

let's talk

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New Covenant Ministries International

Australia

P. O. Box 324
O'Halloran Hill
South Australia 5158
Telephone: 61-88-321-9973
Fax: 61-88-321-9974
admin@coastlands.org.au

Germany

Zschierener Str 19
01259 Dresden
Germany
Telephone: 49-351-311-7533
Fax: 49-351-311-7536
office@jgdresden.de

Holland

Chopinlaan 22
Voorthuizen, Nederland 3781
Telephone: 31-342-471-768
Fax: 31-342-478-272
info@hetkruispunt.com

New Zealand

70 Celtic Crescent
Ellerslie, Auckland
New Zealand
Telephone: 64-9-571-3390
fax: 64-9-571-3392
info@horizon.org.nz

Singapore

#14-58 Mandarin Gardens
7 Siglap Road
Singapore 448909
Telephone: 65-6-2424-597
mckellar@singnet.com.sg

South Africa

P. O. Box 1491
Jukskei Park 2153
Telephone: 27-11-704-3051
Fax: 27-11-704-2814
ncmibry@icon.co.za

United Kingdom

4 Albany Close
East Sheen, Surrey
England SW14 7DX
Telephone: 44-208-876-4491
Fax: 44-208-878-7637
office@lci.org.uk

United States

1920 South Brea Canyon Cutoff Road
Walnut, CA 91789
USA
Telephone: 909-598-1964
Fax: 909-598-7161
kristen@southlands.net

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Chris Wienand Editor in Chief

Samantha Barrett Managing Editor

Alan Frow Content Editor

Laura Volz Art Director

Andrew McKellar Web Master: letstalkmag.com

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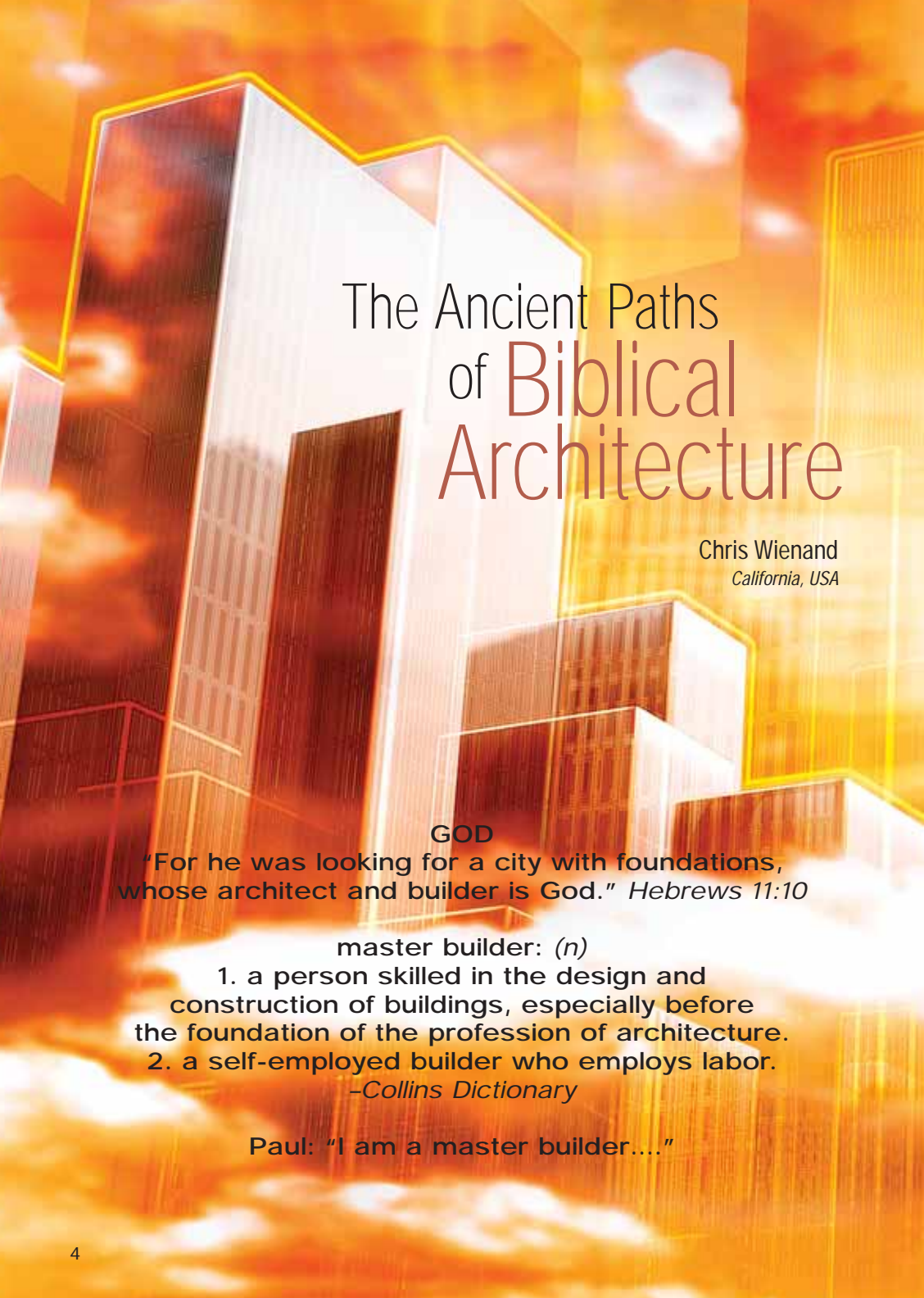
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The Ancient Paths of Biblical Architecture

