year for a week over the New Year's holiday on a large private farm owned by one of New Zealand's Kingdom Generals, Bill Subritzky. Fifteen hundred young people from 15-25 years old came from all over New Zealand to go surfing all day. At night we all attended "rallies" held in a large woolshed that was converted to a meeting place for the camp each year. Everyone sat on large semicircles of hay bales. Even now as I write, I remember with great affection, the smell of the hay and dust, mixed with the summer sun, sand, and salt and the crowds of young people having the time of their lives!

Right at the beginning of camp, after a really fun day surfing, hurling down the side of grassy hills on go-carts, surprisingly enjoying the camp food and everything else about camp life, I found myself in the middle of this rally listening to Bill Subritzky preach the gospel. I began to hear about the love and power of God, that He loved me, died for me, and had a plan, a hope, and a future for my life. I had known *about* Jesus my whole life, but I had never *known* Jesus or even that I could know Him in the way that this preacher described that I could. When he gave an invitation to "Raise your hand if you want to give your life to Jesus and become a Christian," with my heart pounding out of my chest, I thrust my hand up in a decision that would forever shape and change my life, my future, and my eternal destiny.

Next, we were invited to go down to the front of the meeting room and pray a prayer. Many young people streamed forward that night, but it may as well have just been me. As I stood there and prayed a prayer, confessing

that I believed Jesus died on the Cross in my place and rose again from the dead, repenting and receiving forgiveness for all of my sins, and making Jesus Lord of my life, I had my first and most significant encounter with the love and power of God.

It's hard to describe exactly what happened that night, but standing at the front of that woolshed, I suddenly felt the love of God flood through every part of my being. I felt the warm presence of God surround me—in me and on me. All of a sudden, all of the rejection, the pain, the beatings, and what people thought of me, no longer mattered—the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords, the God of the universe, loves me, died for me, *chose* me, and had a plan for my life that was full of hope and a prosperous future. Wow!

That night, December 28, 1991, in a woolshed in New Zealand's beautiful North, I was truly born again!

The next day I woke up literally a different person. In the Bible Jesus talks about being born again (John 3:1-21). Well let me tell you, I was truly born again! I felt light, free, and like I could fly! I was convinced that if someone just opened the zip on my tent and gave me a little push, I was just going to fly right on out of there. I really felt like Peter Pan—without the tights! I also felt like I had grown a foot taller overnight. I stood straighter and was full of confidence and joy.

The Bible also tells us that when Paul had his Road to Damascus God-encounter that "*something like scales fell from* [his] *eyes…*" (Acts 9:18 NIV). Well that was exactly what it was like for me, like someone had peeled the plastic off my eyes, just like off a new mobile phone. Everything was suddenly bright, shiny, clean and clear, like the whole world had been born again along with me. Wow!

This Is Real!

The next morning, we were told that there was a special, extra meeting in the woolshed at 10 a.m. for anyone who wanted to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I had no idea what that meant, I just knew that I wanted it!

So I went to the meeting and almost immediately, I found myself in the middle of another encounter with God. I went forward to be baptized in the

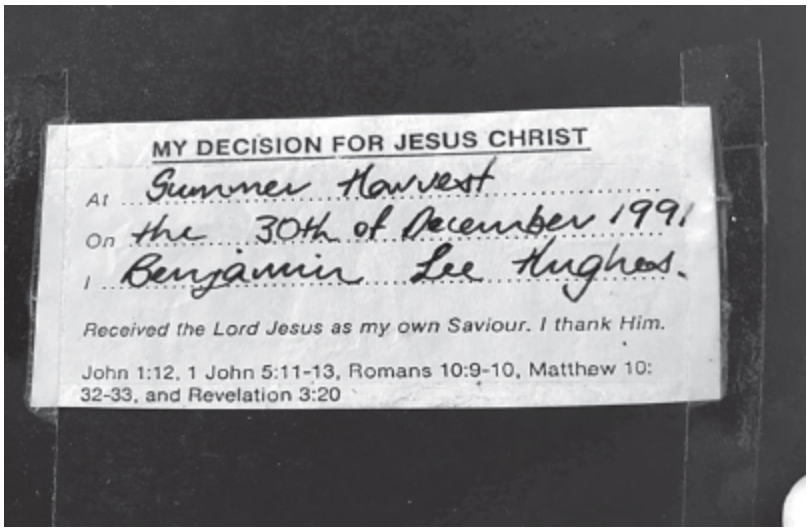
Holy Spirit and I felt His presence and power fill my whole body, while at the same time I felt an intense peace that I had never experienced before. I felt like I was hovering a couple of feet off the ground. Then I started to speak in tongues. It was just two or three different sounds to start with, but they were flowing out of me. What happened next has truly impacted my life and ministry profoundly.

Bill Subritzky, who carried a powerful ministry of signs, wonders, miracles, and deliverance, started to flow in what the Bible calls the word of knowledge. He was calling out details about people's lives as God spoke them to him—people's names, addresses, parent's names, birthdays, etc., and then prophesying over them. I was sitting there completely gobsmacked! But we were just getting started.

He then started to break curses off of people en masse. Before I knew it, about 1,000 young people were getting hit by the power of God, and many were getting delivered from demons. Every kind of manifestation you can imagine, and some that you can't, was happening all around me. People were screaming, shrieking, vomiting, climbing poles, shaking and thrashing violently. Like I said, all kinds of things, and all my 15-year-old, saved-twelve-hours, completely unexposed, unchurched self could think was, *WOW! THIS. IS. REAL*.

I thought, in my 15-year-old boy talk, *Demons are getting their butts kicked by angels all over this building!* What was happening filled me with such faith that God was indeed powerful and this is what Christianity was all about. Only minutes earlier I had heard the preacher quote Acts 1:8 *"You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you!"* Then I immediately saw a demonstration of that power!

The next day I got up and I shared my testimony, the one you have just read about, to the entire camp of 1,500 young people. I knew from that day forward what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I wanted the whole world to experience this love, freedom, and power that I had just experienced. The whole world needed to hear about Jesus, that He loved them, died for them, chose them, had the power to set them free and heal them, and to be born again like I was.



If you have just read through this chapter and have never given your life to Jesus and you want to now say yes to Him, you can do so right now!

Just like I said to those young people and staff at the high school in South Africa, this decision completely changed my life twenty-seven years ago and it will change yours forever right now too!

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I encourage you to pray the following prayer, right now. Read it out loud, and mean it from your heart.

Dear Jesus,

I choose right now to give You my life.

Come and live inside me.

I want to be born again!

I believe and thank You that You died on the Cross for me and were resurrected from the dead.

I repent from all my sins and ask You to please forgive me!

Thank You for Your forgiveness.

Thank You that according to the Bible I am now a new creation.

The old has gone and the new has come!

Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to live every day of my life for You.

Thank You, Jesus!

AMEN!

If you just prayed this prayer and meant it from your heart, then I want to be the first to welcome you to the family of God! The Bible says that *"there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15:10 NIV). So, there is a party going on right now in Heaven in your honor!

I want to encourage you to do a couple of things:

1. We would love to hear from you, connect with you, and encourage you. Please go to our website www.pouritout.org/yes and let us know that you made this decision.
2. Tell someone what you have just done! Find someone you can trust to be encouraging and supportive and tell that person that you have become a Christian and have given your life to Jesus.
3. Start reading the Bible—God's Word. A great place to start is the book of John in the New Testament. (Look it up in the Contents). Even just reading it for a few minutes every day is very helpful!
4. Pray! Prayer is just talking to God. It doesn't require any fancy language or words, just talk to Him like a friend or a father. Ask Him questions, and then listen. Many people find keeping a prayer journal really helpful. Write prayers in the journal, and then stop and listen… God will speak, often in a still, small voice. Then simply write what you hear Him say.
5. Keep reading this book! I think, and pray, that you will be really encouraged and inspired by the amazing stories I have to share with you.

Chapter 2

WAVES OF ANOINTING

THREE YEARS AFTER MY DRAMATIC CONVERSION EXPERIENCE at 18 years old, I graduated high school and was really praying about what God wanted me to do next. I knew that I wanted to serve God, but I didn't know exactly where or how.

One day I found myself at Auckland International Airport, seeing a friend off who was going to Brazil for a year in a student exchange program. I had no ride home from the airport but bumped into a guy called Jarrod who I recognized from the camp where I was saved. We didn't know each other, but he recognized me too, and so we said hello and started talking. As it turns out, he lived in the direction where I was headed, so he offered to give me a ride.

We set off from the airport that day in an old red Fiat Uno, a small Italian car, that as it turned out, he had just bought that day. As we were on the motorway heading across the beautiful Auckland Harbour Bridge, in an all too typical Auckland fashion, it started to rain…hard! That's when we discovered that the window wipers didn't work on this newly purchased little car. Pulling over in the middle of the bridge was not an option, and so there was only one thing to do. I wound down the window, leaned out across the windshield, and manually pulled and pushed the wipers back and

forth so Jarrod could see—all the while traveling 100 kms an hour (60 mph) in pouring rain, with a guy I had met one hour earlier.

Brings a big smile to my face to this day. Teenage adventure at its best! Well, I didn't make it home that day, but instead ended up staying at my new friend's house for the next three days.

Great Adventures Awaited

Conversation led to what I was going to do now that I had finished school. Jarrod told me he had just finished a school with Youth With A Mission (YWAM). As he spoke of the great adventures he had with the Lord in India and around New Zealand, excitement bubbled up in my heart! He said that a new school was starting in just thirteen days. Maybe I could go? The only problem—the school cost around $6,000, and all I had was $1,300, as I had just sold my bright blue VW Beetle, which explains why I didn't have a ride home from the airport.

"No worries," he said, "let's give YWAM a call." Apparently, on occasion, YWAM was open to students starting without the full fees, and trusting for God to provide during the duration of the school. And so we called. After a great conversation with the school director, telling of my situation and my strong desire to attend the school, he told me that he would pray about it with the staff and leaders and call me the next day.

Well, to my delight, he called as promised and told me that they had all really felt like I was meant to come to the school, and that they would be trusting God that He would provide the full fees for me. So that was it—twelve days later I left home and went off to Youth With A Mission, following God's leading, at just 18 years old.

On the first day of my Discipleship Training School (DTS), YWAM's best known training program, a cute Aussie blonde girl came bouncing up and introduced herself. Her name was Jodie! We instantly hit it off and became great friends. As we chatted, it turned out that she had also only applied thirteen days before the school started. But she had to quit her job and moved to New Zealand from Sydney, Australia, during that same time. Most people spend months, and often years, planning, preparing, and saving to be part of YWAM, but we had both suddenly made the decision with

only thirteen days' notice! SPOILER ALERT! It turned out that Jodie and I were a perfect match in many ways—and three years later, we were married!

My time with YWAM was incredibly life impacting and so foundational for the rest of my ministry life and life in general. I had many significant encounters during my time there, but there was one that I remember in particular that I really want to share with you.

The Anointing

One night, a man by the name of Trevor Yaxley came to teach and minister to our small class of seventeen students who were from all around the world. Trevor Yaxley, along with his wife, Jan, who is also an incredible minister and person, was the leader of a significant ministry in New Zealand called Lifeway Ministries. I had met Trevor before, as he would come and minister at the church I attended before coming to YWAM. I was good friends with the senior pastor's son, so I would often be at his house after church on Sundays, and I remember Trevor being back there for lunch also. I was so blessed during that time to glean from many great men and women of God, like Trevor Yaxley, Roberts Liardon, and others, in an informal living room-type environment.

I'll never forget the night that Trevor ministered to us in that small classroom on a remote farm in Maungaturoto, New Zealand, at YWAM's Oakridge Base. I can't remember exactly what Trevor was saying, but I do know he was teaching that week on integrity. As he spoke, I felt tangible waves of anointing coming off of him and hitting me. The waves were thick, heavy, and so powerful that I couldn't contain what I was feeling. I was overcome by the presence of God. My eyes were full of tears, my breathing heavy and labored, as wave after wave of the manifest presence, power and love of God hit and washed over me. I had never experienced anything like that before—it was pure ecstasy to my soul, but almost more than I could handle. I remember so clearly that not only was I having a powerful encounter with the presence of God, but these waves were coming directly from Trevor.

I had experienced the presence of God prior to this night, and powerfully, but never before had I so tangibly experienced the anointing emanating from a person. This wasn't just the presence of God in a room, it was the anointing of the Holy Spirit on a man, coming off of him and hitting me with an almost violent force.

To this day, it's hard for me to think of many other people through which I have experienced that level of anointing. There was something so special of the Lord that Trevor Yaxley was carrying. I also will never forget his eyes. Jodie and I have often spoken about his eyes. They carried something of eternity in them and when he looked at me, it felt like he was just looking straight into my soul, nothing was hidden.

I hadn't seen any man with eyes like that again until I met David Hogan a couple of years ago when we had the great privilege of hosting him at the Pineapple Revival in Australia. I did, however, have an encounter many years later with the true Source of those eyes…the Lord Jesus Himself. I saw His fiery eyes and I was thrown back, but that's a whole other chapter. I know now it was the eyes of the Lord looking right through Trevor, and indeed David Hogan.

A Valuable Lesson

I learned a really valuable lesson that night—that as ministers, as sons and daughters of God, we can carry the anointing of the Holy Spirit in such a way that it physically, emotionally, and spiritually can impact the lives of those around us, and I wanted to be one of those carriers!

In Luke chapter 4, after Jesus had overcome all the temptation of satan, He came out of the wilderness, returning in the power of the Spirit. I don't know about you, but I imagine He was glowing with the fire of God! Jesus then went into the synagogue, as was His custom every sabbath—interesting to note that Jesus went to "church" every week. He picked up the book of Isaiah, which was really, of course, a scroll, and read these powerful words:

> ***The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me****, because He has* ***anointed*** *Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery*

> *of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed* (Luke 4:18).

Jesus was anointed! The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him! And that anointing has purpose! The anointing empowers us to preach the gospel! The anointing has the power to heal broken hearts, open the eyes of the blind, breaks chains off people—chains of addiction, pain, and hurt. The anointing smashes open the prison doors in people's hearts, minds, and souls to set people free from their captivity and oppression, and proclaim that the time for freedom, the time for healing is *now!*

Just as Jesus was anointed, this same anointing of the Holy Spirit is available to us, just as I experienced that night through Trevor Yaxley. There are many stories of otherwise ordinary men and women of God, down through history, carrying a great anointing. I love the stories such as when John G. Lake, the great healing evangelist, was coming into a town on the train. When he was still about two miles out of town, the conviction of the Holy Spirit began to fall on the town and people everywhere started to repent. Lake said of his own hunger and encounter with the waves of the Holy Glory:

> Eight years passed after God revealed Jesus the Healer to me. I had been practicing the ministry of healing. During that eight years every answer to prayer, every miraculous touch of God, every response of my own soul to the Spirit had created within me a more intense longing for an intimacy and a consciousness of God, like I felt the disciples of Jesus and the primitive church had possessed.… Shortly after my entrance into the ministry of healing, while attending a service where the necessity for the Baptism of the Spirit was presented, as I knelt in prayer and reconsecration to God, an anointing of the Spirit came upon me. Waves of Holy Glory passed through my being, and I was lifted into a new realm of God's presence and power. After this, answers to prayer were frequent and miracles of healing occurred from time to time. I felt myself on the borderland of a great spiritual realm, but was unable to enter in fully, so my nature was not satisfied with the attainment.…[1]

There's another inspirational report from the life of Charles Finney, who has been called a "walking revival." He was once doing a series of meetings in New York state, and was invited to tour a local cotton mill. When he walked into the mill, the presence of God fell so strongly that the conviction of the Holy Spirit moved throughout the whole factory. When he walked into a room full of women who were working at looms, talking and laughing, the room suddenly went quiet. One of the women looked into his eyes and started to violently shake. Finney said of the event: "She was quite overcome, and sank down, and burst into tears. The impression caught like powder, and in a few moments all of the room was in tears. The feeling spread through the factory."[2]

As a 16-year-old so hungry for the presence and power of God, I would read and study great men and women of God in search of their secrets, trying to glean any key so I could experience and carry more of God. This practice and hunger I have maintained to this day. I remember reading *The Anointing* by Benny Hinn. Pastor Benny wrote about praying in the Spirit in his prayer closet for two hours, and the anointing would come upon him strongly—so that's what I would do. I would go into my tiny closet in my bedroom in New Zealand, and sit right on top of all my shoes—definitely not the most comfortable of places—and pray in tongues for two hours straight. I remember to this day how the Holy Spirit would fill that closet. There would be such a radiant, warm glow of His presence, and a nearness that's hard to describe.

Through the years, I have studied many of these men and women of God. I've read their books, listened to their sermons, watched them on YouTube, and even had the privilege of interviewing many in person. Much could be said and written about the pursuit of the anointing but ultimately I have learned that the secret to carrying the tangible presence and power of God in our lives all comes down to three simple things:

1. *Hunger*. We must be so hungry for His presence that we are willing to pay any price to have Him.
2. *Time*. We must spend time abiding in Him—time praying, time worshipping, time reading the Word, time seeking Him with all we have.

3. *Faith*. We must believe that we are anointed and step out accordingly.

I have had the great privilege and honor of knowing and traveling with the great Aussie prophet and revivalist Chris Harvey for many years. One night we were both praying for people on the altar and almost everyone he prayed for fell out under the power of God, while almost no one fell when I prayed. I asked him later about this and he said to me, "Ben, it's because you don't *believe* that you are anointed." From then on, I began to believe it and suddenly saw an immediate increase of the power of God flowing through me.

One of my absolute favorite passages in the Bible is a great promise for all who desire more of God:

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him! And what does He reward us with? The very thing that we are seeking…Himself!

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I encourage you to pray the following prayer right now for a breakthrough anointing:

> *Jesus, I love You. I love Your presence, and I'm so hungry for more. Would You come fill me afresh right now. Fill me all the way up to overflowing. I ask for Your anointing. Increase my faith and help me to believe that I AM ANOINTED. I want people to experience waves of Your presence coming from me, just like Ben experienced from Trevor Yaxley. I want my eyes to radiate with Your eyes, Jesus. I declare today—the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and He has anointed me! Amen!*

Endnotes

1. Compiler Gordon Lindsay, *John G. Lake: Apostle to Africa*, told in Lake's own words, (Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations, Inc., 1995), 16.
2. Dave Earley, "Walking Revival," Grace City, June 16, 2013; https://dearleys.wordpress.com/2013/06/16/walking-revival/; accessed April 20, 2019.

Chapter 3

GOD, MY DELIVERER

IN THIS CHAPTER, I NEED TO TACKLE A REALLY IMPORTANT and delicate subject. A subject that unfortunately has led to many people being "taken out" by the enemy and has derailed many ministries, lives, and has split churches, families, and friendships. I'm talking about offense.

This is a story of my own offense and how it nearly destroyed my life… BUT GOD! This is a story of great hope, of great deliverance and of God breaking in and breaking through in my life, rescuing me in the midst of a really dark season.

Earlier you read about my precious Nana and how as a young boy, Nana and Grandad, both of whom I love dearly, took me to Sunday school a few times and would pray with me at night whenever they were visiting. Before I was born, my grandfather had been an evangelist, and he and Nana, along with my dad and his five brothers and sister, would spend many weekends traveling all over and preaching the gospel. I'm proud of this rich heritage!

My father had committed his life to Jesus as a young boy at a Billy Graham crusade in Auckland, New Zealand, in the 1950s. Unfortunately, for one reason or another, by the time my father was in his 20s, he had had enough of the unhealthy side of "religion" and walked away from church

and, at least in my experience of our early family life, his relationship with God. That was the precursor for my growing up in an unchurched, non-Christian household.

I don't know much about that time in my father's life, other than I think it's fair to say that there were some hurts and despite his upbringing in a strong Christian household and ministry family, it sadly led to his own family growing up not knowing Jesus.

Despite all that, as I shared in the first chapter, God "broke in" to my life and poured out His love on me and radically saved me. Other members of my family also had powerful encounters with Him, but that's their story to tell.

Skipping forward a few short years, unfortunately during the beginning days of my ministry life, several events happened over a short period of time that left me hurt and confused. I had felt betrayed and abandoned and also let down by some key leaders in my life. Hurt gave way to offense, and offense, I have learned, is very fertile soil for deception.

Instead of quickly dealing with that offense, I made what could've been a fatal error and in my own pride and immaturity, allowed it to grow. Despite whether what happens to us is right or wrong, we are all responsible for our own hearts and what we let affect us, and at the time I sadly chose offense rather than forgiveness and letting the hurt go.

My heart was now perfectly prepared to be taken, hook, line, and sinker by deception, and sadly, that's exactly what happened.

At that time, I was given some books to read which I was assured would explain that I was hurt because of what was "wrong" with Christianity—and I swallowed the lies right up. It justified my staying angry.

The Dark Path

What ensued was months of reading, studying, and talking with other people who had the same belief system as these books taught. It wasn't a cult as such, in that there was no leader or control in that sense, but essentially a group of very bitter former Christians, who would get together and discuss these heretical teachings and grievances, feeding each others'

hurts. My head and heart were full of confusion, lies, fogginess, and pain. I was spiraling fast into darkness. I could feel myself going deeper and deeper into bitterness and deception and farther away from God.

Hatred for the church and Christians began to grow in my heart. I lost contact with all of my friends and determined that I would never set foot in a church again. The longer I went down that path, the darker my heart felt and the deeper my offenses became. Since the time when I was saved, I had given myself to the gospel and building God's Kingdom, so determining to never enter church again created a huge hole in my life. With the benefit of hindsight, I can see the craftiness of satan to turn my heart against God and His people because he knew I was called to preach the gospel and release revival! Thank God that He is greater than all the enemy can throw at us… but I'm getting ahead of myself.

My new belief systems were "enforced" one night when I went along to a meeting with this group of people. They were talking about speaking in tongues and how they thought it was of the devil. No one in the room, other than my dad (who was also with me) and I, had ever heard anyone speak in tongues. So I said to them, "I can still speak in tongues, do you want to hear it?" They did. So for the first time in a long time, I began to speak in tongues. As soon as I did, I started to manifest a demon. I immediately felt it come up in me and start to take over my body. Although I was shaking and quivering and struggling to move my mouth, I immediately said to my dad, barely able to move my lips, "Dad, I'm manifesting…you need to cast this demon out."

We had both been around a lot of deliverance and had seen many demons cast out of people, so we knew what to do—even in the midst of deception. It's hard to comprehend, I know, but that's how deception works. So we went straight outside and Dad thankfully prayed for me and told this demon to leave. In my deceived state, this manifestation confirmed to me that tongues were in fact of the devil. My fellow "coalition of the offended" are obviously correct, I thought. Of course later on I would realize that when I began to speak in tongues, the Holy Spirit in me stirred up the demon and started to drive it out of me.

Through all of this, my heart amazingly remained hungry for Jesus. However I was so tormented by lies and deceptive thoughts. I remember

praying over and over a simple prayer: “Jesus, Your Word says that I would know the truth, and the truth would set me free. I want to know the truth, Jesus!”