Chris Wienand
California, USA

GOD

**"For he was looking for a city with foundations,
whose architect and builder is God." Hebrews 11:10**

master builder: (n)

- 1. a person skilled in the design and construction of buildings, especially before the foundation of the profession of architecture.**
- 2. a self-employed builder who employs labor.**

-Collins Dictionary

Paul: "I am a master builder...."

I emailed an architect friend recently, wanting to probe the nature and characteristics of a good architect. He replied:

“What Makes a Good Architect?”

I've always held to two analogies in describing what makes a good architect. The first picture is the ability to hold in equal tension and combination, the Brazilian and German soccer teams. The creativity, flamboyance and passion of the Brazilians, mixed with the precision, discipline, and consistency of the Germans. The second being that of a plate of spaghetti. Spaghetti (ideas, dreams, freedom) is far more useful, enjoyable, and nourishing served on a plate (experience, understanding, knowledge). Spaghetti served without a plate is messy, illusive and ineffective as a meal. I guess, what I'm trying to say is an equal measure of the spirit and of government.” Nigel Tarbeton.

A good architect is passionate, can lead a project under extreme pressure, is reasonable, is patient and has the ability to communicate vision well, the ability to enthuse, and has a sensible understanding of people. God is an architect. Amazingly, it is one of the attributes of the Father that gets little mention or discussion, yet is one of the most important ingredients in an apostolic household, as we seek to disciple all nations. The reader is introduced to God as an artist in Genesis 1. However, in his perfection and totality, he is not only driven by an artistic persuasion and creativity, but he has plans, designs and shapes.

Most of us in moments of honesty, would acknowledge that we want to skip the parts of scripture that deal with cubits and design details. It is rather amazing that, of all the things that God could have included in his word, he devotes chapters to the design of Noah's ark and to Moses. I find that amazing. There is not just a generic call to build an ark, but the architect God gives the design appropriate for the challenges which lay ahead. The ark of Noah had to face the full force of the open heavens and the explosion of the artesian wells from below which were to meet in unprecedented power. Certainly this was no pragmatic *do it yourself* project. The ark of Moses was styled in cosmic detail. It had to face the vicissitudes of the desert pioneering pilgrimage, setting up and tearing down, yet shaped with the prophetic detail for the content within as a reminder of God's stated intent.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the New Testament is fashioned by the architectural design of apostles and prophets who '*lay foundations*' (Ephesians 2:20) and that apostles are '*expert builders*' (1 Corinthians 3:10).

“How Do They See?”

They see into the future. They see the completed work in action. They see people moving through and making use of the space and environment created. They see something that is better than what was before. They see the dream performing at full capacity. They see every area being used. They see no dead space.” Nigel Tarbeton.