Jodie and I were married at this point and I later learned that she spent many days crying and praying for me. She would cry in the shower—crying out to God for me. She also told me that her mum and dad had been praying for me and that God had spoken to her dad. God said He was going to powerfully deliver me overnight, and to keep believing. Jodie had also made an appointment to see a very well-known evangelist who knew my grandfather. He prayed with her that God would deliver me and spoke powerful decrees of freedom over me.

What Is the Truth?

One day Jodie and I were out walking around the waterfront in beautiful Mission Bay in Auckland, New Zealand, when we “just happened” to run into an old friend I had shared a room with during my time at YWAM. I hadn’t seen him for some time, and we invited him and his wife over for dinner, a dinner that would lead to another life-changing encounter with God.

This new teaching that I had come to believe, was a very intellectual and complicated belief system, as many deceptive teachings are. This friend from YWAM is an intelligent guy and competent debater—perfect for the conversation Holy Spirit knew I needed to have. So that night, after dinner, we discussed this entire belief system and my thoughts.

After three hours of passionate debate, suddenly something that hardly ever happens during “discussions” like this actually happened…I came to the realisation that I was wrong.

He was right. One simple truth had pulled the pin on my entire new belief system, causing it all to crumble in a heap. But rather than coming to some type of epiphany and return to truth in that moment, instead, I hit a wall. A really big wall.

I had been led to believe that there were thousands of errors in the Bible, and so I couldn’t trust the Bible. I had been led to believe that Christians were all deceived and deluded, and caused great hurt and pain,

and so I couldn't trust Christians. But worst of all, all my studies had just been unraveled by one simple truth and so suddenly, I couldn't trust my own intellect to work it all out. And because of that, I came to the dreadful conclusion that I would never know the truth.

I felt so hopeless.

Another God Encounter

Not too long after that, Jodie and I were up late one night doing the dishes. I remember we were talking about random things and memories of our childhoods, etc., nothing too deep. When we were done, I simply walked into our living room. And that's when it happened.

In the middle of our living room in Milford, Auckland, at around 11 o'clock at night, I suddenly walked right into the presence of God. That's the only way I can describe it. I wasn't praying, worshipping, or doing anything special, and yet I walked into a thick cloud of the tangible manifest presence of God. For the first time in a long time, my hands immediately shot up above my head in worship, thick hot tears streamed down my face which was raised toward Heaven, and out of my mouth, tongues, my heavenly prayer language came gushing out from deep inside me.

Immediately I felt God speak to me, "Now it's time to walk by faith. Don't try and figure anything out, just focus on worship and intimacy with Me."

In a moment, God had invaded our living room and my heart, and completely delivered me. The heaviness and darkness that I had been carrying was gone. I felt light, peace, and such joy and relief. I had been immediately set free. Hallelujah!

Over the next little while, I did exactly what God had told me to do. I began to worship Him again with all my heart. I would do this at home, and Jodie and I started going to church again. I would sit near the back, and just worship Jesus with all my heart. I did my best not to think at all about the doctrines and teachings that I had immersed myself in, in that past season. I was purposefully just focusing on intimacy with God and spending time in His presence. Bit by bit, God would speak to me and drop nuggets of truth

into my heart. I would simply be going about my everyday business, when suddenly it was like a precious gem from heaven would drop, and a light would go off in my heart. Truth would ring like a bell and I would think, Ahhhh, of course! It was so beautiful what Jesus did.

Right now, just as I have finished writing this testimony of God delivering me, in what is the perfect timing of the Lord, I can see out my window that it has begun to snow.

> *…says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow…"* (Isaiah 1:18).

God of the Breakthrough!

In sharing this testimony, the first thing I want you to take away is a great hope!

Hope that your prayers are powerful and effective.

Hope that God loves you with an overwhelming, never-ending reckless love and never stops pursuing you.

Hope that God is able to break into the hardest heart, no matter what the circumstances, and,

Hope that God is truly the God of breakthrough!

In the end, God sovereignly invaded our living room that night and fell upon me with such power and love that I was instantly delivered. A great light shone on me and the spirit of darkness was broken off me. I wasn't in church, no one came to visit, there was no worship music playing—yet God reached in, right where I was, and rescued me.

I thank God for Jodie—my wife, who loved me and went to war for me in prayer. It wasn't easy for her; in fact it was far from easy, but she had faith. Faith that God would indeed break into my life, and He did.

As my dear friend Evangelist Daz Chettle always says, "No one is that lost that they can't be found."

Offense and Deception

The second vital lesson that I pray you take from this chapter is the urgency and importance of dealing with offense. Unfortunately, the Christian road is littered with the bodies of too many people who have been taken out along the journey because they have allowed offense to take hold of their hearts. Tragically, all too often our own offense can lead to not just destroying our own lives but also the lives of our families and their relationship with Jesus. Sadly, I have seen this happen in my own extended family, and as a pastor, also in many other families. All too often, one of the casualties of parents not dealing with offense is that their own children's relationship with Jesus suffers. That's a price I don't think any parent wants to pay. The unfortunate truth is, we have all been hurt at one time or another, but how we deal with that hurt can literally become the difference between life and death. It's that serious.

Jesus is the way. Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the life. When we are hurt, it is so important that we run to Jesus, instead of from Jesus; in doing so, we run to the way, to truth and to life. When we run from Him, we leave all those things behind, and run straight into the devil's trap.

When we look in scripture at the lives of two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and Judas, we see two similar journeys, but two very different outcomes. Peter betrayed Jesus by denying even knowing Him, not just once to a little girl, but three times! (See Matthew 26:69-75). The next time we see Peter, is when the women told him they had seen Jesus, that He was alive. Peter leaps to his feet and bolts out the door, running to Jesus with all his heart (Luke 24:8-12).

Judas also infamously betrayed Jesus, selling Him out for thirty pieces of silver. The next time we see Judas however, he, like Peter, was also full of guilt and remorse but instead of running to Jesus, he runs from him, and kills himself (Matthew 27:3-5).

Peter, who messed up so badly, which I think is why many of us—let's face it, all of us—can relate to him so well and have a soft spot for him, went on to become a great leader of the church. Based on his own experience and the wisdom he received by the Holy Spirit, he wrote to warn us all:

> *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8).

The enemy is waiting for a chance to pounce, a chance to trap us. John Bevere, in his amazing book that I recommend, sums up offense so well by calling it the "bait of satan!"[1] But just like Samson, when that bait comes, when the lion comes running at us, seeking to devour us, if we turn to Jesus and rely on the Holy Spirit, He will empower us to overcome and resist the enemy! (See Judges 14:5-6.)

Choose to Forgive

Dear reader, I encourage you to do whatever it takes to get free from offense and do it quickly, preferably before it even has a chance to take root. Start by taking some time in prayer and just simply give it to Jesus. Choose to forgive those who have hurt you, even if you don't feel like it. Forgiveness starts with a choice. The feelings will come later! Sometimes, a good prayer is simply to pray "God, I chose to forgive (name), please help me to want to!" Believe me, I've had to pray that prayer more than once. Invite Him to come and bring healing to your heart. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is available to heal the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18). Pray in tongues, worship, praise, and read the Word, the Bible. We can't underestimate the power of reading the Word of God and its power to wash over us, cleansing our minds and healing our hearts. His Word is truly alive! Ask someone you trust to pray with you. Get counseling. Have a "Sozo" (a type of Christian prayer counseling). It may happen in a moment or it may take some time, but God will heal and deliver you. Whatever you do, don't isolate yourself. Keep going to church. Keep showing up. Keep worshipping. Keep loving Jesus with all your heart!

One more really important point that cannot be overstated when it comes to offense is this—the devil is a liar and committed to keeping your heart trapped in offense.

The very good news is that God is our Deliverer, our Healer, our Comforter. He invaded that living room of ours, broke into my heart and

broke me out of darkness—He wants to do that for you, for your loved one, and even for your enemy.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I encourage you to pray this prayer right now for breakthrough freedom:

> *Jesus, I believe that You are the way, You are the truth, and You are the life.*
>
> *Let the fullness of what that means be manifested in my heart, my mind, and my life today.*
>
> *Your Word says that I will know the truth, and the truth shall set me free.*
>
> *I want to know You, Jesus, better than I have before. You are truth! Set me free from all bondage. Please forgive me for partnering with any lies, deception, bitterness, offense, and unforgiveness.*
>
> *I choose today to forgive (name the people you need to forgive). Help me to want to forgive!*
>
> *Holy Spirit, please come and heal my heart, comfort me, surround me. Wash over me today, Lord.*
>
> *Come Prince of Peace, reign supreme in my heart.*
>
> *In Jesus' name, amen!*

Endnote

1. John Bevere, *The Bait of Satan* (Florida: Charisma House, 1994).

Chapter 4

ANGEL OF AWAKENING

IN EARLY 2009, JODIE AND I WERE EXPERIENCING ONE OF those valley seasons. When I think about that time, I am reminded of my teenage years growing up in New Zealand, surfing after school, on weekends, and every chance I got. Because of the unique geography of where we lived in the beautiful North Island, we had the rare opportunity to be able to drive from the East Coast beaches when the surf was flat, to the notoriously much bigger and rougher surf of the West Coast, in only an hour!

I remember, on many occasions, wiping out on the huge West Coast waves and getting caught "inside" where the waves were breaking. A massive wave would hit and hold me under for as long as I felt I could take, and then just as I could finally surface and take a huge gasp of air, another even bigger wave hit and again I would be pummeled, tumbling around like I was in the heavy duty cycle of my mum's washing machine. This could go on for six or eight waves in a row depending on how big the set was.

Well, that's exactly what this time in 2009 felt like for us. We had one hit after another over a six-month period that left us feeling devastated, disappointed, and disillusioned. I won't go into all the gory details, but I will paint a bit of a picture of what we were going through, because I know you might just be able to relate.

The “highlights” were:

- We unexpectedly and suddenly lost Jodie’s mum to cancer.
- Our dear friend and pastor was also very sick with cancer, and ultimately passed away.
- We were let down and betrayed by some people close to us, which hurt.
- Another ministry friend had a massive failure that really knocked the wind out of us and destroyed the momentum and ultimately the ministry, into which we had placed so much time, hope, and energy.
- We were dealing with several ministry friends who were getting divorced.
- We were also caught up and exposed to some behind-the-curtain leadership politics that left us feeling discouraged and disappointed and wondering where to put our trust.

There were a lot of other things going on, but I think you get the picture. We were left feeling like everything had been smacked out of us. We didn’t love God any less and neither did we blame Him for any of it, but we were just so flat, knocked on our butts, and wondering, *If this is really what ministry is like, is it even worth it? How can we go on like this?* Just being real!

At just the right time, we heard that one of our favorite worship leaders and revivalists—and now friend—Roy Fields, was visiting a church about an hour away from us. Despite everything that we were feeling, we were still hungry for God, even if that feeling was a little deeper down than usual. Something in us knew that even though in the natural we didn’t want to go, we just had to. So Jodie and I, along with our 11-year-old daughter, Keely, jumped in the car and headed off to the first night of what was to be three nights of meetings.

Marker Night

Well, we only made it about halfway through the worship on the very first night when we were overwhelmed by the presence of God. It was so glorious. Holy Spirit started to speak to both Jodie and me at the same time and we just knew what we had to do. We both went down to the front and threw ourselves on the altar. Praying together we said, “YES” to God afresh, a completely unconditional, unqualified, YES—despite all that we had been through, all the pain, all the betrayal, all the loss and disappointment.

The Lord was reminding me that if I put my hope in anything other than Him, I will ultimately be disappointed. Everyone, even the best of us, has imperfections and weakness and is in need of grace. The valleys and the challenges, the disappointment and hurts, the things I didn’t fully understand, the wondrous and the incredible, all of it in that moment, became an offering at His feet. And so right there on the altar, once again we fully yielded ourselves to God and His plan and purposes for our lives.

That night was one of those marker nights for us. A massive fork in the road. What was meant to be only three nights, turned into two weeks straight. We drove back and forth every night and fully immersed ourselves in the presence of God. We worshipped at the front on the altar every night and experienced wave after wave of His glory and power.

Less than two weeks after those meetings, we would have a life- and ministry-defining encounter.

Around that time, an amazing man of God by the name of Jim Drown was on a ministry tour in Australia. We had been invited to lead worship for some of His meetings. During those meetings—that blew up and were full of so much fire!—we became quite close. Jim asked us one night if we would pray about going on the road with him full time.

Also during our conversation that night, Jim mentioned, almost as a throw-away comment, “If you ever get visited by an angel, make sure you ask its name and mission.” Well, I had never had any kind of angelic encounter, and although I heard him, I thought I would just file that info away, like the emergency numbers on a fridge magnet for highly unlikely random future events. Well, little did we know what was about to happen.

We were excited by Jim's invitation to go on the road with him and so, of course, we wanted to go home and pray about it together as a family, like we always did. We had spent many years in full-time ministry at this point, but were in a short season when I was working full-time with a Christian Radio Station as an announcer and advertising sales rep, while traveling on weekends as itinerant ministers.

We knew that we were called to full-time vocational ministry and wanted to ask the Lord if this was His timing for us. So when we got home, that's exactly what we did. Jodie, Keely, and I sat together in our lounge room and started to pray. We asked Jesus to speak to us, as He had done so many times before: "Are You calling us to step back out into full-time ministry?"

We waited on the Lord, waited for Him to speak, as He had done so clearly many times before. We waited, and waited…and heard nothing. After some time, we were a little perplexed and slightly frustrated, and so we went off to bed—we would pray some more the next day.

Sometime in the middle of the night when I was in a deep sleep, all of a *sudden* I was awakened by what can only be described as a massive ball of electricity surging up and down the length of my body, from my head to my feet and back again. It was so strong and rapidly increasing that I woke up screaming at the top of my lungs… AHHHHH!

Just when it felt like I couldn't handle anymore, Jodie, started hitting me and also screaming, "BEN, BEN, BEN, THERE'S AN ANGEL! THERE'S AN ANGEL! THERE'S AN ANGEL!" She was screaming, I was screaming, we were both screaming! I laugh now when I think about it, but it was the most intense thing I had ever experienced!

When angels showed up in the Bible, the first thing they always said was, "DO NOT FEAR!" as everyone seems to freak out. I had always thought to myself, *Oh they're just a bunch of wusses. If an angel appeared to me, I wouldn't be afraid!* Well, famous last words, because that night, I screamed like a little girl.

As we were screaming, the angel left and then immediately the fear of the Lord fell in the room like a very thick, very heavy blanket!

Jodie and I both went from one second screaming at the top of our lungs to instantly being terrified of making a sound. The fear of the Lord was so intense that I felt like if I just breathed wrong, I was going to explode. Consequently, that intense sense of the fear of the Lord lingered with us both for weeks following. We almost felt like we were going crazy as we couldn't even speak to each other without every word and motive of our hearts being measured. We became intensely aware that holiness and our actions matter very much.

The angel was there and then it was gone.

Jodie describes the angel as being about 10 feet tall, bright white, with a golden sash across its chest. The angel was standing on the end of our bed, with arms folded and a serious intense look on its face.

After some time, it dawned on me that Jim Drown had only just said the night before, "If you ever get visited by an angel, make sure you ask its name and mission!" Yet all we did was scream! I got up out of bed and started to pray, "God, what or who was that, what was its mission? Please speak to me, or send it back! What did You want to tell us?"

Very clearly I heard the Lord say, "Zechariah 4:11." I immediately grabbed my Bible, and not having any idea what the passage said, I turned to Zechariah 4 and began to read, remembering that our question of the Lord the night before was "Are You calling us to step back out into full-time ministry?"

The Scripture passage began, *"Then I asked the angel*, [I immediately knew we were on the right track.] *'What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?' Again I asked him, 'What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?' He replied, 'Do you not know what these are?' 'No, my lord,' I said. So he said, 'These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth'"* (Zechariah 4:11-14 NIV).

Well, that rhema word from God immediately hit me like a freight train and I almost physically felt it come off the page—*"These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."* I then flipped over to The Message version of the Bible of that verse and read: *"He said, 'These are*

the two who stand beside the Master of the whole earth and supply golden lamp oil worldwide'" (Zechariah 4:14 MSG).

The Lord was indeed calling us to step out, but it was more than that, He was commissioning us. As Jodie and I prayed together, we felt the Lord speak to us, "Start a ministry and call it Pour It Out Ministries." Our mandate would be to pour out the golden oil of His presence and power in the nations.

That night, in March 2009, Pour It Out Ministries was birthed, and our lives would never be the same again.

Two weeks later, I was learning a worship song that was written by amazing worship leader Rick Pino. He had written a blurb about the song: "In late October 2006, I was visited by the angel of Zechariah chapter 4… Angel of Awakening is part of that emerging sound of awakening!" I immediately called out to Jodie, "Come look at this, honey!" We opened our Bible to Zechariah 4 again and read from the beginning: *"Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep"* (Zechariah 4:1).

That was, of course, exactly what had happened to us—what a wonderful confirmation of what the Lord was doing.

Two Lessons Learned

1. You never know what's on the other side of saying "Yes" to God!

Immediately following that encounter, *everything* changed. We found ourselves suddenly thrust into an international itinerant ministry. We went from being disillusioned, burnt out, and feeling like quitting, to suddenly being booked every weekend and traveling all over Australia and the nations.

The Lord opened so many incredible doors for us, so quickly, that we couldn't have possibly opened ourselves. In fact, He was very strict on us in those days—we weren't allowed to do any promotion or ask for any meetings, or even let someone know we were in town. He wanted to really show us that *He* would do it and that *"it's not by might, nor by power, but*

by my Spirit, says the Lord”—which just happens to also be from Zechariah 4!

The Lord opened such crazy doors, that we found ourselves eating Nando’s Chicken and racing go-carts with the revivalist who had been leading the meetings two weeks earlier, and we are friends to this day. That’s another whole amazing story in itself.

The bottom line is this—we felt like we had nothing left in ourselves. We were disappointed, disillusioned, busted, disgusted, to use an old preaching phrase; but one simple act of yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit and giving Him an unconditional and unqualified “YES” changed our lives completely.

Since then the Lord has taken us all around the world, on five continents in just the past year. We have planted churches, led revivals, known as the Pineapple Revival, that impacted tens of thousands, seen countless saved, healed and delivered, recorded albums, trained thousands of ministry students in our Revival School and online courses, and have seen God do the most incredible “impossible” things.

Yielding to God is not a one-time deal—it’s a daily thing. In the ten years since the Zechariah 4 God-encounter happened, we have experienced many more valley seasons. Our yes has been tested and has required us to continually offer up our yes to Him afresh.

Our daughter Keely, who is now 20 years of age, just wrote a powerful Facebook article about Being Faithful with our Yes:

> Keep saying yes to His way, His plan. There is so much power in our yes. When we say yes, we are giving Him permission to move through us, to work on our behalf and place us where He wants to place us. Being faithful with our yes can look like saying yes all over again every morning. It looks like backing that big yes with a million little ones. —Keely Hughes

I encourage you to yield to Him afresh today. You never know what is on the other side of your “Yes” to God!

2. Holiness matters!

It’s hard to describe in words the intensity and weight of the fear of the Lord that we experienced that night of our visitation. It’s important to note that it wasn’t in any way the same kind of “yuck fear” you might experience when you encounter something evil, or if your life is in danger, but it was fear nevertheless. It was a holy, weighty fear of the Lord. Perhaps best described as a terrifying awe. As mentioned earlier, I felt like if I moved a finger wrong, or breathed too loudly, I would literally explode.

Hebrews 10:31 says, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* I want to tell you, I have experienced a taste of what that means. God is pure, there is simply no impurity in Him whatsoever; and when He shows up in His glory, no darkness or impurity can survive. Even as I write right now and remember this, I find myself asking God to forgive me for any sin I have before Him.

Don’t get me wrong, I am an absolute believer in the goodness, mercy, and kindness of God. I am a lover of His amazing grace, and great praise rises within me at the revelation that I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21), made pure by His blood! (Can I get an amen?!) But I want to tell you, our actions matter. Purity matters. Holiness matters.

In those weeks following, when Jodie and I even struggled to speak, that weighty fear of the Lord remained with us and impacted every thought, word, and action that we had. I’m sad to admit that same sense of the fear of the Lord isn’t as tangible now as it was then, but it is my prayer, a dangerous prayer, for me and for you: “God, *I* need a greater fear of the Lord, *we* need a greater fear of the Lord.”

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; because when we walk in the fear of the Lord, it becomes a guiding force in our lives for our decisions and actions to come from a place of purity, considered and directed by the Lord. (See Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, 15:33; Isaiah 11:2, 33:6.)

I believe that a great fear of the Lord is about to return to the church. I believe with all my heart that we are about to see a day when there is going to be such a powerful manifestation of the glory of God in our churches and meetings that entire congregations will have their faces pressed into the

carpets screaming in awe! This is what was happening in Acts 2. God was showing up with such power, that *"fear came upon every soul"* (Acts 2:43).

Holiness matters.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Please pray the following prayer for breakthrough, refreshment, and holiness:

God, I want to say YES to You afresh, right now. I want to say YES with no conditions or qualifications. I chose to trust You, no matter what. Here's my life afresh. Have Your way in my heart, in my family, in my home, in my life. Awaken me to the MORE of You. Awaken me to new depths of Your holiness and the fear of the Lord. I say YES to You, Jesus!

Chapter 5

HIS EYES ARE A FLAME OF FIRE

IN LATE 2009, THERE WAS SUCH A HIGH EXPECTATION OF revival and the move of God in Australia. All across the country there were "fires" breaking out in communities of hungry lovers of Jesus. One of the communities that has been a pioneer in pursuing the glory of God and revival in Australia is Tribe Byron Bay, formerly New Earth Tribe, led by our dear friends Pastors Phil and Maria Mason.

During that time, we were privileged to be invited to lead worship and minister at a BURN 24/7 conference event—Sean Feucht's ministry—that they were hosting in Byron Bay. The entire weekend was absolutely incredible. High, high praise was going forth for hours on end. The glory of God was so thick and tangible.

On one night in particular though, something very powerful happened. No one was leading worship; everyone in the room was spontaneously singing, praying, weeping, and interceding. Suddenly it seemed there was a huge crack in the spirit realm. It was as if the very fabric of the atmosphere was torn and Heaven broke in. All across the room people were groaning, wailing, crying, screaming, encountering the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the glory of God.

That's when it happened. *Suddenly* I had a vision. I was standing in a corridor of fire. On either side of me there was a wall of fire that went as high as I could see. It was a heavenly fire. The fire of God. Then suddenly the face of Jesus appeared right in front of my face, inches away. I was shocked and physically jumped backward. I was staring right into His huge eyes.

It wasn't the walls of fire or even the face of Jesus, although of course indescribable, that impacted me the most, it was His eyes. There's simply no better way to say this, other than what it says in the book of Revelation, *"His eyes were like a flame of fire"* (Revelation 1:14; 2:18; 19:12).