Apostles are architects! In partnership with prophets, this is one amazing design combination. There is clear announcement that, *"Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."* Amos 3:7 One cannot underestimate the weight and role of the prophets in divine design. To silence them, ignore them or under use them is to walk in partial architecture at best. In fact, this is a most essential partnership that requires the deepest trust, friendship, mutual honor and respect. When Amos said, *"Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"* was he not inclusively referring to the apostolic-prophetic partnership? (Amos 3:3)

Nigel's description of how architects see warrants some attention. True biblical apostles are strategic architects. They are not only able to see the future (a sign of a prophetic people) but are able to convert the notion, ideas and concepts of the future and give them shape and form. A true apostle is one who can transition the now to the then, with strategic steps, without becoming bureaucratic or goal driven. For the sake of readability, allow me to put these thoughts in bullet form:

- The apostle sees the whole picture, the bigger, the everything...
- The future is clear to the apostle... it is touchable, tasteable and real.
- The steps toward its fulfillment become increasingly clear and obvious. (Remember what Jack Hayford said: *"What we have achieved we have stumbled onto."* That reality keeps us humble at the same time.)
- Apostles are inclusive. They are not enamored by their ministry but are always seeking to release others *"to equip the saints for the work*

of the ministry." Ephesians 4. They are great conductors of the orchestra.

- Like Nehemiah, they are committed to seeing everyone *find their place on the wall*. Both local churches and individuals, apostles desire to help them mature, blossom, grow and find God in any and every situation.
- Apostles want to see empty places (unreached peoples, unchartered waters) filled with divine design of appropriate, apostolic prophetic households.

It seems that almost every move of God starts out being founded by a pioneering apostolic father but drifts into getting primary leadership from a pastoral grace gifting. For example, look at both the Vineyard churches as well as the Methodists. The default button for the pastoral gift is the heart. I wonder if the continuous preoccupation with heart, motive and the like does not lead to *"the paralysis of analysis"* as my old friend Carl Cronje used to say. Risk and entrepreneurial passion surrenders to the safe, the cautious, the conservative.

"How do they take someone else's dream and make it their own without compromising their artistic integrity?"

Another's dream is often the necessary starting point to stimulating another's imagination. Over time I have come to realize the incredible vulnerability and privilege of sharing dreams. A dream is often conveyed in a confused and disjointed fashion, and is more often than not, incomplete. The architect's responsibility in facilitating the completion of the dream offers a sense of ownership to the architect. How is this done without compromising their own artistic integrity? The timing of this process normally

determines the extent to which compromise becomes an issue. Premature involvement by the architect during the formative period of the dream could prevent artistic compromise on the part of the architect, yet steer a client's dream in a direction it was never intended. Delayed involvement in the dream by the architect often leads to compromise, as the architect's primary role is diminished to one of taking instruction and performing duties. A discerning architect knows when the time is right." Nigel Tarbeton.

This package of perspectives is very weighty as we explore the apostle as architect. It seems that:

- There is no *one size fits all*. Every design has its own challenges and its own creativity without forfeiting the essentials of engineering requirements (read biblical pattern).
- Imagination is a daily must.

- Color, texture, creativity, feel are the architects bread and butter.
- Relationship between the architect (apostle) and the dreamer (the leaders and folks of local churches) is essential—ongoing, current, honest and real.
- The absence of uniformity is the architect/apostle's delight. Helping every person build their dream house or building, is the paralleled equivalent of the apostle's partnering with the local elders. It is not the imposition of the apostle's thoughts but the fulfillment of the local

elders mandate from the Father that becomes the purpose of the partnership. The moment the translocal Ephesians 4 ministry becomes the louder voice, we have lost the relationship between the architect and the dreamer. Could it then be that we end up with the boring, bland, bureaucratic buildings of Soviet communistic days—functional but lifeless?

- The architect has to factor in all the ingredients for a successful building. The beauty of the design must be matched with the context (situational geology, city requirements, engineering essentials, availability of materials, real budget limitations). So too, the apostle must consider all these equivalents in effective building. Things like:

- Culture of the community.
- Contextualization of the message without compromise.
- The spiritual maturity of the church as a factor in decision making.
- The history of the *building*.