As I looked into His eyes, I could see the fiery flames burning, flickering back and forth. They were piercing deep into my soul. That's when Holy Spirit spoke to me, telling me what the flames were: "The fire in His eyes is His love and passion that burns for you."

Needless to say, I was wrecked. Wow…I need to pause from writing a moment and just love on Jesus, perhaps you could too. We love you, Jesus!

This was such a precious encounter that brought with it such a precious revelation. Of course I knew that Jesus loved me, but seeing the fire burning in His eyes and the "knowing" that the fire was His love burning for me drives that revelation deep into my heart.

Three different times in the book of Revelation, John describes the eyes of Jesus, burning like a fiery flame.

> *His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire* (Revelation 1:14).
>
> *…These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass* (Revelation 2:18).
>
> *His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself* (Revelation 19:12).

I had read those verses many times and, of course, was intrigued, wondering exactly what His eyes looked like. As I recounted in an earlier chapter, my dad even had a visitation from Jesus, appearing exactly as He

was here in Revelation, the resurrected, exalted Christ. I imagined how that must've been, but it wasn't until this hot night in Byron Bay, Australia, in 2009 that I would truly not only see the fire burning in His eyes myself, but also have the revelation that the fire was burning for me, and for you.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I pray that even right now, in this very moment, as you read these words, that you would be surrounded and completely immersed in the fire of His love. That you would receive the same revelation that I did—His eyes are a flame of fire, because they are burning with passion and love for you.

Chapter 6

THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

IN THE FEW YEARS LEADING UP TO 2012, JODIE, OUR DAUGHTER Keely, and I were on the road traveling full-time as itinerant ministers, the last eighteen months of which, we were *really* fulltime. We had moved out of our home and went church to church, town to town, nation to nation, preaching the gospel and releasing revival. Being on the road all that time was wonderful! For the better part of one of those years, we drove the width and breadth of Australia in our little white Ford Laser, that didn't even have cruise control, towing a trailer that was almost bigger than the car, much to the delight and bemusement of many "passing" motorists. It really was such an epic adventure.

As you can imagine, we have many incredible testimonies from that time. Testimonies of people being touched by the Lord—getting saved, miraculously healed, delivered, encountering His presence, signs and wonders like never before! Of course, all that was wonderful, and what ministry is all about, but some of my favorite memories from that time are the stories of God moving in our own lives. His miraculous provision,

opening of doors, and in His guidance on both a more grand scale and in the whisper of His still, small voice.

Life on the Pour It Out Revival Train

Even though this chapter isn't actually about this, let me throw in a couple of freebie stories. I can't help myself!

One time we were driving from Cairns, in Far North Queensland in the Northeast of Australia, to Adelaide, South Australia. If you're not familiar with Australian geography, the trip is 3,100 kilometers or more than 1,900 miles. It's a long way! We had dropped Jodie off in Brisbane for some medical treatment, and she would fly to Adelaide and meet Keely and me there. So Keely and I drove the last two legs by ourselves, which was still a very big chunk of the journey!

On our last night of the drive to Adelaide, we slept in Mildura, a small regional town in Victoria. As it goes sometimes in ministry life, I realized the next morning that we didn't have any money in our account, and a bit less than half a tank of gas, not enough to get us the 400 kilometers we had to travel to Adelaide that day. But God had been so faithful in providing for us every step of the way, that we had full confidence that He would do it again and take care of our needs.

So Keely and I packed up the car and trailer—The Pour It Out Revival Train, as we called it!—and headed out, excited to see what God was going to do.

As we drove, every now and then I would check our ministry bank balance on my phone, just in case someone had blessed us and deposited some money. I checked once, twice…and nothing. Then just over an hour into the journey I stopped and checked again—this time the story was different. Suddenly not one, but *three* different people, who had never given to us before, had deposited money into our bank account! I can't remember now how much it was, but it was enough to get us fuel for the car and take care of us for the day. We hadn't told anyone of our financial need, but God knew, and He had done it again! Keely and I let out a big "Woohoo!" celebrating His goodness to us. Then, remembering that we were way out in the middle of the Australian Outback with nothing around for miles, our

prayers then turned to “God, please make our gas last until we reach a gas station.” And sure enough, it did!

A Sign and Wonder

Let me also tell you a quick story of how God used a sign and wonder to change a woman’s life.

I won’t go into all the details, as told in a later chapter, but we had been experiencing supernatural rain falling in almost every meeting that we did —and also just at home, in the car, and in our day-to-day life. Several times, we actually had real, physical water falling (inside!), but most of the time, it would just feel like it was raining. Even though there wasn’t actual water, it was unmistakable. It felt like we were standing outside in a shower.

One time during this season, we were heading toward a small town in Far North Queensland. We were going to be ministering in a small church that was part of a conservative denomination that wasn’t very familiar with the gifts of the Spirit or signs and wonders. One of the older ladies in that church heard that we were coming and decided to check us out. She did some research about us, asked a lot of questions, and was skeptical; but eventually, she decided to come to the meeting to see what would happen.

Well, during that meeting, God got her! She had a powerful encounter with His presence and experienced the supernatural rain falling on her. The next night, she was a different person! She was full of joy and so much excitement about what God had done in her. We were told that earlier that afternoon, she had told the entire salon, while getting her hair done, all about Jesus and the miracle of the supernatural rain that she had experienced! That just puts a huge grin on my face!

I love that story so much, as that’s exactly what signs and wonders are all about. They point to Jesus, and His love and goodness toward us!

Anyway, back to the story I’m supposed to be telling you for this chapter.

At the end of 2011, we were on a ministry tour in the United States. We did seventy meetings in seventy days across Texas, Oklahoma, and New England. God showed up powerfully in many ways. While we were on that

tour, God began to speak to us about planting a church and building a "house" to host revival and led us to plant it on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland Australia. So a few months later, with three suitcases and a couple hundred dollars, we rolled into the Sunshine Coast and rented an apartment. After eighteen months of being on the road, sleeping in hotel rooms and people's guest rooms, we finally had a home again! I'll never forget the feeling that first night, it was bliss!

And now to the encounter—finally!

Heaven Is Cheering

A couple of months later, one night I was sitting up by myself watching the movie *Pearl Harbor*. At the end of the film, Ben Affleck's character was given a medal by the US President in a private ceremony for the secret battle he had fought. I was thinking about some of the real battles that we had gone through, some of them really devastating, and to be honest I was feeling a little sorry for myself. I mumbled, almost audibly, "No one ever gave me a medal for the secret battles I have fought." Immediately in that moment, God opened my eyes and I had a flash vision.

In the top righthand corner of my living room, Heaven opened up and I could see the Great Cloud of Witnesses, peering over the balcony of Heaven. There weren't thousands, just a couple of dozen maybe, but they were all cheering and applauding me. It was a real celebration.

Then in an instant the Lord spoke to me, "Ben, every time you go through a battle and come out the other side, even still just believing, all of Heaven is cheering." Immediately I began to sob as the Lord ministered healing to my heart.

The revelation that God is always with us and that Heaven is near, aware, and cheering us on gave me such great encouragement that continues to this day.

> *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us* (Hebrews 12:1).

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Please pray the following prayer for the breakthrough presence of God:

God, thank You that I am not alone, that You are always with me. And thank You for the revelation that Heaven is cheering me on and celebrating all that You are doing on the earth through your sons and daughters. Thank You Holy Spirit that You are my Comforter, my Counselor, my Teacher and Guide. Thank You for Your presence now, God. Come even stronger! In Your presence is fullness of joy, and the joy of the Lord is my strength! Thank You that through Your presence and joy, You give me strength to run the race set before me. I love You and worship you with all my heart. Jesus, I lift Your name above every other name! In Your name, Jesus, I pray, amen.

Chapter 7

ONE HUNDRED HORSES

AS I WRITE THIS BOOK, IT HAS OCCURRED TO ME THAT AS I recount these incredible life-changing encounters I've had along the way, many of the stories start with, "It had been a particularly tough season for us." That's not true of all my encounters, of course, but the truth is that life is full of mountaintop and valley experiences. The fact that many of these encounters happen in the midst of valley seasons is actually really encouraging to me, and hopefully to you, that God is always with us and is the God of the breakthrough. He truly *prepares a banqueting table in the presence of our enemies* from which we get to feast on His goodness (see Psalm 23:5).

One of my absolute favorite examples of this truth happened in the life of Samson. Samson was on his way to find a wife, which was the Lord's plan for him, when *"…suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat…* (Judges 14:5-6).

When we are following the Lord's plan for our lives, oftentimes there will be attacks from the enemy. *But God* is truly always with us, just as He was with Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson just as suddenly as the lion came roaring toward him—and strengthened by the

Lord, he tore that lion apart with his bare hands! Come on! But here's the part I really love…

On his way back from finding his wife, he comes across the same dead lion, only now, there was a huge honeycomb in the carcass of the lion, which meant that he and his family could now feast out of the very thing that tried to attack him (Judges 14:8-9). How cool is God?! In celebration, Samson even dropped a freestyle rap lyric:

> *Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong something sweet* (Judges 14:14 NIV).

You didn't know Samson was a rapper did you? Don't you just love that? And don't you love that that's in the Bible? I do! Out of the very thing that tried to devour and destroy him, God brought something sweet for him to feast on.

I do really pray that as you read these different encounters, that in the midst of difficult seasons you truly would be able to say, just like David did, *"…though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me…"* (Psalm 23:4).

Emergency Tongues

And so now to this encounter…

It had been a particularly tough season for us, on many levels, including Jodie dealing with some significant health issues. To cap it off, we even had a visitation one night from a spirit of death. I was standing in our kitchen area when suddenly I saw both Jodie and Keely's eyes open wide and their mouths drop open in shock. "What?" I asked, and they told me what they had both just seen—a tall black demon physically walked up to our outside sliding door, which was behind me, and open the door. The door physically slid open behind me. Then right as the demon was about to come in the door, a bright flash of white light dropped from Heaven, and the demon was gone. It all happened very fast, but both Jodie and Keely were understandably visibly shaken.

I immediately did what any good old Pentecostal would do—started praying in "emergency tongues" and grabbed a big jug of olive oil. I went outside and poured a moat of oil all around the boundary of our property, rebuking the devil the whole way, "YOU SHALL NOT PASS!"

I had to laugh the next day, which was a very hot Australian summer day, as I went outside and discovered a burnt line of blackened, singed dead grass around the entire property.

The Armies of the Lord

Not too long after that, one night as I was just falling asleep, *suddenly* I heard what sounded like one hundred horses come galloping right up to my bedroom window! I immediately jumped to my feet and threw open my curtains in full expectation of seeing a hundred soldiers on horses outside my window—only to find instead, a completely calm, silent night. I looked up and down the street, but knew, of course, it was quite unlikely that a hundred horses had managed to suddenly go quiet and head next door.

"What's going on, Lord?" I asked.

His calming, still small voice replied, "The armies of the Lord are encamped around you."

Wow…the peace of God that accompanies His voice, filled my heart. Everything was going to be okay. The God of the angel armies was with us!

What is also incredible about this encounter is that once again, I wasn't the only one who experienced this, but Jodie too! She also heard the overwhelming sound of the horses—the groundpounding hooves and the loud, aggressive breathing, snorting, and grunting—come right up to our bedroom window. It was a show of pure heavenly force on our behalf.

We had already seen the demonstration of the protection of the Lord just a couple of nights earlier when the angelic warrior had prevented the evil spirit from coming into our house.

I have long loved Psalm 18 (NIV), where we see David call out to God for help and God responds with what I can only describe as an almost violent and furious love. I've picked out some of my favorite verses for you:

I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
The earth trembled and quaked,
and the foundations of the mountains shook;
they trembled because he was angry.
Smoke rose from his nostrils;
consuming fire came from his mouth,
burning coals blazed out of it.
He parted the heavens and came down;
dark clouds were under his feet.
He mounted the cherubim and flew;
he soared on the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—
the dark rain clouds of the sky.
Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.
The Lord thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High resounded.
He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,
with great bolts of lightning he routed them.
at your rebuke, Lord,
at the blast of breath from your nostrils.
He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.
He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.

Wow! Such powerful imagery! How great is His love for us? When we call, He comes to our rescue!

In Second Kings, chapter 6, we read an incredible story of the angel armies of God showing up to fight and protect Elisha:

> *And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was* ***full of horses and chariots of fire*** *all around Elisha* (2 Kings 6:15-17).

I think it's really interesting to note that Elisha didn't pray for the armies to come, but simply that God would open the eyes of His servant so that he too may see and know that they were there!

One of the very names of God is Jehovah Sabaoth, and it's used 235 times in the Bible. Its literal meaning is "Lord of armies!" It is translated as:

- Captain of the Lord's host
- The Lord of Hosts
- God of the angel armies
- Commander of angel armies

Over and over again in the Bible we learn that God is a warrior, and He surrounds those who love Him, and fights on their behalf!

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I pray for you that even right now, you would truly know that the Captain of the Lord's hosts and the angel armies are encamped around you and fight on your behalf!

But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; *so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten* (Jeremiah 20:11 NIV).

The angel of the Lord *encamps all around those who fear Him, and* ***delivers them*** (Psalm 34:7).

Chapter 8

HILLSONG PRAYER MEETING

THIS ENCOUNTER IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS in this book in that although it was an encounter with the overwhelming presence of God, it is more about the encounter that I had with the wider church and what the Lord did in my heart as a result.

I want to give some background context, which I think contains some really valuable lessons.

As you have read already, my Christian life from the very beginning was marked with the supernatural, full of manifestations and demonstrations of the power of God. Hunger for the more of God had always marked my journey.

When I was 25 years old, I was incredibly blessed to be a student at Hillsong International Leadership College in Sydney, Australia. I am so proud and grateful for the time I spent there. So much of what I learned and experienced at Hillsong was foundational for my whole life and ministry. We were exposed to such amazing vision, leadership, bigness, excellence, love for the local church and, of course, passionate love and worship of Jesus!

As students, we worked very hard, whether arriving at 7 a.m. for worship rehearsal every morning, after a two-hour journey on the train and a brisk walk from the station, or whether it was spending all day, every day during Hillsong Conference setting up chairs, cleaning toilets, and serving 20,000-plus delegates. As you can imagine, we walked and ran a lot of miles around the massive conference arena during those couple of weeks! Even though it was really hard work at the time, I'm so so grateful for the work ethic and passion that it built in me.

While our school was full of a lot of very practical wisdom and equipping for ministry, I also want to point out that there was really great teaching on the gifts of the Spirit and Jesus' desire to heal the sick and set people free.

In the years following my time at Hillsong, as my hunger grew for the supernatural and the things of the Spirit, I had grown a little frustrated with experiences that I was having with churches that I felt were not placing enough priority on the presence and power of God. Somewhere along the way, I had wrongly allowed a measure of judgment to take root in my heart toward these kinds of churches. Because of the amazing influence and leadership of Hillsong Church in Australia and around the world, I had begun to label these churches as "Hillsong-type churches."

I have since learned that we must be so careful with our hearts; it's so easy for judgment and a critical spirit to take hold of us. The enemy is at times so subtle and sneaky, it can be like the proverbial frog in the pot of water. We don't even know what's growing in our hearts until suddenly there's something big and ugly there!

I really need to say that I have always had such love and honor for Brian and Bobbie Houston and for Hillsong Church—that never stopped or changed. Regrettably though, I had held this judgment, albeit subtle, in my heart toward them.

A few years ago, we were going to be ministering at a large church in Sydney, which was located just down the road from Hillsong. It had been years since we had been there, and because we had a few days up our sleeves before our scheduled meetings, the thought occurred to me that perhaps there was something going on midweek at Hillsong that we could go along to.

I looked up their website and discovered that on Tuesday night at 7 p.m., there was a prayer meeting and we decided that would be fun to go to. We pulled into the car park at 6:45 p.m. and were shocked to discover that their HUGE parking lot was almost full!

After we parked the car, we made our way toward the church. There was a great excitement and the buzz of so many people who were lining up at food trucks, dropping their kids at the Kid's Church, buying coffee, and huddles everywhere of people talking.

When we entered the sanctuary, we were shocked again to discover that it was almost full! On a Tuesday night! For a prayer meeting! The only empty seats were in the nosebleed section of this impressive auditorium, but we were very happy to be there and now our excitement and anticipation was peaking!

At 7 p.m., on the dot, the meeting started, and what happened next has forever marked Jodie, Keely, and me. The worship just exploded! From the front to the very back of the room, every person was engaged, arms and voices lifted high. All around us, even in the nosebleeds, everyone around us was singing at the top of their lungs. Such passion, such high praise, such love for Jesus!

Oh man, right now as I write, my eyes are filled with tears and I'm completely choked up, just as the three of us were that night in Sydney, overwhelmed by the presence of God and the roar of praise that was going up from the beautiful people of Hillsong Church. The tears didn't stop streaming all night.

Not only was the worship powerful, it was free, spontaneous, and long! Brian Houston then led the 6,500-plus congregation in a powerful time of prayer, praying in segments for different areas of the church and ministry all around the world. Then toward the end, he let everyone know that we were going to pray for the Spirit of God to be poured out and for miracles to break out.

Immediately, as everyone in the room began to pray, *waves of glory* were going back and forth throughout the auditorium, front to back and

back again, pulsating and increasing. The room was electric with shouts of intercession and praise.

What happened next was the crowning moment for what God was showing us and doing in us that night. In the middle of this prayer for the miraculous, suddenly Pastor Brian starts pointing to certain areas in the crowd and saying, “I believe that right now God is healing (he mentioned certain diseases) in someone right there, and over here (pointing somewhere else), God is doing…” Well my jaw hit the ground and in astonishment I turned to Jodie “Jodie, Brian Houston is moving in words of knowledge right now on the main stage at Hillsong!”

Pride and Judgment

Well, as you can imagine, I spent a big part of that night, repenting and asking God to forgive me for any and every bad word I had said or thought, and any pride and judgment that I had made in my heart about Hillsong.

What God did that night and the lesson that He taught me has stuck with me so strongly. In the years since then, every time I think about Hillsong, listen to their albums, read their books, watch their movies, or listen to Pastor Brian preach, I can’t help but well up with tears with an overflow of love for them and for how God has used them in my life and the lives of millions of people around the world.

It can be so easy to make assumptions about people, churches, and ministries and draw all kinds of wrong conclusions. My perspective about Hillsong had been way off. God showed me how I was completely wrong and that He was powerfully moving in a place that I had made incorrect judgments about. It wasn’t so much about the words of knowledge or any of the specific details of that prayer meeting, the point is that what was happening at Hillsong was undeniably God. Yet in my pride, arrogance, and immaturity, I had managed to pass judgment. We can all do this so easily in our Christian journey with the wider church. The point is, the Church—His people—is His bride and worthy of honor, even in her imperfections.

I have questioned whether or not to mention Hillsong by name in this chapter, but the truth is that this has nothing to do with anything that Hillsong has done, the blame rests entirely on me. They are a big part of my

personal journey and I have nothing but the utmost respect, honor, love, and gratitude for Pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston and for Hillsong Church. To this day, I deeply regret ever holding anything less in my heart toward them.

Unfortunately, this level of criticism is not uncommon in the ministry, especially for anyone who has any level of influence or impact. Social media especially has too often become a place where people can sit behind their keyboards, in a faraway place, and level all kinds of criticism, judgment, negativity, and hatred toward people and organizations that they really know little to nothing about.

Having been on the receiving end of some of that, I know the pain and devastation it can bring to whole families, and I don't want to be responsible for being the cause of that pain for other people. I can do better, and I pray that God helps me to do so.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I encourage you to pray the following prayer, especially if you have been judgmental or prideful regarding a church or ministry—allow God to break in:

Jesus, please forgive me if there are any judgments that I have made toward Your church, Your bride. Please forgive me for any negativity or even curses that I've spoken or released. Please help me to love Your church the way that You love Your church. I pray that You will bless every church in my city right now, Jesus; send revival! Bless every pastor, every minister and their families—strengthen and refresh them and meet every need in abundance! Pour out Your Spirit afresh on them. May this coming Sunday be the best Sunday they have ever had!

And God, thank You for Hillsong Church and all that they are doing for and with You on the earth. Bless them, protect them, and increase them, let Your Kingdom come and will be done at Hillsong as it is in Heaven!

In Jesus' mighty name, amen!

Chapter 9

THE CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP

ONE THING I HAVE LOVED TO DO SINCE THE BEGINNING OF MY Christian life is to read biographies of great men and women of God. In those early years I devoured books about people such as Smith Wigglesworth, reading of how he raised his wife, Polly, from the dead, even though it was time for her to go!

And people like John G. Lake and how under a microscope people watched as disease died in his hands. I loved stories of Katherine Kuhlman and her absolute dependence and love for the Holy Spirit, and how she inspired Benny Hinn in his own relationship with Holy Spirit that would become the subject of his famous book, *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*. I loved reading about all the revivals, and, of course, *God's Generals* by Roberts Liardon. All these men and women of God who had truly done great exploits, moving in miracles and great power. Charles Finney, Reinhard Bonnke, A.A. Allen, Aimee Semple McPherson, Maria Woodworth Etter, William Branham, Alexander Dowie, William Seymour, Hudson Taylor, Jackie Pullinger, George Mueller, Loren Cunningham…the lists goes on.

I would devour these books, and they would stir in me so much hunger and passion for Jesus, for the adventure of serving Him and to move in the same miracle-working power that I would read about in the Bible.

Speaking of Loren Cunningham, who is the founder of YWAM, during my discipleship training school (DTS) when I was eighteen, we had a free weekend and a friend of the ministry took a group of us out on his yacht for a couple of nights away on the beautiful ocean off the East Coast of New Zealand. One afternoon we were sailing along and I was sitting on deck reading Loren's book, *Is that Really You, God?* It is the story of how YWAM started and his adventures learning to hear the voice of God. I read how YWAM was launched because of an encounter he had in the middle of one night. A huge vision where he saw waves of young people going out all around the world as missionaries.

Jodie, who at the time was just my fellow student and friend, was with me, so I said to her, "I really hope that one day I have some kind of life-defining encounter like this." She turned to me and said with such certainty, "I'm sure you will." Well, little did we both know that fourteen years later, not only would I have a life-defining encounter in the middle of the night, but she would be there as my wife having the same encounter with me—and it would launch the ministry that God had for us together. (The Angel of Awakening visitation from Chapter 4.)

Over the years I have had the great privilege of meeting and even ministering with so many of my personal heroes. However, I had never met Loren Cunningham, whom I admire and respect so much. Just recently, I had the real honor of being part of Reinhard Bonnke's farewell crusade in Africa, in Lagos, Nigeria. You can imagine my delight when I suddenly saw Loren Cunningham and had the opportunity for the first time to say hello and tell him how much he had inspired and influenced my life. (And, of course, grab a selfie!) I thought it was only too fitting that I would finally meet this hero of mine, the leader of the largest mission organization in the world, who had inspired me to "GO" to the nations with the gospel, not in a conference in the United States or Australia, but rather standing in the mud in a field in Africa. It was a sweet, sweet moment for me.