- The nature and personality shape of the leaders.
- The mandate (candlestand) of that particular church.
- The real faith of the people (like Jesus in Nazareth)
- The role that the elders actually want the apostle to play, as there is only invited not imposed authority.
- Whether the church is born from the planting of a son or that of an *"orphan"* church.

Successful design matches its context—situational geology, city requirements, engineering essentials, real budgetary limitations...
—yet brings beauty.

- Going in as father or as a guardian (interesting conversation...).
- The role of the church in the broader togetherness.
- The apostle architect provides a strategic collage of prophecy, scriptural blueprint, now realities and the *'unforced rhythms of grace.'*
- Therefore it does require an ongoing partnership until the task is complete... guardians are like specific contractors, but father architects are in for the long haul.
- The question of timing is one of great architectural priority. Paul probed the new frontiers knowing that in some cities the doors would not open for him while in others he would stay a long time. Although the nature of this essay is not to discuss the theology of time and place, it is a major part of the apostolic heritage.

Some Biblically Essential Texts:

- *Genesis 11: The Architecture of Men*
- *Genesis 12: The Architecture of God*
- *Genesis 6-8: The Flood Fighter*
- *Exodus 37 & 38: The Presence Holder*
- *2 Chronicles 3-7: The Building*
- *Jeremiah 29:11: The Plans of God*
(*Psalm 20:4, Isaiah 37:26, Isaiah 46:9-11*)
- *Psalm 127:1: One Ultimate Builder*
- *Isaiah 28:16: The Cornerstone*
- *Isaiah 54:2-3: The Architecture of Enlargement*
- *Isaiah 61:4: Restoration Design*
- *Matthew 7:24-29: The Wise Man (Luke 6)*
- *Mark 11:17: House of Prayer*
- *Luke 5:36-39: Garments & Wineskins*
- *Luke 9 & 10: Going*
- *Luke 14:28-30: Building a Tower*

tLT

*Do you think you are invincible? This is a naive—and deadly—damaging assumption. I feel impressed to deliver a prophetic warning as we move forward into the future as relating churches. The glory of the Lord will cover the earth—that's a given. We cannot make the assumption that we will be the instrument. One of the quickest ways to make ourselves irrelevant is to succumb to the spirit of *denominationalism*.*

The 9/11 attacks and the tsunami devastations are horrific reminders that no one is immune to an alteration in the status quo. Lewis Carrol wrote that great nonsensical poem which none of us really understood, *"The Jabberwocky."* Some of it reads: *"Beware the jabberwock, my sons; the jaws that bite, the claws that snatch. Beware the jubjub bird and shun the frumerous bandersnatch!"* There is a Jabberwock that waits for all of us! I mean **all** of us—leaders **and**

Peter Howard-Browne
Somerset West, South Africa

fighting the subtle creep of denominationalism

followers. Jabberwock has multiple siblings but the one I want to focus upon is the jabberwock of denominationalism. Dudley and Ann Daniel and those who began together many years ago, have passionately fought this jabberwock and we must remain vigilant as we walk into our future inheritance, or we will lose it. Samuel 1: 8 records that Samuel gave in to the baying of the crowd who demanded, *"Give us a king like the nations!"* When leaders give in, we often end up in a place we never intended to go. Sometimes letting the 4000 speak is not helpful! Verse 10 illuminates the results of a denominational spirit. I think we underestimate the role of followers in building a denominational spirit—we forget that Israel, the people themselves said, *"Give us a king, like the nations."*

Your dictionary will define the word denomination as: *'the act of denominating, a name or*

designation, especially for a class of things.' It also speaks of being in vogue, commonness, frequency, and popularity. Denominationalism is a *'sectarian spirit or policy, the tendency to divide into denominations or sects.'* Denominationalization of groups is a subtle slide... it is slight, faint and underrated, yet insidious, sinister, dangerous and menacing. It creeps... moving stealthily, on tiptoe... sneaking, slinking... slithering. It may not even appear that ominous at first. The writer to the Hebrews warns us, *"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away..."* (Hebrews 2:1) *'Drift'* in the Greek is *'to flow by; to carelessly pass'*. The greatest problem with our man-made structures and ideologies is that they often tend to obscure Christ. We no longer do what we set out to do in response to the overwhelming love of Jesus. We begin to worship the created thing instead of the Creator.