Live a Worthy Life

Back to the story at hand…

One day many years ago now, I was in a Christian bookstore in Perth, Western Australia. I was standing in front of the biography section and for a really long time was looking up and down and back and forth for a book that would satisfy. I had a yearning in my heart that was so deep it was almost painful, to find a book that would tell of a great adventure in God, and testify to His power at work. *Suddenly* (a definite theme of this book) the Lord spoke to me: "Ben, it's not a book that you are looking for…you are longing to *live a life* that is worthy of writing a book about."

Wow. Holy Spirit was right (funny that!). I didn't want to just read about someone else's powerful life pursuing God and their call, but I wanted to *live a life* that was worthy of maybe one day writing about. I'm smiling as it suddenly occurs to me the irony of writing about this in a book right now.

The point is this: it can be so easy for us to read books, watch videos, go to endless conferences and be so inspired, but never actually do anything ourselves. Our inspiration must become perspiration. We are not called to live out our dreams and calling vicariously through the lives of our heroes. Our being inspired must lead to action, or it's pointless. I have found that many people want to attend a Heidi Baker conference, but not everybody wants to live like Heidi Baker. Everyone wants to come out to hear David Hogan speak, our church had more than double our regular attendance when we hosted him, but not everyone wants to live like David Hogan. Both Heidi Baker and David Hogan have laid down their lives and sown them on the mission field—in the dust and dirt of Africa and Mexico. Heidi Baker speaks of having to pray for four hours a day, not just because she's super spiritual, but in her words "just to cope with what God has called her to do."

There is much talk these days of the coming move of God being about a nameless and faceless generation. What that really means is that it's not going to be just about the great man or woman of God up front doing all the miracles, it's going to be about the whole body of Christ living out the great commission and preaching the gospel, healing the sick, raising the dead, and cleansing the leper.

But that does not mean the standard of hunger, pursuit, and the price of following God is being lowered for everybody, but rather that the whole

body of Christ is being called to step up, to come up higher, to pay the price, to lay aside reputation, ego, pride, selfish ambition, the cares of the world and even comfort, and to be full of the fire of God to preach the gospel with boldness and turn the world upside down in our generation.

Even as you read this book, I pray that in every chapter you would be inspired to pursue God yourself with all of your heart, to hunger to meet Him and encounter His presence just as I have. And that you would then not just put the book on a shelf, but you would *do* something with that inspiration. May the yearnings of our hearts translate into lives impacted by the power of God.

Our inspiration must become perspiration.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Pray along with me:

Jesus, I love You! Thank You for all the great men and women of God in history who You have used so powerfully. I want to live a life like that. A life laid down for the sake of the gospel. To be used by You. To reach the lost, heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, and cleanse the leper. Thank You for the gifts that You have given me, help me to use them for Your glory, whether it be preaching at a crusade to thousands or loving the person next to me in the supermarket. In my life, be lifted high! In Jesus' name, amen.

Chapter 10

HEAVEN IS SO CLOSE

ONE DAY IN JUNE 2008 WE RECEIVED ONE OF THOSE UNEXPECTED and not-so-pleasant phone calls. It was Jodie's dad calling from India. He told us that her mum was really sick and that they needed to go home to Australia quickly.

Jodie's parents, Harold and Robyn, had been missionaries in India for the better part of twenty years. They had seen God move powerfully so many times and had impacted many lives for the gospel all over the nation.

Six months prior to getting this phone call, Jodie and I had a sudden strong urge from the Lord, a "call" to go to India, and that we were to go right away. We happened to have the money in our account at the time, and so immediately booked flights for the three of us, Keely was 9 at the time. A couple of weeks, and a whole bunch of vaccination needles later, we were off!

I had the great joy of traveling to India a few years prior with Harold, but for Jodie and Keely, this was their first time. I loved everything about the trip, from beginning to end. I even enjoyed all the preparation which included shopping in outdoor-adventure type stores and buying shoulder bags and equipping them with all the essentials for an India trip such as

hand sanitizer, baby wipes, toilet paper, and of course anti-diarrhea tablets! We also spent time every day squatting down on our haunches, trying to build up our leg muscles for the inevitable visit to the dreaded squatter-type toilets that are everywhere in that part of the world.

We landed in Chennai on the Southern East Coast of India, which used to be called Madras, and were picked up by a member of a local ministry. He was holding up a sign with our names on it, the only distinguishing characteristic amid a sea of Indian people waiting to pick up their own guests.

From the second we got off the plane, there was no mistaking where we were. India can be an overwhelming assault to all five senses at once—from the beautiful, bold vibrant colors, a sea of people everywhere, to the sound of a billion horns tooting, to the tantalizing aromas of a thousand different spices and curries cooking. I absolutely love it!

We were staying in an area of Chennai called Santhome, named after Saint Thomas the apostle. It was there that in the first century A.D., Thomas had been martyred—speared in the back while preaching the gospel to the Indian people. That alone speaks to the ancientness that is India, something hard for people from Australia and the US to contemplate.

There is a massive and very ornate church there called Saint Thomas Basilica, and under the church is the tomb of the apostle. It was an honor to be there and have the opportunity to visit. When we walked into the tomb, there was truly an overwhelming sense of awe and the presence of God. We were informed that most of his remains had since been moved to Rome, but a couple of bones and other relics remained. The presence of God that remained in that tomb, though, was unmistakable! There was a real sense of holy awe.

After a couple of days in Chennai, we boarded a train—always a wild adventure in itself in India—to begin the seventeen-hour ride to the city of Nagpur, where Harold and Robyn awaited. I'll never forget getting off that train in Nagpur and seeing them standing there. We were finally there with them, altogether as a family, in the place we had all heard so much about for so many years.

For the next few weeks, we experienced living out the stories, meeting the people, eating the food, and going to all the favorite places that Harold and Robyn had told us about. I remember the great delight on their faces when they introduced their daughter and granddaughter and their son-in-law —who everyone thought was a WWE wrestler!—to all of their friends around town. We truly got to experience “their” India, and it was glorious. They had truly sown their lives into India for the gospel.

When the day came to leave, we were on the train, waiting for it to pull out from the station and head back to Chennai. Over the years, as hard as it always was, we had somehow grown accustomed to saying goodbye to them, knowing it would be some time until we saw them again. But this time was different. Jodie was crying, really crying. I had never seen her like this. She was almost inconsolable as we waved goodbye both to Nagpur and to her mum and dad. As the train slowly started pulling away, she really wept. Neither of us could understand why she was so affected, but we would later learn why.

Life and Death and Life

Six months later, we received that phone call. Robyn was suddenly very sick with cancer and they needed to get home quickly. That was on a Monday. We immediately booked tickets for them on our credit card and they began the long journey home. Three days later on Thursday, we were at the Brisbane airport to pick them up. When they walked off the plane, Harold was pushing Robyn in a wheelchair, which we had never seen happen before, and when we saw her, it was obvious that she was very unwell.

For the past few months straight, we had spent four to eight hours a day, every day, praying and pressing in to God during the Lakeland Revival in Florida. We were truly so on fire for God and full of faith. We had watched as hundreds of people had been miraculously healed, right in front of our eyes on TV, with testimonies of thousands more. There were also reports coming in from all over of people being raised from the dead.

On top of that, Harold and Robyn had themselves just seen someone healed of cancer and a young boy raised from the dead only a month earlier

in India. The truth is, both Jodie and I were absolutely full of faith that Robyn would be completely healed.

Events happened very quickly over the next few days. On Saturday morning, we took Robyn to the hospital and by Monday they diagnosed her, giving us a very tough prognosis. Robyn's condition had very quickly deteriorated. Jodie, her dad, and I were all in the hospital room next to Robyn early on Tuesday morning. She had been mostly unconscious the past few hours and looking very off-color and her breathing was very labored.

All of a sudden, something happened. Her breathing became normal, color returned to her face, and the three of us jumped to our feet and started really praying, declaring healing over her! What happened next, I will let Jodie tell you in her own words:

> The atmosphere was suddenly charged and a sense of expectation that was palpable filled the room. As Mum's breathing shifted from extremely labored to normal and her skin tone lost its grey look, along with the sudden "crispness" in the air, I assumed a miracle was upon us and Mum was being healed. Something supernatural was indeed happening; my spirit was alert and overwhelmed by God's presence as I stood next to Mum.
>
> Suddenly, I entered into the most precious and surreal of encounters! I clearly saw an angel "drop" at the end of the hospital bed, and I pointed and shouted out, "There's an angel, there's an angel!" From there I entered into what I can only best describe as another atmosphere. An atmosphere that carried a weighty glory—it was crisp, pure, charged, electric, tangibly infused with thick peace and felt-hope, and the breath of Life seemed to step into the room. I watched my mum open her eyes and stare straight at the angel, which was about 7 feet tall. Her countenance changed…the peace, despite the charged atmosphere was thick. The holiness of God filled the hospital room. I knew why the angels said, "Holy, holy, holy."

I was aware somehow that there was communication taking place between Mum and the angel, a conversation, if you will, that though I couldn't hear the words I understood what was going on.

Mum was full of joy. I sensed her heart being filled with Hope that seemed tangible, weighty, and a substance that I could touch. The "realness" of God's love was a substance that could be felt, and I knew it was settling on Mum. Within the encounter it was as if I entered the very atmosphere of Heaven and it was more glorious, more beautiful, more real than the hospital room I was standing in. I understood somehow that Mum was going to Heaven and I sensed a conversation that seemed to take hours and yet somehow condensed, that brought peace to every unanswered question in my mum's heart. Peace, thick peace was tangible.

I was completely unaware of Dad and Ben in this moment, as I knew I was observing a precious moment, my mum stepping into her new eternal home. I could feel the perfection of eternity's manifest promise, and somehow listened to a Spirit-to-spirit conversation that left fleeting images in my head of victories, joys, and heartaches of my mum's life—and yet the peace was so thick it was almost overwhelming. I sensed unfinished stories being passed as a baton with a promise of fulfillment. There wasn't pain, there was only peace.

I couldn't speak, I couldn't move. I was frozen in this holy moment. Time seemed different. I was aware of the enormity of what I was watching unfold and yet I wasn't just watching. I felt as though I was somehow part of the encounter but equally separate from it. I felt part of the very atmosphere itself, that a portal of Heaven had opened up and was infusing every part of me with a deeper and more tangible sense of "God's realness" than I'd ever touched before.

The holiness, the crispness of knowing anything is possible, this didn't just impact me, it entered me. It was but a taste of Heaven, but it wrecked me. Heaven is real and it's more real

than here. Where my mum was going was truly full of indescribable wonder.

I sensed in Mum her readiness, that what needed to be said was said…and again I felt waves of God's presence emanating through me that felt more real than the floor I was standing on. A strange knowing came over me. I knew I could take just one step forward and enter Heaven. I felt eternity was closer and more real than I'd ever understood. Eternity was a place charged with a tangible life force of God's love that was felt in every part of my body. I was also aware, I was not to move, I was not to step forward. I sensed the importance and preciousness of only observing and receiving Heaven's hope.

It deeply impacted me that Heaven felt so close and so tangibly real. Please understand I believe in the realness of Heaven… this encounter just transformed my understanding of real. It felt as though I could just step forward and step into another realm, another time of timelessness, another world of weighty glory. Without spoken words I understood I was not to lean in any farther as my time for Heaven had not come. Mum was peaceful, healed, full of joy, transfixed by the glory emanating from the angel, full of a hope that wasn't hope, it was a knowing eternity with Jesus had come.

And then as suddenly as the angel came, I watched mum's body shake as if discarding an old jacket, and the angel and my mum were gone. I watched as she stepped from this world to the next. Whatever door had been opened was now closed, and I knew my mum was in Heaven, and yet a tangible resonance of weighty glory remained in the room. I knew Mum had been victoriously escorted from earth to eternity, and was now in the very presence of Jesus.

The strangest thing happened, Ben assured me that this entire "moment" was one or two minutes at most, and yet to me it felt like at minimum twenty minutes had passed if not hours. It may have been a suddenly but nothing was rushed. When I looked at the hospital room and the body of my beautiful,

precious mum, her body immediately looked “empty.” Heaven felt more real than real to me, and earth felt somehow not real, or less real. In fact, for days afterward I struggled to feel that life was anything but a shadow, and Heaven is our real home.

Of course, sadness came that Mum was no longer here, but in that indescribable encounter of the home God had prepared for her and us, my primary thoughts and feelings were awe and wonder! The glory of God eclipsed even the feeling of grief in that moment. Truly Heaven has no sorrow.

I was aware of a few precious truths. My mum’s prayer had been to be healed, and she truly was transformed in God’s glory in that encounter and went home healed in an instant. I felt the peace, joy, hope, love, and resolution of incomplete prayers and dreams in eternity’s presence. Truly nothing was missing, nothing was broken, nothing was incomplete. My mother was triumphantly and victoriously escorted home.

Even though I think her life was too short, it marked me that death did not steal her. An angelic host carried her right into Jesus’ presence. Her last moments on earth were gloriously full of God’s presence and life, life, life! Her final breaths were not in pain, nor was she fearful. The thick consuming presence of God’s love completely overtook the room and death had absolutely no voice in this moment, only life spoke!

My mum was and is now very much alive, more alive than before, and she is with her precious Jesus in Heaven. I know Heaven is real. I felt it, I touched it, but for a second. It’s more real and more wonderful than anything in this world.

As an aside, Mum led her dad, in his final days on earth, in a prayer to accept Jesus as his Savior not long before this. It made me happy that the time they didn’t get in this life to enjoy loving God together, they now had in the next.

As time goes on, my heart desperately misses “Mummy” and my greatest cheerleader…and yet the preciousness, the realness of seeing her glorious promotion from time to timeless glory

> has forever changed me. What an honor, what a precious memory. You see, my heart hurts when I miss my mum, but never once had the moment of her "going to Heaven" been anything other than the most profoundly beautiful and inspiring moment of my life! I will see Mum again—she's just loving somewhere else.
>
> My mum lived to make Jesus' love known, and I hear my mum's heart-cry still. She would want you to know it's critical to "Choose Jesus! Don't wait another day, surrender your heart to Jesus today."
>
> Death truly has no sting in the realness of God's presence. When we have chosen to give our hearts to Jesus, it's not death, it's the beginning of life eternal.

Jodie has so beautifully and powerfully described her encounter that day. I just want to finish by reiterating what she has said. Although, I didn't see the angel myself, I did experience the tangible presence of God that flooded that hospital room. I remember seeing Jodie being overcome, barely able to stand up, and hearing her loudly proclaim, "There's an angel, there's an angel!"

After a few minutes had passed and the angel had left, we began to pray for resurrection. The room was still filled with such a strong sense of the presence of God as we did everything we knew to do…rebuking death, calling her back, telling her to come forth, etc. We even had our dear friend Rob DeLuca, who was at the Lakeland Outpouring at that very moment, praying for resurrection over the phone on loudspeaker. We prayed for the next five hours, but didn't see her raised. She had gone.

I appreciate that if you weren't there to see it, it might be difficult to understand, or even believe, but right before Robyn breathed her last, something happened. As already mentioned, her breathing returned to normal, color returned to her face, and her eyes opened, clearly looking at the angel. We believe in that moment, that she was healed! Cancer didn't kill her; her life wasn't stolen. Robyn victoriously went home and had sown her life as a seed for harvest on earth. In that moment, at the end of her life

on earth, she was given a heavenly escort as she passed into that realm of glory.

I don't feel this is a time to discuss or draw any theological conclusions from this event, but rather I write to tell you this: in that moment, and in the hours and days following, just as it was for Jodie, it was also my experience that Heaven became so real, and so close. It no longer felt like it was a faraway place, completely separate from this world, but it was just a step, just a breath away. So near. So real. It felt like there was only a very thin veil between this world and that. The sense of the overwhelming nearness of Heaven lingered with us.

Heaven Is Real

Heaven is so real, my friend. And one day, I pray, that you and I will be there together. I think about it all the time, if not every single day.

I'll never forget one day many years ago when I was riding my bicycle along the waterfront in Perth, Western Australia, past a row of gigantic mansions that closer resembled cruise ships rather than houses, and I was thinking, *I wonder if I will ever live in a house like that?* The Holy Spirit clearly whispered to me in that familiar still small voice, "This is not your prize, Ben."

The truth is, when we lay our lives down for the gospel, we are not living for any earthly reward, but rather a heavenly prize! We're not living for now, but rather we are living for eternity and the life which is to come.

Jesus said:

> *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city* (Revelation 22:12-14 KJV).
>
> *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive*

you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:2-3).

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Pray for God to break in—break into your life as never before, closer than ever before.

Father, I thank You for the reality of Heaven and for the home that You are preparing for us. Help me to remember that the world is not my prize and please help me to live with eternity in mind. Thank You also, Lord, that I don't have to wait to go to Heaven to experience Your presence and glory. Come close to me today, Lord, as I come close to You. Let the very atmosphere of Heaven invade this room and my heart and life right now. I love You, and worship You, Jesus! Amen.

Chapter 11

GOD SPEAKS ON THE TRAIN

AS MENTIONED IN A PREVIOUS CHAPTER, WHEN I WAS 25, I was a student at Hillsong College in Sydney, Australia. I had wanted to attend for quite some time, and when I finally had the opportunity, I really loved it. It was hard work, though, and a real sacrifice for our family. As is life for many students the world over, I had very little money at the time and the added pressure of being married and having a 3-year-old daughter. I lived off 35-cent cans of baked beans and a couple of slices of buttered bread, that I would take with me for lunch, and make a toasted sandwich in the college kitchen almost every day.

We also had the added challenge of distance. At the time, we lived in Wollongong, a beautiful oceanside town south of Sydney. It was a fifteen-minute walk to the train station from our apartment, then a ninety-minute train ride, and another fifteen-minute walk the other end to get to Hillsong. I made that two-hour journey each way, four days a week for an entire year.

What made it even more of a challenge at times, was that I was on the Hillsong College worship team and rehearsals were at 7 a.m., which, of course, meant leaving home at 5 a.m. and getting home usually around 7 p.m. Many days I wouldn't even get to see our Keely, who would be asleep when I left and asleep before I got home at night. I am forever grateful to

Jodie and her sacrificial support of me during that time, which allowed me to pursue my study.

Although it was a challenge, I am certainly not complaining. In fact, I am incredibly grateful for my time at Hillsong College. It built real capacity in me—capacity to persevere, endure, press through, and work really hard. These traits have really stuck with Jodie and me and have served us well all of these years.

Out of the Blue

On one of those early morning train rides, which was otherwise just like any other morning, my head was leaning against the window, my breath fogging it up, as I watched the beautiful coastal scenery flash by. I wasn't praying or thinking about anything in particular, I was just kind of dozing. All of a sudden, completely out of the blue, I heard a Voice speak to me. The Voice was internal, yet audible—so clear and so loud, completely invading my mind and heart, cutting across everything else. "Never associate what you do, with who you are."

Suddenly I was bolt awake, and immediately aware. *Oh my goodness, God just spoke to me!* I had heard the voice of the Lord many times before, but never like this. This time it was so loud and so clear.

Of course, immediately my attention turned to what God was trying to say to me. At the time I thought the interpretation was clear. This was a warning to me to not get full of pride by any ministry position that I had, or because I was part of the world famous Hillsong Church, etc. My role wouldn't make me special, I was still a lowly sinner, saved by grace. Or so I thought.

Recently at the time, Jodie and I had received a prophetic word from a dear and wise ministry friend. She said that God was telling us, "Don't be distracted by the bright lights." At the time, and throughout the years, this word of wisdom and direction from the Lord has served us well. It meant to us that we were to follow the leading and guidance of the Lord, and not necessarily just chase after things because they were perceived to be big and fancy—bright lights. Not that there is anything wrong with big or bright

lights, in fact we love all of that, but rather to make sure that our obedience to God wasn't compromised or influenced by those things.

This word at the time gave context to my interpretation of what God was saying to me, "Don't think you're something special, Ben, just because you're a pastor or a preacher or part of a big ministry."

However, in later years I discovered that what the Lord actually meant was the *complete opposite* of what my 25-year-old self had thought. I know now that what He was telling me was that my identity, who I was, wasn't affected at all by what I did. My entire identity is found in the fact that I am a son of the Most High God! There is no better title that I could have in all the universe. I couldn't fail or be fired from being His son. My identity, position, and relationship were secure and were not subject to whether I was a world-famous preacher or a toilet cleaner.

I am His son. This revelation changes everything.

Find Your Identity in Him

The great cinematic masterpiece *Cool Runnings* has a great scene in it, a scene that I have often quoted when preaching or sharing with those we have been mentoring or training. John Candy's character—a disgraced former Olympic bobsled champion, true story!—is asked by one of the Jamaican guys why he cheated. He responds that it was because he had made winning everything, and how a gold medal was special but, "If you're not enough without it, you'll never be enough with it."

That's the truth that God was trying to instill in me—I am a son of God and I am enough despite any job, role, title, position, recognition, or popularity that I could possibly have on earth. When you accept that revelation deep down in your heart, it means that as a believer, you don't have to scramble for a platform or try to be noticed or recognized by anyone else. You can rest secure in your identity, knowing who you truly are and Whose you are.

If you're not enough *without* the platform, without the particular title or job, without the fancy house or car, without the social media likes or followers, you will *never* be enough *with* them. This truth is especially important in this social media-driven world where "likes" can be currency

for our value as people. If Instagram followers and Facebook likes define our worth, then we have to constantly scramble, compromise, and do whatever it takes to make sure we are liked and popular.

Jesus, of course, is the ultimate example of living out this revelation of being the Son of God. He knew who He was and where His worth and value came from. He wasn't striving for popularity or acceptance. His ministry was not for accolade, human acknowledgment or applause. He didn't derive worth from how many followers He had, whether or not the religious leaders approved or validated Him; neither did He get His sense of identify from the fact that He could raise the dead and turn water into wine. In fact many times when He performs a miracle, He tells them to "tell nobody." His worth, value, and identity came from deep revelation and knowing that He was and is the Son of God, loved by His Father.

Over the years there have been many opportunities to learn this lesson and for this revelation of sonship to be tested, or maybe it could be better said as being reinforced in me. I'll never forget early on in our journey having been part of a certain conference. There was a bit of a funny political situation over who was allowed in the "green room"—a back room where ministers hang out, pray, prepare, rest, and often socialize before preaching, etc. For whatever reason I was not invited to the green room. The truth is, I was a little offended, hurt, and feeling rejected. I was allowing myself to feel "less than" and associating who I was with whether or not I was invited to the green room or accepted by the other ministers. It sounds so silly, but I think on some level, maybe you can relate?

Sometime later, we were ministering in Fiji as part of a revival—more about that amazing story to come in a later chapter. On our last night, the pastor asked Jodie, Keely, and me to stand up at the front of the church. When I say church, I mean a wooden floor and a roof, with no sides, on the top of a hill in a Fijian village with cane toads and all manner of bugs hopping around. What followed was an experience I will never forget. About 300 beautiful Fijian voices, people we had come to love during the month we had been there, sang to us with such passion, love and honor…

Till we meet, till we meet,

Till we meet at Jesus' feet;

Till we meet, till we meet,

God be with you till we meet again.

Tears filled our eyes, overcome by the incredible harmonies, but more so the love and honor that they expressed. In the middle of that Holy Spirit whispered to me, through what sounded like a big smiley face, “This is better than any green room, hey Ben?” Of course, I agreed and was even more overcome with emotion as not only the people, but Holy Spirit ministered to my heart. I knew that God had orchestrated this moment, as if Heaven was thanking us and loving on us. God is so, so kind.

Never associate what you do, with who you are. You are so much more than what you do.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Please pray with me that God will break in and make Himself real to you as your Father:

Father, thank You for the truth that I am Your child! That I am a son or daughter of the King of kings. That You love me and have called me Your own. Let the revelation of the fullness of what that means go deep into my heart. I want to live from that place. From the truth of who I am in You. Thank You that I am not living or working for Your love and acceptance but from Your love and acceptance. Thank You that You are the Father who has put a clean robe on my back and a ring on my finger, and declared to me, that “all I have is yours.” Help me, Father, to never associate what I do with who I am. I am Your child! In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

Chapter 12

A FORK IN THE ROAD

THIS IS ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE DIFFICULT CHAPTERS TO write about because it took place during a really tough time. There are two things to remember though when we share our battles and challenges. First, remember that authenticity is really important. It's important to be able to share with each other the trials and battles we are facing. It helps to unite us, as we often learn and discover that we are not alone in the fight. Sometimes, it can feel like we are the only ones going through something, and isolation can make the battle all that more difficult. The old adage, "A problem shared is a problem halved" has a lot of truth to it, as we find strength from each other.

The second thing to remember when sharing about our battles, and just life in general, is to resist having a victim mentality. I have come to learn that a victim mentality is a close cousin of the poverty spirit. When we give ourselves over to being a victim, we form a partnership with a type of poverty, helplessness, and hopelessness. It says, "This problem is bigger than me and bigger than God." It says, "There is simply not enough—not enough to meet my needs, be it emotional or financial" It says, "I'm trapped and now I'm 'less than' as a result of what has happened to me." The victim and poverty spirits move us away from a place of faith that says God is our Provider and Source of *everything* we need—to a place where we

manipulate and coerce others into guilt so they will give to us, if not money then sympathy, pity, and attention. The trouble is, that pit is never satisfied. It always needs more.

I'm not in any way downplaying the very real hurt, the real pain, and need for real healing, love, and ministry as a result of terrible circumstances we all can at times face. I'm talking about giving ourselves over to victimhood and allowing it to become our entire identity, informing who we are, rather than it just being something that happened to us.

Self-Enslaved

There are some people who are enslaved by this victim and poverty mentality to the point that they are afraid of things going well, and of others seeing that they are doing well. When you ask someone with a victim mentality how are they are doing, it's like they *have* to tell you that they are struggling with this or that because otherwise it might mean you stop giving them money, attention, pity, etc. Their identity is found in remaining victims. The truth is that people who have become like that have suffered terrible hurts and circumstances and need to be ministered to, often delivered from some level of demonic oppression and given tools to overcome and stay free.

The revelation of being a son or daughter of God really comes in to play here. He is a good, good Father. Just as the older brother is told in the Luke 15 story of the prodigal son, the father says to us all, "Son, all I have is yours." There is always enough!

That was just a little aside, but a very important point that could definitely be the subject of an entire book of its own. Let me just tell you this, despite all that you have gone through, you are *not* a victim. You are so so loved by God, and He wants to meet your *every* need. Right now before we go any further in this chapter, I want to pray this over you:

> *Father, I pray for every reader right now, that they would know You and have the same deep revelation that David did, when he wrote Psalm 23. I pray that they would know that You are the Shepherd; I pray right now, they would know the peace and security of the green pastures, the serenity of the still waters. I*

pray that they right now would feast at the banqueting table of Your love and goodness, even in the midst of their enemies. I pray that You would anoint them with fresh oil today, to the point that they are overflowing with Your glory. Let Your presence surround them, comfort them, heal them, and deliver them right now, in Jesus' name! I thank You, Lord, that perfect love casts out all fear, and that You love every reader perfectly. So right now, we tell all fear to go in Jesus' name! May this person now be filled with overwhelming joy in Your presence. Hallelujah!

On to this chapter's story.

My wife has battled for many years with a chronic illness. This battle has meant spending many weeks and even months in the hospital over our years together. It's really important to say that in the midst of this battle, there has indeed been a real struggle; but we have also seen God show up and move in the most incredible, miraculous, and beautiful ways.

Some years back, we went through a particularly tough battle with this illness. I won't go into all of the details, because it's really Jodie's powerful story to tell. I will say, though, that in this season she was extremely sick and in constant, terrible pain. Her condition was very serious and we were faced with the daily reality that she could lose her life, even at any moment. I was unable to leave her for more than just a few minutes to do a very quick run to the supermarket or other essentials. Even though we saw God do several incredible miracles of provision for us, our finances seemed to dry up and we weren't receiving any normal ministry-type income due to not being able to travel or work.

One day when we had little to nothing left, I found myself in line for a food parcel at a place that supported needy families. This was after we had had the angelic encounter and had been traveling full-time around the world, experiencing a level of what would be considered ministry success. I only say that so you might see what was going through my mind.

When I got back to my car with the food parcel, I closed the door and just burst into tears, big ugly sobs! I started to cry out to God for answers… *"GOD! A (insert mild curse word, just being real) ANGEL CAME AND*

STOOD ON OUR BED! I AM SUPPOSED TO BE HELPING TO FEED THE WORLD, NOT LINING UP FOR A FOOD PARCEL!" (Caps for emphasis, volume, and to show how I really felt!)

In response, my beautiful Lord spoke to me and ministered deeply to my heart.

First, He began to speak to me about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel 3 tells the story about the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar who had issued a decree that every time the call went out, everyone must bow down and worship the golden statue that he had built in his name, threatening anyone who disobeyed with being cast into a fiery furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three Hebrew young men, refused to worship the statue, and instead prayed to God. They were caught and brought before the king. It's important to note here that they were innocent before God. In fact, it was their passion and devotion to the Lord that caused them to go through this trial and face a fiery death. (I'm not saying that it was God who caused this! They, like when Samson was attacked by the lion, were in pursuit of God's will at the time.) When given one last chance to give up their faith and pursuit of God and kneel to King Nebuchadnezzar, the three young men responded with one of my favorite dialogues in all the Bible: *"O King, our God is able to deliver us from this fire, AND HE WILL! But even if He doesn't…WE. WILL. NOT. BOW!"* (Daniel 3:16-18, my paraphrase).

Wow. Such faith in the midst of the fiery trial. They had complete confidence that God was going to save them, but even if He didn't, they were resolved that they would not bow down to the enemy and the circumstances they were facing.

God was reassuring me that He would deliver us too. He would rescue us. But was I going to bow down to the enemy?

At that part in the story with the three Hebrew boys (let's be honest, that's easier than writing out their full names again!) you would think that would've been a perfect time for Jesus to come riding in on a big white horse and rescue them—that's certainly how the movie version would've played out. But instead, what really happened was that King N (another

difficult and long name!) was even more enraged and commanded the fire to be heated seven times hotter, and then had the three thrown into the furnace. The fire was so hot that the guards who threw them in were instantly incinerated!

After a few moments, King N then jumps to his feet and can't believe what he is seeing. He asks, "Didn't we only throw three men into the fire?!"

"Yes!" replied his counselors.

Then he says, *"Look! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God"* (Daniel 3:25).

Jesus had indeed rescued them; He was right there with them in the midst of the fire. He brought them through the fire and out the other side, delivering them, rescuing them, just as the young men had said He would. I know this is an Old Testament story but hey, it says *"and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God,"* so I'm comfortable believing that this was preincarnate Jesus. Not only did He rescue them out of the fire, when He brought them through it, their clothes were not burned, not a hair on their head was singed, and they did not even smell like smoke! They had been *completely* delivered from the fire!

Not only that, their faith and faithfulness had not only led to their deliverance but it could be said that it led to a revival of sorts. King N decreed to the whole kingdom, that no one would speak badly of their God because no other God could deliver like the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!

Hallelujah!

Next, the Lord took me to the time when a great many people walked away from Him. It was right after Jesus had performed the incredible miracle of multiplying the food right before the eyes of the crowd, and fed 5,000 men plus women and children on the side of the mountain. They were all astonished and declared that He must be "the one." The next day when Jesus is preaching to the same crowd, He tells them:

> *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you* (John

6:53).

When Jesus said that, a great many of the people got offended and stopped following Him. The same ones who just the day before had seen great miracles and declared He was the promised Messiah. Seeing that many people were leaving, Jesus turns to the disciples, who were also offended—of course they misunderstood what Jesus meant, but were offended nevertheless—and He asks them, "Are you going to leave Me too?"

Peter speaks up and replies, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (John 6:68-69).

Peter doesn't say, "No" but replies, by telling Jesus, "Where else will I go, Lord? I don't get it. I don't understand. What you have said and done offends me, and goes against everything I have been taught, (eating flesh and blood was highly offensive to Hebrew laws and culture) BUT…I KNOW that You are the Son of God. I choose to trust You."

I knew that this was a real fork-in-the-road moment for the rest of our lives. God was ministering to me, and at the same time He was asking me if I would respond like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Peter? Would I have the same faith and trust they had? God was asking me if I would, and yet at the same time, encouraging me, filling me and affirming to me that I did, and I would. If I could trust God in this very low place and allow Him to bring us through and deliver us out of the fire, then I could walk with Him for the rest of my life.

Of course, right then, in that moment, I made the decision to trust God, and that no matter what we faced, I WOULD NOT BOW!

It's very hard to take any credit for that decision though, because it truly was only because of the grace, goodness, and kindness of God; it was His tender love and instruction in those moments that enabled me to make that decision. I, just like Peter, had no other place to go, because Jesus had proved to me over and over and over again, by His love, goodness, and power, that He indeed is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Let’s pray together right now and believe God to break in afresh:

God, I thank You that there is a fourth Man standing there in the fire with me, and that it’s You, Jesus. Thank You that just as You are with me in every fire, You will deliver me out of the fire. Help me to have the same courage, faith and resolve that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had to truly say, no matter what the circumstance, I will not bow! Just like Peter said, Lord, I know that You are the Son of God and that You have the words of eternal life. Thank You that even when I don’t understand, You give me peace that surpasses all understanding. I lay down my right to have to always understand in order to trust, and I choose to trust You anyway. God, break into my life right now in a powerful and fresh way. Thank You that You are always with me, and will never forsake me. I love You, Jesus! Amen.

Chapter 13

THE ANGELS ARE SINGING

MUSIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HUGE PART OF MY LIFE. OUR HOME was always full of it when I was growing up. Mum loved to put a record on (yes, one of those vinyl black discs), turn the volume up to 11 and blast it right through the house as she cleaned or did laundry, dancing as she went. It was usually Michael Jackson or the Beatles or Dire Straits, with those legendary guitar solos.

My parents also loved to party and so our house was full of people every weekend. My dad and my uncles, he has five brothers, all loved to play guitar and sing, so it was only ever a matter of time before the guitars came out and the next couple of hours were spent singing through all the hits of the ’50s, ’60s, and ’70s. Of course I couldn’t help but love it too, so at the age at 12, my first year of high school, I learned to play the guitar and was finally able to join in with them. We played songs like “La Bamba,” “Twist and Shout,” “Smoke on the Water,” “House of the Rising Sun,” all those classic songs that guitarists learn when starting out. Well, at least those were the songs we learned in the ’80s.

Three years later, when I was saved at the age of 15, immediately my passion became worship. So because I could already play the guitar, it was a natural transition for me. The only problem was that even though I was

competent with the guitar, I was a terrible singer! I just loved to worship though, so I would cry out, “God, please teach me how to sing!” and He did! I spent hours alone in my bedroom with my guitar, worshipping God at the top of my lungs. I would sing and play with all my heart, but sometimes it just wouldn’t be enough. If I could take off and fly around the room, I would’ve done that too! During this time God miraculously taught me how to sing and gave me a voice!

I loved all the warfare songs from the ’80s especially “King of Kings,” “The Gates of Hell Shall not Prevail,” “Fear Not,” “I Am Full of Power,” and then some of the quieter ones like “I Believe in Jesus,” “More Love More Power,” “Create in Me a Clean Heart,” pretty much anything by Hosanna, Vineyard, Kevin Prosch, and let’s not forget, Hillsong!

Within just a couple of months after being saved, I started leading worship in home groups, Bible studies, on the school field at lunchtime, anywhere and everywhere there was an opportunity. It’s been a great joy and privilege to have now been leading worship for more than twenty-five years—a journey that has taken me literally all around the world. I’ve had the honor of leading worship in big conferences and revivals with some of the most-known names in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. I’ve also had the great joy to lead worship in slums in India, jungle villages in the Pacific Islands, and on the dirt in places like Asia and Africa. I even led worship in a bar in Nigeria just a couple of years ago!

One of my favorite worship-leading memories comes from the time in India when Jodie, Keely, and I were with Jodie’s parents, Harold and Robyn, ministering in a slum. There were more than fifty people, all Indian except us, squeezed into a tiny, and I mean tiny, corrugated iron hut with a dirt floor. Everyone was joyfully singing and praising God when suddenly the power went out and, of course, with it, the light from the single bulb that hung precariously from the very low “ceiling.”

The light went out but the worship didn’t stop. In fact, it only got louder. There we were, sitting in the pitch dark, on the dirt, in a slum in India, and God’s praises were being lifted up, ringing out right through the village. Our voices could be heard all around! It was a beautiful and powerful moment that I will never forget.

The absolute greatest joy of my life though, has been getting to lead worship with our beautiful daughter, Keely, all across the world, as the three of us have traveled and ministered together as a family. At just 10 years old, she started singing backing vocals on stage with me at churches and conferences. And at the ripe old age of 12, she started leading herself. Let me tell you, she is *amazing*! I don't know how many times I have been on stage with her, playing guitar and singing, and I get completely choked up and reduced to tears, as I watch and hear such power, anointing, fearlessness, and maturity coming out of her—well beyond her years.

It hasn't come easy for her though, she has worked hard to cultivate a very special level of intimacy with the Lord in the secret place, which then comes out when she's on the platform. One of my favorite memories of her childhood is hearing worship emanating from her bedroom as she would sing to the Lord with all her heart. As a dad, that's just everything!

Singing Angels in Fiji

One of those precious times when we had the opportunity to worship and minister together was some years back when we were invited by our dear friends, Larry and Carol Taylor, to join them in ministering at a revival in beautiful Fiji.

Keely and I had led worship almost every night, along with a group of very talented Fijian musicians. On average, there were between 150-300 people there every night. On one particular night though, there were only about 80 people in the meeting. It was a Monday night, raining outside and colder than normal. To be fair, it's never really that cold in Fiji but this was a colder night for the locals. The road leading up the hill to the church was hard to walk at the best of times. It was a dirt road with very big corrugations in it, which resembled more of a river bed than a road, and now that it was raining, it had become like an actual river! Nevertheless, there were still about 80 people who made it!

As I was leading worship, I came to a part where it was quieter, and I was singing in a spontaneous prophetic flow, *"We come to the waters and drink."* As I was repeating this line, suddenly I heard beautiful singing. The singing in Fiji was always beautiful, but this was something I hadn't heard

before. I opened my eyes and looked around the room for the voices I was hearing, but I couldn't spot them anywhere. Suddenly I realized what was going on. I immediately told everyone in the room, *"Just listen everyone, no one sing…the angels are singing."*

As I continued to sing, three perfect female-sounding harmonies were singing along with me. And the entire room could hear it with me. You didn't have to "squint our ears" to try and make it out, it was loud, clear, and beautiful…the angels were singing!

Immediately the atmosphere got all Benny Hinn-like. I say that of course a little tongue-in-cheek, but with all honor and respect. What I mean is, immediately that quiet, holy awe, charged with the presence of God filled the room, just like I'd seen happen so many times at a Benny Hinn meeting when everyone is quietly singing "Alleluia." The glory of God filled the room in a way I hadn't experienced any night leading up to that one. After a little while, I asked the band to take over and sing, "We are standing on holy ground." I put down my guitar and started to minister, laying hands on everyone in the room. The power of God began to flow so strongly and people everywhere were falling out as we prayed for them, having life-changing encounters right there on that wooden floor.

It has always stuck out to me that this wasn't at some big, fancy conference in a well-known city, it was the least-attended night in a small, village in Fiji. It wasn't being live-streamed, of course that was impossible then, or even recorded, and yet the angels showed up in this humble place. I am reminded of the whole host of angels, the heavenly choir, that appeared the night of the birth of Jesus. They sang out praises, not in Jerusalem, not in the city, but in the fields, just to a few shepherds. Wow. The Kingdom of God is often counter to our expectations. There is nothing wrong with big cities, big conferences, or fancy venues, of course, God shows up there in power too, but there is something the Lord loves about humble hearts in humble places.

Singing with Angels

Another thing that really grabbed me from that night, is that the angels were worshipping along with us. They were harmonizing with what I was

singing. Heaven was literally joining in with our praises to the King of kings.

This was a very special night, but it's not the only time that we have experienced Heaven break in and sing and even play instruments with us. We have heard drums being played that weren't there, and even entire orchestras of stringed instruments, horns, and flutes that people have heard. And every time it has been the same, the angels have played and sung along with us.

I truly believe that every time we worship, we join with Heaven and Heaven joins with us. We may not always hear them, but nevertheless, we worship the King of kings together.

> *And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"* (Revelation 5:13)

An experience and encounter like this, once again, reinforces to me and to us all that:

1. Heaven is so real and so close!
2. Angels are real, and involved in the affairs of earth. Angels show up in almost every book and season of the Bible, and it says that they are sent to minister to those who will inherit salvation. Hint: that's us!
3. Signs and wonders point us to Jesus and stir faith. No one started to worship the angels that night. Everyone's hearts, affections, and worship immediately turned to Jesus. He was the only One who, rightfully, got any glory that night. This has been my experience every time God has chosen to manifest the Kingdom realm through signs and wonders.

After the meeting ended that night, I grabbed our video camera and interviewed a couple of people about their experience. I'll never forget talking to the pastor's son, Levi, who was the drummer. With the hugest

Fijian smile on his face, he said, “It will always be my story now, that I have heard the angels sing. I believe I will hear it again, but it will always be my story. I have heard the angels sing!”

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

I encourage you to pray this prayer with me:

God, I thank You that Heaven and the glory realm are so real and so close. Thank You for the truth that I am seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Right now, I join with the angels and all of Heaven in worshipping You, whether I can see and hear them or not. I lift up Your name, Jesus, above every other name. I give You the highest praise and sing out: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

Chapter 14

RAINBOW VAPORS DURING WORSHIP

SOME YEARS BACK, I WAS LEADING WORSHIP IN THE DOWNTOWN area of one of my favorite cities in the USA—San Antonio, Texas.

We were having a beautiful time when suddenly I began to have a vision in the spirit. What I mean by that, is that I could see it with the eyes of my spirit rather than in the natural, at least I think that's what was going on. Sometimes it can be hard to separate the two as both are very real.

At the top of the room near the ceiling, I saw what was like a cloud of brown smog, about 2-3 feet deep (60-90 centimeters). This was not a glory cloud but quite the opposite. Then I looked at the people, and as they were worshipping and praising God, this brilliant rainbow-colored vapor was coming out of their mouths and heading up to the ceiling. The vapor was multicolored and so vibrant and beautiful. As it went up, it was literally changing the color of the atmosphere. The brown smog was becoming a cloud of beauty and splendor. Then something else happened…

As soon as the brown smog shifted and became this beautiful rainbow cloud, the vapor then started pouring out of all the building's windows and

into the street, shifting and transforming the atmosphere all around where we were meeting and into the surrounding areas.

God was speaking to me and showing me how our praise literally changes the atmosphere.

Now please don't think that I'm saying that I believe literal vapors come out of our mouths when we worship. Who really knows, maybe in the spirit they do; but what I am saying here is that God was giving me a vision to teach me and bring revelation regarding our praise for Him.

Praise Changes the Atmosphere

To understand the power of our praise and how it shifts the atmosphere, we first need to recognize and acknowledge that there is even such a thing as spiritual atmospheres. You may actually be very aware of this fact, but may have never been able give it language before.

Have you ever been in an area of a city late at night and thought to yourself, *This feels really yuck*. (Translation: creepy, unsettling, horrible, eww, bleh.) On the opposite end, have you ever walked into someone's house and noted, *It feels really peaceful in this home*. What makes it feel like that? Of course there are physical and natural factors—aesthetics, etc., but mostly what you are discerning is the spiritual atmosphere.

When you travel, you may notice how the atmosphere of one city differs from another, sometimes greatly. Some places just feel depressing, heavy, and hopeless. While others feel full of hope and life and opportunity. Some locations feel sleazy, while others feel exciting. All of this is about spiritual atmosphere.

What determines an atmosphere? The single greatest contributor to atmosphere is what or who is worshipped in that atmosphere. Psalm 22:3 says that God is *"Enthroned in the praises of Israel."* What that means is that when we, His people, give God praise, He is literally enthroned, or placed on the throne, taking His rightful place as King over the atmosphere where we are praising Him.

Just as God is enthroned on the praises of *His* people, the enemy and the disgusting hordes of hell, demons, are also enthroned on the praises and

worship of his people. I am in no way diminishing the fact that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords over all of the universe and that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord! What I am saying, though, is that when the enemy is worshipped, be it blatantly by bowing down in some kind of ritual or idol worship, or whether through partnership with sin, that could be fear, lies, doubt, lust, murder, unbelief, gossip, etc., it's all worship. It gives the enemy a foothold and the right to come and reign over the atmosphere where that is taking place.

A practical example of this could be a New Age store in a mall. The shop is full of idols, trinkets, and maybe even has actual rituals and practices taking place such as tarot cards, fortune-tellers, psychics, etc. This gives the enemy a foothold and a right to come and take up residence in that place. Demons are enthroned over that store. If you could see in the Spirit, you might see demons standing in that store, or perched over it.

Most people, because we are spiritual beings, can discern or feel the demonic presence, and might just express it as, "This doesn't feel good in here," You might start to pick up feelings of anxiety, fear, confusion, tightness, etc.

Please hear me when I say that as believers this is nothing to be afraid of. I am not one of those people who thinks there is a demon behind every little thing; however, somewhere along the line we stopped talking about this and it's important that we as believers have an understanding of these things. We don't need to talk about it all the time, but I believe we do need to talk about it a little more. We should not be ignorant of the devil's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Active Worship

The very good news is that our praises are powerful. In our mouth we have the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6); and when we give God praise, we wield that sword. When we lift up the name of Jesus above every other name, He is enthroned, the presence of God comes and the enemy flees. This not only affects the atmosphere of a room or a city, but also our own personal atmosphere. Many can relate to having experienced people who walk around like the character from Charlie Brown, with a

black rain cloud over them. What a perfect picture of a personal atmosphere.