1 Samuel 8:7: "God said, 'The people have rejected me from being king over them.'" Our Ecclesiology begins to eclipse our Christology. Our wineskin replaces the Wine-giver as the object of our affections. Our response to people is no longer put through the grid of the heart of Christ and thus people become expendable commodities in our quest for organizational excellence and survival.

The insurance industry is all about risk management. The premium we pay depends on the kind of risk we represent. Are you at risk of succumbing to the spirit of denominationalism? Has a thoughtless 'rah rah' spirit invaded your local church which threatens to sweep you away into irrelevance? What makes you think you are immune from denominationalism? Do you think not wearing a dog collar nor having a title protects you automatically? Many of

the younger singers in our togetherness say, 'Lordtt'—why is that? Someone is being imitated. Why is this such an issue? Because in the history of the church, every single move of God eventually lost its heat and lost its relevance. Vibrant, Bible-based, Holy Spirit-filled passion, fervent missionary and evangelistic zeal repeatedly gave way to respectable, self-indulgent and impotent religion. The Pentecostal movement lost its heat because it was seduced into becoming *respectable*. Wesley replaced himself with a Conference of 100 specified men and he made that Conference his successor. But eventually too,

Methodism lost its heat. The genius in Wesley's organizational ability was the class meeting—which in the end became legalistic and lost the vital essence of being a vital living organism.

The Moravians began so well—laying their lives down, selling themselves into slavery for the sake of winning the lost, but were weak on leadership development and in the end, lost their edge. The way to stay true to your marriage vows is to have a

healthy distrust of your own sense of invincibility. The way to stay true to the Biblical mandate is to understand that individually, and thus corporately, we are always vulnerable to the subtle creep of denominationalism.

Our very humanity is the problem: the default setting in the human heart is control. Look at the Genesis account. The defining manifestation of

the human heart is its insistence of being in control. The serpent offered Eve the acquisition of power. It wasn't just about cornering the market on wisdom and insight. It was about control. In fact Genesis 3:16 predicts for us the root cause of trauma in marriage—the refusal to be defrauded and the self-protective obsession with dominance. Humans love to organize, to manage, to conserve. We don't like living in any sense of blurred edges because to do so would be to admit we have lost control. We insist on turning flexible wineskins into concrete bomb shelters and like engineers, we tend to over

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Use of a corporate
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specify. I believe that Jesus intends for us to never lose our heat! Jesus said, in John 15:8, *“It is to My Father’s glory that you bear much fruit; showing yourselves to be My disciples.”* The Greek word much suggests both *quantity and chronology*. John 15:16: *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit that will last.”* ‘Last’ in the Greek means *stay, abide, continue, dwell, endure, and stand*.

Malcolm Black has listed these symptoms of the downward slide into denominationalism:

- *Doctrinal disputes*
- *Organizational and hierarchical structures*
- *Static wineskins*
- *Absence of leadership training*
- *Exclusivism*
- *Loss of passion and focus*
- *Traditionalism (worship of the tradition)*
- *Institutionalism (worship of the institution)*
- *Compromising the Word of God*

Wouldn’t it be great if all you needed was to hang flags in your rafters and then the nations would be on your heart? Imagine if all you had to do was buy the manuals and books and CDs at the leadership training times and you would be fine? Wouldn’t it be great if all you needed was Billabong and Quicksilver gear and that would keep you from the seduction of denominationalism? In order to avoid the subtle creep we need to **pay attention...**

to language. At the risk of appearing Athenian—a love of discussing words and ideas—it seems that today’s definitions determine tomorrow’s behaviors. I contend we are sloppy with how we define things. Every Reformation or new move of God has to find a new vocabulary to express rediscovered Bible truth. When Dudley began 20

years ago he and others had to come up with a vocabulary that would be helpful in describing their revelations. Steeped in the religious language of our past experience, Jan & I had to learn a new language... *“LTTs: perspective; wine-skin; invited-not-imposed authority, non-use of titles, translocal* (initially that sounded like the trans-Siberian railroad to which Dudley was inviting us!) *relating, plurality of elders*. Leon Van Daele has enlightened us as to why we really shouldn’t use the word “deaconate”, Ian Mac unceremoniously and convincingly tipped the triangle onto its side, and we all lost our parking bays, along with the organist. We had no “policies,” no “party line” but shared values, New Testament values at that. That vocabulary has defined us to this point. But unless we pay attention, we will find ourselves using jargon that quickly becomes meaningless. You say you are a relating church, but are you really? An eloquence and an ease around a corporate glossary of terms will not immunize us from our own deadly form of denominationalism.