When we choose to worship Jesus *actively*, we take authority over our hearts and the atmosphere that we carry personally, and a proper alignment comes between us and Heaven. We do not have to be subject to the atmosphere around us—we can, and are called to, walk around as atmosphere changers. We are a mobile embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven, a portable burning bush encounter for people to experience God through us, no matter where we are. When our hearts are in correct alignment with God and He is enthroned upon our hearts, wherever we walk we carry the very atmosphere of Heaven with us.

This subject alone is worthy of an entire book. In fact, I recommend Dawna DeSilva's book, *Shifting Atmospheres*.

The point is this: *The praising mouth becomes a literal portal through which Heaven invades earth—praise changes the atmosphere!* And let's not forget this vital truth—one of us can put 1,000 to flight, but two of us can put 10,000 to flight! (See Leviticus 26:8.) This is why our corporate worship and prayer is such a powerful weapon and a vital key to revival, to intercession, and to seeing our cities and nations transformed by the love of God.

> *Yet I know that you are most holy; it's indisputable. You are God-Enthroned, surrounded with songs, living among the shouts of praise of your princely people* (Psalm 22:3 TPT).

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Declare this with me:

My praise is powerful!

My praise shifts the atmosphere!

Jesus is enthroned upon my praises!

God inhabits my praises!

As my praise goes up, the glory comes down!

I am a walking embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven!

I carry the atmosphere of Heaven with me!

Where I go, the atmosphere changes!

Jesus, I give You the highest praise!

I place You in the highest place!

I lift up Your name above every name!

Everything that is not You must flee in Jesus' name!

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

Hallelujah!

Chapter 15

THE BIG WHITE TRUCK

THIS IS ONE OF MY MOST FAVORITE ENCOUNTERS OF GOD'S goodness. Not because it is particularly spiritual, but more because it's a little crazy and just a perfect example of the goodness of God and how He takes care of the little things in our lives, as well as the big things. To this day, when I remember what happened I can't help but smile and shake my head. It's just so cool!

Many years ago, I was lying in bed with my wife Jodie the night before we were due to move. We had a four-bedroom house full of everything that a family accumulates over the years. We didn't have the money to pay a removalist (a moving company), and so in the morning a few guys and one *ute* (a pickup truck in American English) were coming to help. Many of our belongings were going into storage as we were going on the road to minister and wouldn't have a home of our own for some time. I looked over at my wife and said, "How is this going to happen tomorrow?"

Not only did we have the enormous task of moving out of our house, but we were also scheduled to lead worship and preach an hour away that same night! Yes, we were, and most would think still are, crazy! We both had faith and a real peace that it would all happen somehow, but we really

didn’t know how God would do it. The Lord had been teaching us that when He said, “Don’t worry about your life,” that He meant it!

The next morning came and the guys arrived to help us. They took one look at all of our stuff and knowing the time frame we had, they too exclaimed, “How is this going to happen?!” So I said, “Look, let’s just start by taking everything out of the house and putting it on the front lawn.” So for two hours, that’s what we did. Soon enough our front lawn was covered in beds, couches, bicycles, boxes, and all manner of household items. Thankfully we had a large front lawn.

Suddenly, there’s that word again—and I mean *suddenly*, out in front of our house, a huge white furniture truck pulls up, right in front of us all. Now you must realize that our house was not on a main road, but a quiet side street. The cab door opens and out jumps a typical truckie-looking guy, with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He walks straight up to me and says, “It looks like you’re moving…if you give me $40 for diesel, I’m yours for the day!”

Well, all the guys’ chins nearly fell off as we all collectively gasped in simultaneous disbelief and amazement at what we were witnessing. Where had this guy come from?!

Of course I said, “YES and thanks so much!”

Not only was this a huge furniture truck, but our smoking, bogan-looking new best friend was an actual removalist, a professional mover! He had all the ropes, blankets, carts, etc., and loaded our whole house, everything we had, into the truck completely by himself in 15-20 minutes! Not only that, he then drove to the storage facility and unloaded the whole truck by himself as well. We offered to help, of course, but this guy was an expert and he made it clear that we were just in his way.

After all was done, Jodie ran up to him before he left and said, “Thank you! And just in case you’re an angel, I want to say thank you for being an answer to prayer today!”

I’ll never ever forget the sight of that big white truck pulling up outside our house that day. A complete miracle, sent by God. It may as well have had a big red bow tied around it. God had shown up with a crazy miracle; and like the amazing Father He is, took care of what His kids needed that

day. As I sit here writing, I'm laughing with a few tears forming at the same time, at God's overwhelming love, kindness, and goodness to us. *Nothing* is impossible and *nothing* is too big or too small for Him. Jesus tells us:

> *Therefore I tell you,* ***do not worry about your life****, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?* (Matthew 6:25-26 NIV)

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Praise God for breaking into your life with His promises:

God, thank You that you have said, "Do not worry about your life" and that You promise to take care of me in every way. Please help me to have faith for this promise and to trust You. Thank You, God, that truly nothing is impossible for You. Please increase my faith and creative capacity to believe You for the impossible in every circumstance. Thank You that nothing is too big or too small for You. In Jesus' name, amen!

Chapter 16

IT'S RAINING INSIDE!

BECAUSE OF WHAT FOLLOWS IN THIS CHAPTER, SOMETHING I wrote in the Introduction of this book is worth repeating here:

The Bible is full of what might otherwise be considered crazy signs and wonders. From gold coins appearing in the mouth of a fish, to floating axe heads, supernatural instant transportation from one city to another, walking on water, angels appearing and baking, oil jars that never run dry, talking donkeys, sticks turning into snakes, and so, so many more—and this isn't even including all the people being miraculously healed and raised from the dead! In the context of the Bible, these signs and wonders from God are sometimes easy to accept, but what happens when supernatural occurrences happen to us today? The Bible, of course, tells the stories of over 4,000 years of ordinary people like you and me having everyday encounters with a supernatural God! If Christianity is anything, it is most definitely supernatural!

The following is a story of one particular sign and wonder, that God has done repeatedly in our lives and ministry. In fact, it's probably our most common supernatural occurrence.

One day, almost ten years ago, something very strange happened to me. I was walking through a mall in Brisbane, Australia, when suddenly I started to feel a drip of some kind of liquid hit my inside right ankle. Not just once but several times. I had no idea what was going on! I was obviously fully clothed—jeans, shirt, socks, shoes—and I knew everything was intact with my bladder. But still, drip, drip, drip…

By this time, we had become accustomed to the supernatural and God doing strange things, so I just said, "God, if that's You…could You do it somewhere else?" Immediately I felt drips hit my right wrist and also my forehead. That at least gave me some peace that whatever this was, God was doing it. I know how weird this sounds, but I'm just telling you what happened.

Over the next few days, the dripping increased. It felt like raindrops hitting my face, head, and arms at different times and different places. I told Jodie about it, and then she started to experience it as well. Increasingly, it felt more and more like rain—sometimes just a few drops, and sometimes a light shower. There was never any real water at this point, just the physical feeling of raindrops hitting us.

That is until one night when we were on the Gold Coast and leaving a meeting in our car. All of a sudden, a whole lot of real raindrops fell on both Jodie and me—*inside the car!* The windows were up and the doors were closed, and yet real rainwater had supernaturally fallen on us.

Following on from that, the rain began to increase and become almost a regular daily occurrence for Jodie and me, and then for Keely. Then it began to fall and be experienced in our meetings as we ministered. You may remember from an earlier chapter the lady in Northern Queensland, Australia, who went from being a skeptic to an evangelist overnight after experiencing the supernatural rain!

At that same time, God began to speak to Jodie and me out of First Kings 18, which speaks of Elijah hearing the sound of heavy rain! It wasn't yet raining, but Elijah could hear the sound prophetically of a coming outpouring of abundant rain in the land. The Lord had us release this word as a prophetic message of revival outpouring coming and for people to press in for more, just as it says in Zechariah 10 to ask for rain in the time of rain! In other words, when it's raining, *ask for more!* We released this

word everywhere we ministered for quite some time; and for well over a year, supernatural rain would fall in almost every meeting. It often still does.

When we were in Fiji during the revival there, on the very first night I could feel the rain falling on me stronger than ever before. I turned to our revivalist friend Larry Taylor and without mentioning anything, asked him, “Do you feel anything, Larry?” Immediately he responded, “YES, it’s raining!” Every night we were there during those meetings in Fiji—thirty nights straight—it rained supernaturally. And not just a few sprinkles, it honestly felt like I was standing outside in a shower. Everyone we know of who came to the meetings experienced it.

It was fun to watch the reactions of people who felt it. A number of different people from Australia came to Fiji to be part of the meetings. Some had heard about the supernatural rain and were skeptical. I remember one man in particular who thought we were crazy. Until one night, you guessed it, he came running up to us saying, “I can feel the rain!”

We have discovered through the years, when it comes to signs and wonders nobody thinks it’s crazy or from the devil when it happens to them. They may think that beforehand, but once they experience something themselves, they suddenly have a great revelation that it is God!

A Personal Kiss from Heaven

The rain always was accompanied by the thick presence of God. It was as if the rain was coming out of an invisible glory cloud of His presence. The rain would refresh, revive, and even bring healing. Often as we traveled and ministered and had personal prayer times, we would feel the rain. It became a personal kiss from Heaven—I might even say a sloppy wet one, ha!—and would always revive, strengthen, and heal us! Of course, this was all Jesus.

We have experienced supernatural rain with actual water on a number of occasions as well. This has happened in meetings when we have been ministering, either preaching or leading worship, on altars as we have prayed for people, and even at home. As well as the rain, there have been manifestations of thunder—when there was no thunder or even hint of a cloud in the sky outside. There has been wind, and I mean real wind! One

time, about 150 chairs on one side of the church all blew over at the same time. And even lightning! One time Jodie was praying for a man, and all of a sudden they both saw a lightning bolt flash over Jodie's shoulder and hit the man head-on. He immediately was knocked to the ground, was shaking under the power of God, and was delivered from some significant personal stuff. All these things happened inside.

Just recently Jodie was preaching at a conference at True Life Church in Round Rock, Texas, and sharing about this sign and wonder of the supernatural rain and weather, when right on cue, lightning struck the building and all the power went out across the building! God is very good at making a point!

We have experienced many different supernatural signs and wonders—manifestations from the glory realm of Heaven. We have seen many things appear right in front of our eyes from oil, to feathers, diamonds, gold, and even honey! We have even had money, actual cash, appear in people's wallets in our meetings. One time, one of our Pour It Out Church pastors and dear friend, John Evans, felt that the Lord had asked him to give away the money he needed. After doing so, three crisp, new $20 bills appeared in John's wallet that weren't there moments earlier, at exactly the time he needed them. This also happened in one of our meetings.

I want to tell you something, without fail, every time this has happened, people have immediately turned their hearts and affections to Jesus and began to worship and give Him praise. Never once have I seen anyone begin to worship the sign or the wonder, or even the angel. Instead, I've seen awe and wonder in people's faces and amazement at the bigness of God!

I'm not saying that there are not false signs and wonders, the Bible makes it clear that those do happen, but always through people whose hearts do not have Heaven's agenda. When God releases a sign and wonder, like any sign points to something, His signs and wonders always point to Jesus!

Jesus did many signs and wonders throughout His ministry, in fact the Bible says that, *"Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know"* (Acts 2:22 NIV).

God uses signs and wonders to accredit His ministry to us. Then Jesus said, *"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father"* (John 14:12 NIV).

Another great example of how Jesus uses signs and wonders to bring people to Himself happened during a time we were ministering in Far North Queensland, Australia, which just happens to be where I was born. One night at the end of a revival meeting, where we had led worship and preached and released this prophetic word about hearing the sound of heavy rain, which was accompanied by the supernatural rain, a lady came up and told us what had happened to her during the week. She said that all week long she kept hearing it suddenly rain really loud and heavy on her roof, but when she went outside and looked, there was no rain in sight!

The lady said this happened several times during the week. She thought that she was going crazy, so she had better get herself back to church after not going for more than a year. Well, it just so happens—of course not at all a coincidence but rather a "Godincidence"—that it was our meeting she came to. We spent the night talking about supernatural rain and what God was saying through First Kings 18! She was so so blessed by what she experienced and how God had brought her back to Himself. Of course we were blessed as well.

As recently as just a few months ago, God did it again. We had just finished ministering for the weekend at the East Texas Glory Revival with Bethesda Church in Lindale, Texas. A couple of days later, Jodie and I felt the Lord give us a word to send through to the pastors, our dear friends Steven and Camilla Charles. The following is what we messaged:

> BEN: Death could not hold him down and nothing can hold down the harvest either!! I prophesy abundance and hear the sound of heavy rain!!
>
> JODIE (in part): I say yay & amen to that!!!!  The sound of heavy rain!!! The heavy rain includes people.…

What we didn't know was at the time Pastors Steven and Camilla were having a prayer meeting at the church. Here's what Pastor Camilla said

happened next:

> CAMILLA: I didn't read it right away (Ben's message with the word). During this time it starts raining, heavily. A downpour that we all heard. Then we get the word from Jodie Hughes: The raindrop emojis on the message caught my attention because it was literally pouring rain at the time I read the message. We shared the word with everyone at Bethesda and rejoiced for the sign of the heavy rain in the natural while this word is being delivered. (Harvest and revival!)
>
> Then we all leave and go to our cars and it's as DRY outside as it can be. Steven and I even drove our Jeep around in the grass to look for evidence of rain. There was NONE! Not a drop on our cars or anywhere outside.
>
> Yay God! Pour it out! Let it rain! We are ready. I hear the sound of the abundance of rain! It's harvest time!

Isn't God amazing?! The entire church prayer meeting heard supernatural rain!

Since this particular season, we have indeed experienced great outpouring of the Spirit of God and revival in many places, but in particular on the Sunshine Coast in what affectionately became known as the "Pineapple Revival"—more to come about that—but we are now more excited than ever that there is a great outpouring coming. We hear in our spirits the sound of the abundance of rain. And we are still singing, still praying, still declaring, "LET IT RAIN!"

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Let's pray that God will break in with powerful miracles and signs and wonders that affect people worldwide:

Thank you, God of miracles! Thank You for performing mighty signs and wonders. I pray just as the apostles prayed in Acts 4:30 that You would

stretch out Your hand to heal and perform mighty signs and wonders that Your servants will be filled with all boldness.

I ask You for rain, Lord! Pour out Your Spirit! Just like Elijah did, I prophetically hear the sound of heavy rain, falling on my home, my church, and my nation! And according to Zechariah 10, I ask for more rain in the time of rain! Pour out the reviving rain of Your Spirit, Lord! Send revival to my nation! In Jesus' mighty name! Amen.

Chapter 17

GOD STEPPED IN

AS I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK, WORSHIP HAS always been a huge and central part of my Christianity and my relationship with God, both privately and corporately. It has led to some of my most powerful encounters and experiences of His presence.

There are times when the presence of God has been so powerful that it has affected me for days after. I remember one such time when I was leading worship at Jubilee Church in Sydney, which is pastored by our friends Fini and Isi De Gersigny. It was part of an Australia-wide revival tour with a few amazing friends: Joshua Mills, Catherine Mullins, Chris Harvey, and others. We ministered at fifty meetings in thirty days in every capital city in Australia, except Hobart and Darwin. There was such hunger for God building in Australia.

On the first night in Sydney, I arrived early for a worship sound check, and right there during rehearsal, the presence of God was already so thick in the room. Sometimes rehearsal can be like that, but then people arrive and because they can be carrying all kinds of stuff along with them, the worship team usually has to work hard and press in to get the breakthrough and see Jesus really enthroned in the room.

But this night, was not like that at all. Right from the very first chord, the glory came in that room and stayed, thick and heavy. The weighty,

tangible presence of God was in that place. Leading worship in that atmosphere is both easy and difficult at the same time. Easy because worship just flows and has no resistance, but difficult because it can literally be a struggle to stand up, to keep playing and singing, and to not just collapse in a puddle on the floor. Not that that is a bad thing at all! The weight of God's glory was so intense that night that it stayed with me all through the next day. It's very hard to describe in words how I felt, but it was like I was unnerved and shaky—the only appropriate word seems to be that I was just undone. It was glorious.

Many nights on that tour were very powerful like that. Catherine Mullins and I took turns leading, one night after the other, across the country. We were both in every meeting as the intensity just grew.

There were several nights when this happened, but I remember especially one night in Melbourne when I was leading worship at Stairway Church. We had been going about two hours already, and there were no signs of worship slowing down. The house was packed to the brim with 700-800 people, and there was a continual roar of praise coming from the congregation. The entire room was ablaze with the fire of God and such high praise was going out and up from that place. I was just strumming one chord, and walking back and forth on the stage, as the spirit of revival swept through that place. It wasn't a song, it was raw worship. I was just doing my best to steward the fire and pour oil on it where I could. Wow… even as I remember it now, and many nights that I have experienced like that since, I am reminded how glorious and precious those moments are. Times like this shift cities and nations toward awakening!

Another night on that tour, we were in Adelaide at Field of Dreams Church, led by Pastor Todd Weatherly and Adam F. Thompson. I had awakened that day with the flu and had no voice. Catherine Mullins was also sick and unable to step in for me. So I prayed and just went for it. With almost no voice at all, I stepped up and trusted God, and He showed up! We started singing Roy Fields' song, known from the Lakeland Revival, "In the Presence of Angels." Everyone in the room was singing "Holy," and I felt the Lord tell me to stop playing the guitar and ask everyone to keep singing on their knees. About 400 people, every person in the room, except one teenage guy who was sitting in a chair and doing the song words, got down on their knees and sang, "Holy, holy, holy" for a good fifteen minutes,

unaccompanied. I was on my face on the stage. Once again, it was so so glorious, it was like being in Heaven. Such a thick and overwhelming presence of God was inhabiting the praises of His people.

The amazing thing is that at the end of the meeting that night, Joshua Mills gave an altar call for salvation and about fifteen people gave their lives to Jesus! That means that those people had been on their knees in worship that night, before they had ever even given their lives to the Lord. Such was the presence of God in that place.

When I recall encounters I have had while leading worship, one night always stands out in particular that I will never forget. I was leading at a meeting on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, in 2009—three years before we moved there and planted Pour It Out Church. We were all going for it, in full flight, contending for revival glory and breakthrough in the region.

The room was electric with praise, when *suddenly* God stepped into the room! I didn't see a giant foot come down, but that's how it seemed. Immediately everyone, including me and the band, about 150 people, all went from full-blown praise to completely frozen in silence. There was a palpable excited but nervous and almost fearful anticipation in the room, like a bomb was going to go off in that second, and everyone was holding their breath waiting for the BOOM!

The holy fear and awe of God was tangible. It was incredibly intense and overwhelming.

After what seemed a long time but no doubt was only a couple of minutes, the pastor quietly stepped up and began to pray. As soon as he did, I took off my guitar, put it in the stand and quickly exited the stage. I ran outside and immediately burst into tears, sobbing. I was completely overwhelmed and undone by the presence of God. It was a hot, subtropical summer's night in Queensland and it was raining heavily. I remember my hot tears mixed with rain pouring down my face. Not tears of sadness, but tears of a man who had just encountered the God of the universe.

(BIG sigh and exhale as I slump back in my chair right now, as I write and remember.) Wow, Jesus. I love You and give You the highest praise!

I want to make a very important point right now—*the presence of God is the presence of God!* So deep (wink). God cannot be separated from His presence. If the *presence* of God is in the room, it means that *God* is present in the room. I know that sounds like a no-brainer, but I think that sometimes this fact is overlooked or somehow forgotten. We can treat the presence of God like it's an impersonal force that we can do with what we like, or even take it or leave it, rather than honoring, prioritizing, and receiving from His presence. I'm not talking here about having some kind of pious or religious subdued reaction, but rather more that we actually give His presence the attention, honor, and worth that He deserves.

I have been a Christian and a minister for twenty-seven-plus years. I have traveled worldwide and have had all kinds of experiences—but I want to tell you, *nothing*, and I mean *nothing* compares to when the presence and glory of God shows up.

Several years ago, Jodie, Keely, and I had the awesome opportunity of going to see the Dallas Cowboys play at Cowboy stadium in Texas with our dear friends Larry and Carol Taylor. It was our first NFL (American football) game, and it did not disappoint. They had everything: the biggest screen I had ever seen in my life, the national anthem, fireworks, hotdogs, cheerleaders, bands, and 90,000 fans screaming at the top of their lungs. It was an incredible experience, maybe the best "atmosphere" the world can provide, but I can remember thinking—and I don't mean to sound overly spiritual, I genuinely mean this—in the middle of all of that going on, *This is awesome, Lord, but I would much rather be in a slum, in Your manifest glory, than even here*.

I pray you will remember a couple of key things from this chapter:

1. The presence of God is the presence of God.
2. God inhabits the praises of His people. When we worship Him with all our heart, mind, and strength, He shows up. Tangibly.
3. There is *no substitute for the glory of God*.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

This is a short but simple prayer. I encourage you to take a moment, put your hands out in front of you, palms up (like you are carrying something) and pray this, then close your eyes and spend a few moments waiting on Him.

Oh God, it's the greatest desire of my heart, above all else, I want Your glory. I pray, just like Moses did, "Show me Your glory, God!"

Chapter 18

FINANCE ENCOUNTERS

IN MORE THAN TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS OF WALKING WITH Jesus, we have experienced many incredible supernatural provisions of God. The kind when you know that you know that you know that it could only be God. But there are a couple in particular I want to share with you because of the specific, powerful lessons that the Lord taught us through them.

When we were first launched out by the Lord into traveling fulltime with Pour It Out Ministries, the Lord really wanted to teach us that He alone was our Source so that we would have that revelation deep down in our hearts. An early lesson that we are so, so grateful for and has been foundational for the rest of our ministry and personal lives. In this season God was very strict with us. We weren't permitted by the Lord to discuss or request finances from churches or pastors when we were being invited to do meetings. So that meant paying our own way including flights, hotels, gas, etc. Also we were not to ask for an offering or honorarium. If the church offered to pay for flights and wanted to bless us, that of course was totally fine. God just didn't want us to ask for it.

Encounter One

The two “finance encounters” happened in the same week and both involved a check for $1,000. The first involved us being handed an offering for $65 following a night of ministry. I’m not complaining about the small amount as we really felt that God had told us to go, and He showed up! However, the $65 was not going to cover the ten hours of driving we did to get there, let alone the cost of the flights and hotel that night. But, right as we were about to leave, an older lady came up to us and dropped a piece of folded paper into Jodie’s handbag. We thanked her and after we got into the car and were out of sight of everyone we had ministered to that night, we did what is I’m sure a familiar practice for every traveling minister the world over, we had to satisfy our curiosity. We took a quick peak at what the piece of paper was. Sure enough, it was a check for $1,000!