to biblical truth over personal and cultural taste. We found there were many cultures we needed to have in a local church and most of them warred against our arsenal of personal preferences and tastes. The Renaissance put man on center stage and we began to see ourselves as the center of all reality. History tells us that the third and fourth generation often lose heat because they have not paid a price and have settled down into comfort and convenience. The default setting is not inheritance, it is inertia.

to apostolic imperatives. We hold that it is in the giving of ourselves that we receive, that it is in the pouring ourselves out as drink offerings

that the Kingdom is advanced. Remind yourself that wives are part of a team and that children can participate in this apostolic journey their parents are on. Remind yourself that the pastoral model is a counterfeit model that results in naval gazing and has never resulted in God's house becoming a house of prayer for the nations. But how quickly we can settle down! You and I are not immune! Pay attention...

to heart rhythms. Denominationalism develops when we neglect to check our hearts. Sometimes the problem lies more with motive than it does with methodology. Pride has single-handedly stopped major moves of God dead in their tracks! Arrogance is a subtle sin. Why do you need to control? Why do you fear the future so much that you feel you have to organize it? Has Jesus slipped from first place in my heart and now I am in love with the nations, the ministry, and the business of church? What's wrong with my heart? Why do I need profile and thus find myself striving for office? It's a heart problem!

I need to ask myself questions like, *Do I speak of "NCMI churches"?* Hello!... There is no such thing! *Do I think regionally, along with regional headquarters?* *Do I find myself quoting team members more than Jesus?* Has love-motivated respect for team members given way in my heart to guruism? (*"I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, and I'm of Jesus!"*) *Who is your guru?* *Do I fear team men more than Jesus Himself?* *Am I sharing my heart honestly with others?* In some parts of the world

people have a historical psyche that makes them vulnerable to control by authority figures. Do team guys lead our church for us? Do I see good deaconing as a stepping stone to promotion to eldership, and good eldering as promotion to translocal ministry? Do I find myself looking over my shoulder continuously wondering what so-and-so (mostly on team) would think about what we as elders feel God has shown us to do? Am I afraid to be entrepreneurial because of what a team guy might think? Do I find myself constantly looking

for *the party line*, or a so-called *NCMI policy*, a uniform dress code, and needing someone to make a rule for me, tell me what I can and cannot eat or what I can and cannot drink? How susceptible am I to a hierarchical mentality? How desperately would I love to occupy the front few rows at any given LTT? How desperately do the front few rows love to sing the old hymn, "*I shall not be*

moved!" Maybe we should go off team every 2 years for 6 months to check our hearts as to why we are there on team in the first place? Do I find myself talking about *the model*—elevated to 4th person of the Trinity? In my most honest moments, do I think, in our togetherness, we are really better than any other people God has raised up? Our passion must always be Jesus!

Our goal is to spread abroad the fame, the splendor and the majesty of the King who is indescribably exquisite. Let's make it our goal to keep Him central in everything we do! †LT

Do I find myself talking about "the model" (practically elevating it to the 4th person of the Trinity)? In my most honest moments, do I think we are really better than any other people God has raised up? Maybe we should go off team every 2 years to check our hearts as to why we are there in the first place.



The One Thing

the Church of Acts had incredible focus and unity. They all believed the gospel enough to order their private worlds around it. They realized they were going to spend eternity together, so they had better get on well together on earth. They all shared the same Spirit, the same mission, the same heart. A combination of age-old selfishness, modern day consumerism and postmodern thinking, have all colluded to make the customer his own king and the King our custom-feeder. But church by definition is a group of born again believers, called out of the world and called into service for the King. We are the clay; He is the potter. He is **the one thing**.