You can imagine our excitement and delight, not just at the check but the fact that God had done it again! He was our Source, not the meeting, not the pastor, not the big or small church, not Mr. or Mrs. Big Bucks, but the Lord. Don’t get me wrong, God absolutely uses people to bless us and provide for us. He uses churches, pastors, and people with much and little alike. The point is though, He wants us all to know deep in our hearts that *He* is our Source and nothing or no one else.

When we don’t *know* this for a fact, we can unnecessarily worry and feel the pressure to try and manipulate, manufacture, hint, and strive to position ourselves in what we think is the right place, begging and playing the passive-aggressive victim. As well as being exhausting, this type of behavior is not at all becoming of a son or daughter of the King.

I am aware that not everyone who will read this book is in fulltime vocational ministry, and that many, in fact most, believers are called to work and minister in the marketplace. This truth, though, is the same for all of us—our job is not our source, our income or business is not our source, the government is not our source, *God alone is our Source*. He is our Father, our perfect good, good Father—and He takes care of His kids. He is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider! He is also El Shaddai, the God of more than enough.

Encounter Two

The second story happened the very next day, on a Sunday. We had a five-hour drive to get to the hotel near the church where we were ministering Sunday morning. We had thought it was only about two hours, but it turned out to be a bit further. We left the Saturday night meeting pretty late and arrived at the hotel about 2 a.m. Sunday morning. That morning, we were ministering at a church of about 300 people. Quite a contrast from the small house-type meeting the night before! It was an awesome morning. Jodie and I preached about forty minutes each and then we prayed and prophesied over almost everyone there, with many miracles taking place.

After several hours of ministering, the pastor asked us if he could pray for us. As he was praying, he said, "Lord if there's any way that we can be a blessing to Ben and Jodie, please let us know. In my head I was thinking, somewhat practically, *Well, cash is good!* We had the usual ministry expenses including travel, food, and hotels. When the pastor finished praying, he said, "You know what, we're going to buy you lunch." So he gave the church credit card to a young couple and asked them to take us out to lunch. Of course it was nice to have our lunch provided for, but to be very honest and vulnerable, my heart sank a little as I realized there would not be an offering for us.

But the Lord was teaching us again and testing our hearts. Were we doing this for Him or were we doing this for a paycheck? Were we working for this church or were we working for Him? Was our next meeting our source, or was *He* our Source? Please understand that I know it is biblical to bless ministers, as a worker is worth his wages; but in this context, I'm talking about where and in whom we place our treasure, hearts, and dependence.

So we went out for lunch with this young couple, who were really great people. We connected over some delicious food and conversation and then said goodbye. Three days later, on Wednesday night, we were at our last ministry meeting in the region. It was actually in a "mainline denomination" beautiful church. It was an incredible meeting and God really showed up powerfully. It was a great way to end our month-long tour in that particular region.

At the end of the night, the pastor took up an offering for us and handed it to us, which, of course, was such a blessing! There was one particular

check in the offering that we noticed. It was a check from the young couple who had taken us out for lunch on Sunday from the other church. They had come to the Wednesday meeting and put a check in that night, at this completely separate church, for $1,000!

With big smiles on our faces, Jodie and I received the revelation that God truly was our Source. He had found a way of providing for us, even when perhaps those who should have, didn't. This was such an important lesson for us to learn.

Encounter Three

I am also reminded of one more story with a similar lesson. I know you were expecting two stories, but consider this one a bonus freebie. A preacher friend had once stayed in our home and saw our very old small non-flat screen TV. He told us, and our daughter, that God had told him to buy us a brand-new TV and that he would be doing that. We were very excited, but not as excited as our daughter, Keely, who was around 10 years old at the time. We waited in anticipation…and we waited…and we waited…and the TV never came. Quite a number of months had gone past and we were still watching our old 25-inch "fat back" TV. Every now and again Keely would ask, "Are we still getting that TV?"

One weekend, we invited some friends from overseas to come and stay with us. They knew nothing of this TV story. One day they had been out all day and returned home late in the afternoon. Suddenly the front door opened and to our *huge* surprise, they were carrying a *huge* brand-new flat screen TV! They said, "We really felt like God told us to buy you a new TV!"

WOW! God is so so good and was once again teaching us that He alone is our Source, and even when people let us down, He never will.

> *If you, imperfect as you are, know how to lovingly take care of your children and give them what's best, how much more ready is your heavenly Father to give wonderful gifts to those who ask him?* (Matthew 7:11 TPT)

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

The following prayer is to thank God for breaking into your finances and becoming your Source.

God, I thank You that You are my Provider. Thank You that You have said to me, "All I have is yours." I thank You that You are faithful, even when I'm not faithful. I thank You that You are faithful, even when others let me down. Thank You, God, that You are my Source! While You use people, jobs, and many natural means to provide for me, still, those things are not my source, only You are!

I choose to put my trust completely in You. Right now, I give You all my needs, and in faith I receive them and thank You for providing! Is there anyone You want me to give to and bless through me today? All I have is Yours, God. I love You, Jesus! Amen.

Chapter 19

THE PINEAPPLE REVIVAL

I COULDN'T WRITE A BOOK ABOUT ENCOUNTERS WITHOUT sharing some of the incredible encounters that we have seen others have during our ministry, in particular during the Pineapple Revival.

When the Lord called us to plant a church on Australia's Sunshine Coast, the call came with a specific instruction to "build a house to host His presence and revival." The dream in our hearts was to have a place where we could simply say, "Yes" to God. Yes, to His presence. Yes, to Him coming, and yes to revival. So many times when we were traveling and ministering, revival would begin to break out; but for one reason or another, it would be shut down. We had learned that when God is moving like that, it is so so precious and to be highly valued. And so in building a house that was marked by a big YES to the presence, power, and fire of God moving, we had a unique opportunity for extended revival to break out. And it did.

From day one of Pour It Out Church, we went after His presence and contended for revival on the Sunshine Coast. We regularly communicated that our number-one core value was that we were "Presence Prioritized." So, every Sunday service, every prayer meeting, every time we got up to worship, and every time we preached, we worshipped the Lord with

everything we had. We made space for and pressed in for revival on the Sunshine Coast and in Australia.

When you prioritize God like that, it's really simple—God shows up. Pour It Out meetings were always marked by fire. We were meeting in a small building on a back street of the Sunshine Coast, but many days we were absolutely packed to the rafters and exploding with shouts of praise, worship, drums, laughter, and people encountering the King of kings. Outside it must've looked like a cartoon building pulsing in and out, almost bursting at the seams.

Our usual M.O. on the road was to have extended nightly meetings, but we felt like the Lord told us not to in the beginning stages of the church. If the meetings we were having every Sunday had happened on the road, we would've recommended to the pastor to consider extending and going again on Monday night. The meetings were simply always on fire!

Right before starting the church, the Lord spoke to us about the time when John the Baptist was in prison and was having a really rough time of it. In what seemed like a mini-crisis of faith, in real need of reassurance John sent his disciples off to ask Jesus if He really was the prophesied One that was to come.

In Luke 7:22-23, Jesus answered John's disciples:

> *Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me*.

Jesus then went on to say to the crowd:

> *For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, "He has a demon." The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!"* (Luke 7:33-34).

In other words, God was saying to us that it doesn't matter what you do, people are going to get offended! So make sure you go all out with what

God asks and has put in your heart to do.

And so we did.

For three years we had crazy, fiery meeting after meeting. In that time we also faced many ups and downs of church life and everything that can come with being a senior pastor of a church. Almost every pastor knows that many different accusations, insults, and complaints are encountered along the way. One of the things said about me was that I was always wanting worship to be at 11/10 in intensity—meaning loud, fiery, breakthrough-type worship. I'll own that one, as I really believe it was my job as co-senior leader, with Jodie, to keep the pedal to the metal in our pursuit and hunger. And that we would "worship outside of the room" as I call it, meaning that we were not just interested in what was going on *in* the room, but our focus was taking ground in the spirit and contending for revival in our city.

After that three years, Jodie had a dream one night about an old friend of ours, Rob DeLuca. He is a prophet and minister, and the same friend who had prayed with us for Jodie's mum to be raised. Jodie had a word for him so we sent it to him. He replied almost straight away; and when he did, God spoke clearly to me, "Put on a week of meetings, January 3-10 (2016). Invite Rob and call it Summer of Revival." Australian summers are from December 1 until the end of February.

Summer of Revival

So after three years of explosive Sunday meetings, the Lord finally told us to have extended meetings. We told our church and immediately we all started to prepare. When we were about two months out, we held several prayer meetings a week. Well, any pastor knows that something is happening when you have whole bunches of people show up at 6 a.m. on a weekday to pray for revival. Some were even driving up to two hours to join us. At that time, the new app Periscope had just come out. It was before Facebook Live and was the first of its kind that anyone could live broadcast over the Internet for free using a mobile phone.

I encouraged everyone in the church to pray for the Summer of Revival meetings every day for at least five minutes. And to help them with that, I

encouraged everyone to download Periscope and I would pray live for five minutes every day for the revival. Well, not only did many in the church join, but many from all over joined me live online every day to pray for revival. And instead of five minutes, we would usually go for 30 to 60 minutes, sometimes even longer. There was such incredible momentum and fire building.

Pour It Out Church was known for its hunger and fire. It was known as a place where His presence was prioritized and the fire burned. The truth is that our church was very much already in revival, it's just people hadn't heard about it yet. I don't say that lightly. I have heard many people say over the years "Revival is here," and yet the evidence might suggest otherwise. But what I am saying is that revival fire and the glory of God was in our midst. Those who called Pour It Out their home church were truly lovers of His presence and revival fire!

When January 3 came, from the very first night the building we had rented for the meetings was packed out. There was that incredible buzz and crackle of excitement, expectation, and faith for what was about to happen. And happen it did. From the very first song, I could tell this wasn't a normal meeting—it was at a whole other level. It was revival!

By the scheduled last night, night eight, it was standing room only in the building. People were standing all along the outside walls, in the foyer, etc. The meeting was exploding with His glory. Worship was through the roof and lasted between one to two hours each night. We saw whole families coming back to God, many miracles, people coming in off the street and getting saved, and people everywhere wiped out on the floor under the power of God.

We knew we had to keep the revival fire burning and extend the meetings, so we asked everyone for a show of hands, who would come back if we kept going. It looked like every hand in the building was raised. We couldn't stay in the building though, so overnight Jodie and I frantically searched for a new building that could fit several hundred people, park as many cars, have no restrictions, and where we could start using it right away!

After an exhaustive search the next day, we couldn't find a suitable building or church.

Eventually someone suggested we try contacting Aussie World, a family theme park and home of the famous-in-Australia Ettamogah Pub. So we called Aussie World, and they said, “Absolutely, we would love to have you. Our staff will set up the chairs, take care of the cleaning…” and on top of that, we were given a substantial discount. It was a beautiful venue that had just completed a million-dollar refurbishment with incredible lighting and the works.

I called our amazing associate pastors and team leaders, John and Jenny Evans, “Aussie World is a go, and we’re carrying on the meetings tonight!” Immediately our incredible team scrambled to shift all our gear to the new venue, send out emails, make Facebook posts, and pray that everyone would come to the new venue.

Well, they did. Within just a couple of weeks, we had several hundred people coming every night, driving and flying from all over the country to the famous pub on the Sunshine Coast—all for revival and the presence of God. And yes, the bar was actually still open to the public, during the meetings. One night a guy came in, sat and drank six beers, and watched the meeting. After the meeting, he was healed and gave his life to Jesus! Come on!

Eight weeks in, we had to move again, this time it was to the Big Pineapple, which would be our venue for the next year. We ultimately hosted around 20-30,000 people from all across Australia and the nations, plus multitudes online. People flew from as far away as the USA and Asia. One guy rode his motorcycle 5,000 kilometers (around 3,100 miles) to be there. Many of our dear revivalist friends, some of the most anointed on the planet, came and ministered including Rob DeLuca, Larry Taylor, David Hogan, Joshua Mills, Matt Sorger, Clark Taylor, Adam F. Thompson, Lana Vawser, Rolland Baker, Chris Harvey, Daniel Hagen, Paul Manwaring, David Crabtree, Maria Mason, Faylene Sparks, Rory Jensen, and many more.

The glory was astounding. We cried and laughed and cried some more at the hunger of the Australians. The people just kept coming from everywhere and we did our best to steward all that God was pouring out.

Jodie and I preached about 50 percent of the nights, and ministered every night. Our daughter Keely, who was 17 at the time, led worship every

night, along with Lauren Darlington, who was 18, and Hannah Wallace who was also 17. Lauren and Hannah were interning with us that year; little did they know what a wild ride they were in for! I played acoustic guitar and sung also. That's all we had, three teenagers and one guitar, and at times more than 500 people in the room—and it was glorious!

We could very much write a whole book about the Pineapple Revival. There is so much that happened, and so much that we learned and experienced. It was the most glorious, glorious time. Night after night, we experienced revival. Waves of glory, waves of joy, waves of power. Thousands of lives healed, delivered, saved, and encountered the power and presence of God like they never had before.

None of us who were involved will ever be the same.

I want to share with you a few of the encounters people had that have marked not only them, but those of us who heard their stories and saw it happen.

During worship one night when the glory of God was so thick and heavy in the room, a 16-year-old girl suddenly began to loudly scream out, "HO!" If you've been around revival meetings where the presence of God is moving powerfully, you will be familiar with this type of manifestation. If you haven't, well, it's exactly as it sounds… the teen began to repeatedly scream out "HO!" This continued throughout the meeting. She was overcome and something powerful was happening to her.

The next day we heard what had been going on. During worship, she was down at the front, as most people were, worshipping God. She suddenly bumped into something behind her and turned around, but no one and nothing was there, so she carried on worshipping. A short while later, the same thing happened and she turned around again but saw nothing.

This happened a third time, only this time when she turned around, she saw with open eyes an 8-foot-tall angel standing right behind her. And as she looked up, she saw angels standing with people all over the room! That's when suddenly she was overwhelmed and began to yell out, "HO!" (See Isaiah 55:1.) She couldn't stop right throughout the meeting, and eventually her mum, not knowing what else to do, took her home. Well, she

kept HO-ing all the next day too, including at school, overwhelmed by God's presence and what she had seen.

We had an altar call for people to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit one night and people were asked to stand at their seats. Suddenly a young 15-year-old girl started "machine gunning" out in tongues, loud and fast! Jodie and I were shocked and immediately tears welled up in us, as we knew her as usually fairly quiet and unassuming—clearly she was in the midst of a powerful encounter. Later she told us what happened. While she was standing there, suddenly in front of her face she saw a hand appear and it begin to write out in midair in golden script. Immediately she could read it and this is what the tongues were that shot out of her. Wow! In her own words she said, *"It was indescribable, out of this world, no doubt it was God. I felt an intensity inside me like fire, and I just couldn't help but let it out. I now know that God is with me, always."*

The following are some encounters that people shared in their own words:

> In worship I had a vision. In the vision a lion came and roared around my family, and I heard this roar! It was so ferocious that it shocked me and then instantly an angel that was 10 feet tall came down and covered us. —*Megan*
>
> I needed God to demonstrate Himself in power. I was called up from a word of knowledge and when prayed for I fell out (fell down on the ground). When I stood up, I was instantly healed! —Rod
>
> I was called out, and for the first time felt the presence of God on me and inside me. I now know He is real. —*Girl, 14*
>
> I've really struggled with the revival. I didn't know what it was. I had no expectations, and during this revival, I've seen Jesus. As I was on the ground, soaking, the real Jesus came and sat with me. His eyes were incredible. —*Lady*
>
> In worship I saw a white dove fly across the room. Then I sat down and my friend prayed for me. It felt like a warm blanket covering me. It came in waves. It just hit me. —*Girl, 13*

I saw the same dove that girl saw. God started showing me words that I later found out were Bible verses. *—Girl, 13*

I could really feel the presence of God. I then received tongues. I then invited my friends, one isn't really a Christian. We were called out and were prayed for and we all could feel the presence and got filled with the presence of God. Then Finn got saved and encountered God! *—Boy, 13*

I saw an angel in front of me just flapping its wings. With each flap, a wave of joy hit me. It was incredible. This angel was my guardian angel. I felt like this angel was assigned to me, to protect me. The angel then stood behind me, put its hands on my shoulders and wrapped its wings around me. I felt so safe and protected. I then asked God, "God, what are You protecting?" I heard Him say, "Your purity. The purity of My presence in you is being protected." *—Hannah Wallace, 17, Intern*

I had just started interning and thought that my "job" would look like a couple of hours a week doing admin and helping on Sundays. Little did I know that soon a week of meetings we had been praying and believing for would turn into an all-out revival that lasted over 18 months. That year turned out to be the most refreshing, challenging, and impacting year of my life thus far. I got to sing on stage every night with my two best friends, as an 18-year-old, and lead hundreds of people into the heavy, thick presence of God, night after night after night. Some nights the presence of God would be so thick that I would "wake-up" from an encounter with God on the ground of the stage, not knowing how I got down there, with the crowd all screaming and praising Jesus. One night, right before we were set to start worship, Keely, Hannah, and I got together and prayed. We did this every night and asked God what He was saying, what He was doing, and what He had planned for the night. We all prayed and shared and then put our hands on each other and ask God to do it. The presence of God came so thick we all fell out and used the wall on the back of the stage as our "catcher." I don't remember how long I was "out" for, but I do

remember at one point crawling across the stage to my mic and somehow pulling myself up to sing. *—Lauren Darlington, 18, Intern*

Keely's Encounter with Jesus

I also want to include our daughter Keely's own account of an encounter that has deeply impacted her to this day. She was 17 at the time. As a father, seeing and hearing your own children have encounters with God like this is just the best of the best, and makes everything that we do and go through so so worth it. I know that you will be blessed by her story.

On January 10, 2016, I had one of the most, if not the most significant encounter I've ever had with Jesus.

This was the last night of a week of meetings we had called the Summer of Revival. We were believing for incredible things, but had no idea what was on the other side of our pressing in.

Leading up to these meetings we prayed and interceded a lot, fasted and sought after what God's heart was for this; we had multiple prophecies, dreams, and visions for what God was wanting to do out of these meetings.

Revival wasn't a new concept to me, but what God did in this time for me personally, completely marked me. This week of meetings ended up lasting for more than a year. People came from all around the world, many had incredible—crazy incredible—encounters. There were amazing healings, and hearts were set on fire for Jesus.

It was affectionately nicknamed the Pineapple Revival, as the meetings took place at an old Australian Landmark attraction, which is a pineapple farm, and has an actual giant pineapple. It was revival.

But back to the original reason why I wrote this.

At the end of an amazing meeting where young teenagers were being saved, marriages were being restored, the power of God

was sweeping through the room, families were encountering God together, and lives were being touched everywhere I looked, I remember thinking, *Oh my gosh this is actual revival!* I could feel it. It wasn't subtle, it was as obvious as a bright light suddenly being switched on in a dark room.

At the beginning of this same meeting, before leading worship I was so done. I was exhausted, I didn't want to keep going, I had barely any voice left, I just wanted to go home. Not because it hadn't been amazing, I just was exhausted. (Remember it was the final night of 8 meetings—we hadn't extended yet, and at the beginning of the night didn't fully plan to.)

Right before worship that night, I had to decide if I was going to just treat it like something to "get through," or if I was going to continue to give it my all, because it's only by His Spirit anyway. It didn't matter if I was strong enough, it mattered if my heart was going to say yes. If my heart was all in, then I knew Jesus would take my yes and lead me by His Spirit. His Spirit would come. His presence would come. That's all it is about anyway. It's all Him. But He asks us to say yes, not to be strong enough, just to be the open door over a place. The size of our strength is only as big as the size of our yes, because it's not by power, it's not by might, it is only by His Spirit. Our yes is what matters. He does the rest.

Before the meeting started, I had a short moment alone at the back of the stage. After I stopped complaining, I said to God, "I'm going to give this my all tonight, no matter how small my all is, I'm going to give it. All I have is Yours."

He is so faithful. After a short while I couldn't even remember ever wanting to stop. His presence was so thick and I could feel His strength and power rushing through me. This was one of the most powerful sets of leading worship I have ever experienced. That power that I felt lingered within me the whole night.

There was this burning inside me, this electricity rushing through my veins. I kept leaning in to it, not wanting it to leave. I went from extreme exhaustion, moodiness, wanting to give up, feeling weak—to feeling like I never ever wanted to leave this place. I never want to not feel like this.

Later on, there was an altar call, one of many that night. I went up with my friends. Someone laid their hand on my head and nothing happened instantly, I was already feeling so much power, but I received whatever God wanted to do. When the hand was laid on me it was like a slow sink into it. I didn't just fall out instantly, which I have many times before. I don't know how else to describe it other than I sank into it. All of a sudden it was honestly like I slowly fell smoothly—I can't remember if someone caught me—and it felt like I blacked out. It's like it was really just me and Jesus. Everything in the room suddenly fell into complete silence, even though in reality, it was loud in there. People were shouting, clapping, crying, singing, and praising Jesus. But to me, it was complete silence, everything was hushed, Jesus was there.

I tell you He was right there—Jesus was physically right there with me. I laid on the ground for a while. I think too often we wait for the instant, crazy encounters. God does do that. He is sovereign, and those are absolutely amazing. But if we want to encounter Him more though, we need to linger and press into the seemingly smaller subtle encounters.

If you hear Him speak, don't just be amazed that He spoke, reply. Ask more questions, ask Him to keep speaking. If you see something, even if it was just slightly faint and you aren't fully sure, ask Him to show you more and open your eyes more. If you get prayed for in an altar call, if you fall down, don't be quick to get up. Stay there and talk to God, ask Him for more of His presence. The things are incredible, but they are doorways into greater encounter. Sometimes we get stuck at the door, and in awe of the door, when we can walk through it and experience more. I'm not at all saying don't be amazed and grateful at whatever you experience, I'm saying be incredibly

thankful and keep asking Him for more. Lean in. There is so much more than we realize.

So I was lying there feeling Jesus so, so close, I can't even fully describe it, because He was just there and nothing else mattered. It's like every possible negative thing from your entire life never existed, not a single bit. I still felt like I was blacked out and not there. I don't know how else to describe it. I wasn't in the room. I remember as I stayed in that place, I started feeling like this electric rushing river flowing through me. I started vibrating and shaking full-on as I was laying there and tears started streaming down my face, and it only got stronger and stronger.

I was thinking, Jesus is physically right here next to me and I can barely breathe. It is so intense and powerful, but intimate at the same time. I just don't want this to end, I've never felt more alive. I kind of "woke up" and looked around and realized the meeting was still going and I could hear talking, "We need to extend."

I was in a beautiful daze, I could still feel this extreme weight on me; like the stronger the weight, the lighter I felt. It got thicker and thicker. I felt like Jesus was facing me and standing toward me and His face was so close, like His face was only an inch away from mine. Zero separation. I cannot fully describe what it felt like because even though I had encountered Jesus my whole life, He became even more tangibly and physically real to me that night—and I fell more in love with Him. It gave me a physical awareness of how insanely close He is. Closer than we can even imagine. I felt His love burning with fire and I felt the intense electric power and strength that He carries.

Afterward, I went and sat down on a chair and was kind of funnily saying, "It's like Jesus is sitting on me." I could feel the weight and intensity of closeness. I still felt so emotional in a good way. That feeling didn't leave for a long time, all through the night and through the next day I could feel the same weight, intensity of closeness and power. I even was watching The

> Gilmore Girls with my friend the next day, and could still feel His presence so strongly.
>
> The remnants of that encounter lasted a long time, and when I think or talk about it, I can feel it too—and it's been three years. It was just a taste of what we can experience every single day, no matter what we are doing. I have had many encounters before then and since then, but this one is what I go back to the most. I want more of it, though. I want to feel Him even closer. I want to encounter Him more. We always need more of Him, no matter what it looks like. I am thankful for everything I have experienced, but I am not satisfied. I want more.

Literally thousands of lives were forever impacted, never the same because of encounters they had with God at the Pineapple Revival. I could go on and on and on. I haven't even begun to talk about the healing miracles that took place. There were so many. One that stands out is a 9-year-old girl who had never heard out of one ear. At the revival, it popped open for the first time, when Hannah, our intern and worship singer, and I prayed for her. Like thousands of others, that 9-year-old, along with Hannah and I, will never forget what God did.

Keely spontaneously sang this out during the Pineapple Revival:

Once I've been touched by the fire

I am marked forever

There's no going back

There's no going back

Truer words could not be spoken. When we encounter God's love, presence, power, and fire, it marks us and changes us forever. Our encounters with Him become like anchor points in our lives. When the storms come, we know that we are anchored to Him. The unshakeable, never-changing Rock who is Christ.

Main Lessons Learned

1. God is *encounterable*. When we prioritize the presence of God, we make room for and create opportunities for others to be able to encounter Jesus in a safe environment.
2. One encounter with God can change your life and mark you forever.

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

For this Encounter Moment, I really want to pray a prayer of impartation and release of revival over you.

Jesus, I thank You for all that You have done through the Pineapple Revival and for all that You continue to do as we carry it to the nations. I pray that for this reader You will pour out a double portion of all that You have poured out on us. I release what we affectionately called "the pineapple wine" of Your presence—the new wine that You poured out at the Big Pineapple—over this reader and his or her family, church, city, and nation. Send revival, Lord, pour out Your Spirit. Send awakening and start with each one of us. In Jesus' name, AMEN!

Chapter 20

HARVEST ENCOUNTERS

FROM THE VERY FIRST DAY WHEN I MET JESUS AND HIS LOVE, presence, healing, and freedom flooded my entire being, my immediate response was "Every person on the planet needs to experience God like I just have." The day before, I didn't know that such love was possible or available. I had found the key, the very reason for living, the meaning of life—and now I had to shout it from the rooftops for all the world to hear!

The very next day, at the camp where I was saved, at 15 years old I got up and gave my testimony to 1,500 young people and staff. But it didn't stop there. When I went back to school to start the new year, I wanted my whole school to hear about Jesus. So, I spent every day telling others about Jesus. My classes and school life were filled with sharing the gospel, praying for people, having lunchtime prayer meetings, leading worship in the middle of the school field, handing out tracts, and leading other kids to Jesus. That year, we—a bunch of other teenagers who had had their lives radically transformed and I—saw many young people in our public school come to Jesus. It became common place for kids to get saved, for miracles to happen in the middle of our school playground, and even for demons to be cast out.

Such was my passion and commitment to evangelism that I went from being second in the school for math scores the year before, to passing by only half a percent! I'm not advocating for not applying yourself at school, education is obviously very important, but I'm also not apologizing for a life devoted to preaching the gospel and seeing others get saved, free, and healed, just like I had been.

The stakes of preaching the gospel are very high. This was reinforced to me during this season at high school. For several weeks in every class, I told a friend of mine, Vicky, about the gospel and about Jesus. Eventually, one day she said to me, "Ben, stop. I don't want to hear about it anymore."

One week later, I heard the tragic news that Vicky had gone to bed one night and had died in her sleep. I'll never forget being at her funeral, along with many other teens from school, and feeling the urgency and weight of what it means to preach the gospel and to share Jesus with the world. While she had asked me to stop talking about the Lord, I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to share the gospel and the love of God with her, and I certainly prayed for her with all my heart. She may very well have called out to God that night—the truth is I won't know until I get to Heaven.

I want to share with you several significant times when I have experienced what I call "Harvest Encounters." These are times when encounters I have had with the Lord throughout my life have overflowed into seeing a great harvest of souls come into the Kingdom.

An Entire Village

In 1995, I had the immense privilege of spending two months in the Solomon Islands on outreach with a small team from YWAM. We were based in the capital "city" of Honiara, which was still fairly undeveloped compared to the more touristy island nations like Fiji. From our base, we would take several trips out to the more remote village areas. On one such trip, we were heading to the center of the main island of Guadalcanal, to a village at the top of the highest peak in the nation, in an area called Kolosulu.

The journey there started with a two-hour drive over dirt roads and through the jungle sitting in the back open tray of a Toyota Hi-Lux pickup

truck. This was how we got around for most of our time there, and I loved every second of it!

One time we were out in the middle of absolutely nowhere, and I mean no where! There was nothing but jungle and an occasional mud hut with a grass-thatched roof. I was standing up on the back of the Hi-Lux, the wind blowing through my still lush head of hair, when suddenly in front of me, I saw what I thought must be a mirage. Heading toward us, in the middle of this jungle road, was an ice cream truck playing the very familiar "Greensleeves" song, the siren call of ice cream lovers everywhere. Of course, we had to stop and buy some! The ice cream was a welcome and refreshing cooling treat in the tropical heat, but what a wild sight to see. A very modern ice cream truck, juxtaposed against a backdrop of primitive surroundings.

After driving for two hours, we jumped out of the truck and had to walk the rest of the way. Some young local girls, who were about 13 to 15 years old, met us at the bottom of the mountain and wanted to carry our bags for us. I was 18, very strong and fit, and thought I would be fine to carry my bag. I certainly didn't feel right about letting these much smaller and younger girls carry my bag for me, but they insisted. Well, it wasn't long before I was very thankful that I wasn't carrying it myself. To say the walk was tough, is an understatement. It was a very physical six-hour hike, straight up the side of a mountain, through jungle tracks that often required slashing vegetation out of the way with machetes as we went.

Of course it was also very hot and extremely humid. It was so intense that I threw up at least twice. The young girls had taken off, pretty much running the whole way. They were nowhere to be seen and I think arrived four hours ahead of the rest of us. Our group had become quite spread out, and an English doctor, Andy, and I were quite some distance out in front of the others. By now it was dark and we were following one of the locals who was just up ahead of us. Suddenly he disappeared from sight and we weren't sure what happened to him. Here we are, in the thick jungle, in the dark, and it's just Andy and me.

All of a sudden a group of about forty to fifty island natives, covered head to toe in white war paint, swinging and waving spears and bows and arrows and all kinds of weapons, came running out of the bush in front of

us and came right up to our faces, screaming out their war cries! I was convinced my name was about to be published in the *Foxe's Book of Martyrs!*

Well, they stopped literally inches from my face. I can only imagine my expression. It turns out, we had reached our village and this was our welcoming party! As you can imagine, I urgently needed to find those girls with my bags, as I was going to be needing a change of clothes!

We stayed in that village for two weeks. It was a very simple village with grass huts and dirt floors, with fires inside the tiny huts for cooking and warmth. We ate nothing but sweet potato, which is their local crop, cooked on the fire, three times a day. At risk of sharing too much, most of our team was constipated, which would've been a welcome alternative to the constant diarrhea that I had. Two weeks of squatting over a mud hole several times a day, is not as fun as it may sound!

On our last day before leaving the next morning, I had the immense privilege of preaching the gospel, through an interpreter, to the village. I shared the simple gospel, and my testimony of what Jesus had done for me. At the end, I invited everyone to give their lives to Jesus, just as I had done. Holy Spirit gave me a unique idea for the altar call. I got a stick and drew a literal big line in the dirt across the front of all the gathered people. And then I said to them, "If you want to give your life to Jesus, I want you to stand up and come and walk across this line, and stand here with me." Right there that day, in the red dirt on top of that mountain, under the warm tropical island sun, the entire village, every last man, woman, and child, walked forward, crossed the line, and gave their lives to Jesus!

Of course, a tear is running down my face as I remember that glorious day. What an unbelievable privilege it was as an 18-year-old boy, saved for only three years, to be used by God in this way. Maybe as you read this now, would you say a quick prayer with me for the people of Kolosulu, and also that God would send a great revival that would sweep across the Solomon Islands.

A Muslim School in the Jungle

Several years later, during a break in my second year of Bible college, I was invited by an older friend to accompany him on a trip to another remote nation in Southeast Asia. Again I found myself hiking through remote jungle, passing through the very wet but vibrant green rice fields, crossing rivers in very old canoes with the water not more than an inch from the rim and the threat of sinking an unwelcome constant, sleeping on wooden boards in very simple thatched-roofed homes, showering out of a bucket at best, and no Western amenities or comforts. And I loved every second of it! For about ten days we walked from village to village and had the opportunity to preach, heal the sick, and lead local believers in worship, borrowing some of the villagers' guitars.

A door opened for one of the local village pastors to have us come and speak to a school of about 200 young Muslim children, around the ages of 8-10 years. I don't know how it happened as the school principal and all the teachers were Muslims, yet they welcomed us to come and speak to them. The older man I was with asked me if I would like to speak, and of course I was very honored for the opportunity.

I stood up in front of that assembly, packed with the beautiful faces of all these young children. First, I asked for about a dozen volunteers to come up on the stage with me and I led them in acting out the story of David being anointed as king, even though he was the smallest and overlooked. Then we went on to David taking down the giant Goliath! The smallest little boy there played David, and guess who got to play Goliath? You guessed it! Me. I fell down on my back and hit the stage, much to the delight, laughter, and cheers from everyone.

After that I sent all my "cast" back to their seats, and shared the simple gospel with them—the love of Jesus. I told them that Jesus had died for them and had an amazing plan for their lives, just like David. I then began to give an invitation for them to give their lives to Jesus. Before I even got through what I was saying, kids around the room started to stand up. Didn't they know they were supposed to wait until I give the signal? I was preaching through an interpreter, so maybe the interpreter got it wrong. So I asked them all to sit down, and again went through the gospel very plainly and simply. I wanted to make sure it was clear and we got this right.

I told them I was going to count to three and on three, if they want to give their lives to Jesus, I wanted them to stand up. “One… two…” On three, every child, from the youngest to the oldest, immediately stood to their feet!

I led them in prayer, asking them to repeat after me. They all prayed with their eyes squeezed shut, in such sincerity and passion. Then they formed a huge line and came and shook my hand. I was able to bless each one of them as they passed by.

I will never forget the sight or the sound of all those precious children, in the middle of the jungle, standing to their feet and encountering for the first time the God who loves them so much.

What a miracle!

You Worship a Monkey God?

A couple of years later I found myself in India with Jodie’s dad. We were in a remote village area, after a thirteen-hour train ride and a two-hour drive on the bumpiest of dirt roads. You may have heard that there are 300 million different gods and idols everywhere in India. Well, that’s true. There are idols *everywhere* in India. In every taxi there are idols on the dash or hanging from the rear vision mirror. They are scattered throughout every home, on the street, and throughout every town. Big, small, every shape and size. Many homes even have idols in glass boxes that are lit up at night so you can see them as you walk past.

In the village we were in, the main idol worshipped was the monkey god. I remember going for a prayer walk one day and walking past a temple where people were worshipping and bringing offerings to this monkey. I remember thinking to myself, *How could people be so stupid as to worship a monkey?* I know that’s not the most sensitive of comments or thoughts, but I’m just being honest. The idea seemed ridiculous to me. Then Holy Spirit began to show me how behind each of these idols were powerful demons that have enslaved these people and their families in fear and bondage for generations.

Shortly after that, I had the opportunity to preach the gospel. The meeting was to take place in a large upper room of a concrete building.

There was no air conditioning and it was sooo hot—over 40 Celsius (in the 100s Fahrenheit.) Because of the local custom, however, I had to preach in a suit and tie! Oh my gosh, I was sweating so much I felt like I was swimming in my clothes.

That day, once again I preached the gospel. I told them what Jesus had done—that He had died for us, to save us from our sins. Then I told them that the God of all the universe, the God above every other god, loved them, died for them, and wanted to set them free from all bondage and fear! When your family has been enslaved in bondage and fear for generations, the gospel truly is good news!

About 200 men and women were sitting cross-legged on the floor in that hot second-story room that day; and when I gave the invitation for them to give their lives to Jesus, again I witnessed an incredible miracle as every one of them stood to their feet and got saved. In that moment, the fear and bondage stopped as each one passed from death and into life, bondage into freedom, fear into joy!

Our beautiful Jesus had done it again.

One Thousand Boys

At the very beginning of this book, I started by telling you the story of the more than 1,000 boys who were saved at the public high school in South Africa. I don’t need to tell you the full story again, but I felt it worth mentioning it as part of this chapter, because to this day, it’s simply one of the most remarkable encounters of my life, with the power of God and the power of the gospel on display. Paul tells us in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The gospel has its own power; and when it is preached, it comes with its own encounter of the God who is mighty to save!

When I walked into that high school, I only had fifteen minutes and no one had ever heard of me. The only thing I had going for me in this strong rugby-playing school, was that I was from New Zealand, had played rugby, and went to school with Jonah Lomu, perhaps the most famous rugby player of all time. But that certainly was not enough to elicit the response that happened that day.

Standing on that stage, completely underdressed in jeans and t-shirt, my feeble attempt to at least look a little relevant, with the entire school faculty on my left and right, and more than 1,000 boys dressed in their formal school blazers and ties, I had an encounter of my own. The power of God and the anointing fell on me with boldness to preach the gospel! It was a potentially very confronting environment, and yet I wasn't intimidated or nervous in the slightest. I felt such boldness in me and coming out of me.

Nevertheless, I was totally blown away by what happened. When an entire school—except about a dozen guys who may very well have already been saved—raised their hands and then stood to their feet to accept Jesus, and the school principal along with them, I was overwhelmed by the goodness, kindness, and power of God.

Jodie and Keely were sitting on the stage beside me, along with our friend Pastor Charl Rautenbach, and witnessed this miracle that has forever wrecked and marked our family.

Oh, I also wanted to tell you this. Right before all the boys walked into the assembly, I was sitting on a chair on the stage praying and waiting on the Lord for what was about to happen. Right then, *suddenly* right before my eyes, a beautiful feather appeared and fell right at my feet in front of me. I knew it was a kiss from Heaven. God and the heavenly host were present and something miraculous was about to happen.

I'm aware that all of these Harvest Encounters involve big numbers and crowds of people getting saved and, of course, Jesus loves that, but He equally loves showing up for the one. We have seen many people saved one on one, but two stories in particular come to mind right now that speak of God's goodness and how far He will go to reach us.

Please, Sir, My Heart Is Hurting

During that same trip in India, I was walking down the street in the city where Jodie's parents were based. Like always in India, I was surrounded by many people. Frequently I was approached by beggars asking for money, and merchants trying to sell everything imaginable, but this time as I was walking along, suddenly a man stepped in front of me. There was something different about him. He didn't have that familiar confronting,

untrustworthy something about him that can often accompany people on the street who stop you. Rather, this man simply said to me, “Please sir, my heart is hurting. Can you help me?”

Of course, I stopped and told him about the love of God, hugged him, prayed for him, and led him to Jesus right there on the side of the busy street. We bought him some lunch and asked him to come and join us at the church later that night that was part of Jodie’s mum and dad’s ministry.

I’m amazed and humbled by the fact that of all the different kinds of people, with different religions and impure agendas that this man could’ve stopped, God moved upon him in that moment, and he had jumped out in front of me, a Christian missionary, in search of something to heal the pain in his heart. Little did he know he was about to encounter the very Lover of his soul.

God is just so good.

Miracle in an Uber

A couple of years ago, we were ministering in Northern Queensland in Australia. We had taken a whole team with us, and one day we were all visiting the waterfront in Townsville and having lunch together. When it was time to head back to where we were staying, we didn’t all fit in the vehicles we had because some had been dropped off. Everyone fit except me, and so I decided to catch an Uber and see them at home.

My Uber driver’s name was Miroslav. Conversation quickly turned to what I was doing in his city, so I told him we were there to tell people about Jesus! For the next ten minutes I heard Miroslav’s story about leaving his home in Czechoslovakia many years ago, working as a professional chef in Sydney, and was now living in Townsville and driving an Uber. I shared with him the gospel and answered his questions about how he could go to Heaven. When we arrived at my stop, I simply asked him, “Miroslav, would you like to give your life to Jesus?” And one word forever changed his eternity…“Yes.”

Right there on the curbside, I led him to Jesus and prayed with him. We exchanged contact details and then off he drove to his next job like he had

done many times before—but this time he was born again, a brand-new child of God.

Afterward, I was blown away as I thought about what had happened. Here was this man who had been on a journey his whole life, from one side of the world to the other. And here I was with my own journey, full of twists and turns and moving and traveling. Then suddenly our worlds collided when I stepped that day into his Uber. Ten minutes later, he passed from death into life and became a child of God.

I may never see Miroslav in this life again, but one day we will be standing together in Heaven and saying, "Remember that day, way back in Townsville, in the Uber." And he'll be standing there with me, because God reached out to encounter him that day.

If there is one truth I want you to take from this chapter, it's this—a lifestyle of encounters with God leads to a lifestyle of others encountering God through us. God wants us to encounter Him just like Moses did at the burning bush. He then wants us all to become burning-bush encounters for those around us.

Note: After writing this chapter, Jodie suggested to me that I change the name of my school friend who died, to protect her and her family. Straight away, the name that came to me to change it to was "Vicky," which is nothing at all like my friend's name. I asked Jodie, "What should I call her?" Instantly she replied, "Vicky." Whoa…we both agreed that it must mean something. Well, Vicky means victory, victorious, triumphant, and we both agreed that the Holy Spirit must simply be telling us that "Vicky" is in fact… in Heaven!

ENCOUNTER MOMENT

Pray this prayer for God to break in with boldness:

> *God, I want to be a walking burning-bush encounter, everywhere I go, so that others can encounter You through me. I want to live a lifestyle of encountering You because I know that will then lead to a lifestyle of others encountering You. I*

ask You for daily opportunities to preach the gospel and to share Your love with the world. I also ask You for boldness to then step out and do what You are asking me to do. Thank You that as I step out, You will meet me right there.

Let me pray for you now…

Father, I want to release an impartation for souls, for evangelism, and for harvest for my friend reading this prayer right now. That same anointing that You have released to bring entire villages, schools, and rooms of people into the Kingdom, as well as the one on the street or in a taxi, I release to all who will receive it.

Let us burn with the fire of God for the gospel, in Jesus' name!

Conclusion

GOD TRULY IS ENCOUNTERABLE

THIS BOOK CHRONICLES SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND life-defining encounters I have had throughout my more than twenty-seven-year walk with the Lord; but more than that, the pages of this book all testify of the One who is truly encounterable. He is the great Lover of our souls, the Desire of the Nations, the King of all kings, and perhaps my favorite—He is Emmanuel, *God with us!*

The Bible is truly the book that tells of the God who simply wants to be with His children that He loves so much. He created Adam and Eve and put them in a beautiful garden, where He spent time walking with them, talking with them, and just being with them. When Adam and Eve fell, they were separated from God, and the intimate, glory-filled relationship that they had with their Father was destroyed. Over the next several thousand years, God has been on a journey with man to reconcile us to Him and restore that intimate relationship.

For a couple thousand years, His presence was literally in a box called the Ark of the Covenant, hidden behind walls of ritual and blood sacrifice. I love that the very first thing that happened when Jesus died, was God stepped down and with His own hands tore the temple veil, a thick curtain that symbolized our separation from each other, from top to bottom! Well

that's how I imagine it happening anyway! When Jesus cried out those final words on the Cross, "It is finished!" among other things, ultimately what was finished was God's separation from us, and ours from Him.

Even though there was this separation because of our sin and our falling short of the glory of God, *still* God kept showing up over and over and over again. He was in the burning bush, and the glory cloud, and the pillar of fire. He was in the fiery furnace with those three Hebrew boys. He appeared as an angel to Gideon and many others. He came really close to breaking the rules when He showed Moses His back, and He even spoke through a donkey!

Over and over again throughout the Bible, we are told of a God who is pursuing us. Song of Songs is pretty much a fairly explicit love letter from a bridegroom to His beloved bride. We are invited repeatedly into a place of intimacy with Him. "Ask, seek, knock; draw near to Me, search for Me with all your heart. I will be with you, I will be with you, *I will be with you!*

In Hebrews we are told that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. What does He reward us with? What is a diligent seeker's reward? Of course, it's Him!

While many of these encounters are a spectacular invasion of our beautiful God into the life of a Kiwi boy who had no friends, the even more beautiful truth is our God is the God of the everyday encounter of His presence.

Our Christian life need not be summed up with the twenty or so times that we encountered God, but rather with a life of experiencing Him every day, every hour, in every place and every circumstance.

He truly is encounterable.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3 NIV).

ABOUT BEN HUGHES

Ben Hughes and his wife, Jodie, are founders of Pour It Out Ministries with a mandate to “pour out the oil of His presence and power in the nations. It’s all about Jesus!”

They have been in ministry together for more than twenty years. Recently relocating to the United States from Australia, they, along with their adult daughter Keely, travel full time around the world as revivalists, with an emphasis on releasing and equipping for revival, breakthrough prophetic worship, prophetic ministry, and preaching the gospel with miracles, signs, and wonders following.

Known for recently hosting the Pineapple Revival in Australia, which saw thousands come from all over, initially going nonstop for twenty-two weeks and extending for eighteen months.

As well as being full-time itinerant revivalists and prophets, they have pastored and planted several churches, trained hundreds of ministry students, recorded worship albums, and are currently working on several writing projects.

To invite Ben, Jodie, and Keely to minister at your service, conference, or other event, please go to www.pouritout.org/invite or send an email to info@pouritout.org.

To partner with Pour It Out Ministries financially, please go to www.pouritout.org/partner or give via paypal.me/pouritout.

More information is found on their website
https://www.pouritout.org/.



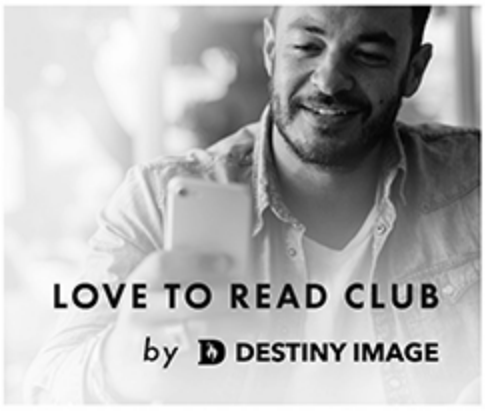
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