He is our Reason, our Reward, our Reliance. He is our portion and our cup, our cleft and our advocate. He is the Commander in Chief. His whisper is our command. We do not mix His word with our convenience, comforts or culture-bubble restrictions. Is there anything I would not obey Him on, any place He could not send me to, any person I would refuse to speak to? If you knew you were going to die this Christmas, what would your *one thing* become? As the saying goes, no one on their deathbed worries about whether they spent enough time at the office. This question tests how much and how often we think on the resurrection of the dead, the

judgment of deeds done in the body, and eternal rewards for the faithful, persevering saints in paradise. Now the question is, how do we make this *one thing* the main current in the river of our local church? How do we get believers to cast off their moorings from temporary things, from building bigger barns, from their oxen and fields and new brides, to plunge into *the fullness of God*? The simple answer is this: it will happen as long as the leaders have made Christ and His Kingdom their *one thing*, their pearl of great price! To do this—to grow a church from a plant to a church, to a base for the commission—I believe every leader needs to pay attention to the following private growth areas.

Ancient Wells. Only the ancient paths lead us to the One Thing. Only a knowledge of the Holy gives us over to courage and fearlessness in these days. We would all acknowledge that theology and doctrinal completeness are central to eldering generally, but in a smaller church many co-elders can get away with shallower wells and poor reading habits, because one man does most of the preaching and weightier counselling. But bigger church is busier church, and needs every elder to be wise, and to be *one thing visionaries!* This prevents the lead guy from drowning (see *Exodus 18:13-22*), stops doctrinal off-centered-ness, and also halts the invasion of barbarian subcultures driven by ‘many things.’ I believe the shallow-well leader will sooner or later lose his ministry as time, events and the last-day church emerges. Not because he does not have clever things to say, but because the time is soon coming when only ‘one thing men’ will stand in the end-time storms.

One Thing Boldness. Some leaders are too timid, so a rising river only serves to make them more timid. But the river is soon becoming a sea of glory! Now is the time to deal with the flinch reflex. This must start with an unswerving belief in Jesus, His purpose and goal, as well as His personal call to you to follow Him in spite of a lack of home, a dying father, a new bride. One thing leaders are hallmarked by their courage to speak up, speak out, challenge nonsense, say no, push out a coffee date, bring a rebuke, defend a leader, challenge their wives at times. I have had my fair share of disarming comments around eternity, but I remain utterly convinced some of us simply need to take Baxter’s advice and meditate a lot more frequently on our own demise one day. This will give us the hunger and desperation to make this remains of a life count, and not settle for the fool’s gold of a *comfortable pastoral post*. And then, for the remains of this life, what are you aiming at? What is your unfulfilled dream? What city or nation? Is there a cry and a groan in your belly? *Philippians 3:12-14*: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

One Thing Wallets. Stinginess in leaders is virtually never linked to gree, but almost always to fear, and fear has to do with Lordship issues—serving two masters and many things. Yes, we can do this as leaders! Fretting is a sin,

according to the Bible. Whatever happened to the Reese Howells, getting into train ticket queues without a penny? A leader giving only a fraction beyond his tithe remains immature in covenant and one thing revelation. *He who gives seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.* He will! Generosity was not a function of means to Macedonians, so thus it is a function of romance, revelation and one thing passion. As your church gets bigger, the team will need to be populated with romantics, wilder men (not necessarily all of them big capacity, though). Without this, corporate inertia sets in, camps form, fears congeal, “many things” emerge, and then the wild ones are seen as eccentrics and the majority immunize themselves to the sound of those eccentrics’ voices. Why? Because they see two or more “reasonable men” on the eldership team. If there is any perception of a place for a reasonable man on your leadership, it will very soon evaporate. If a man refuses to move from reasonable to flaming radical, the tensions will move from latent to patent and something will snap. If your lead elder is more “one thing” than you, more generous than you, now is the time to grow your own revelation, courage and wildness.

One Thing Prayer. This is actually the number one key to a One-Thing church. Prayer is the

How do we get believers to cast off their moorings from temporary things, to plunge into the fullness of God? It will happen as long as the leaders have made Christ and His Kingdom their One Thing... their pearl of great price!

open road in the blizzard—Spurgeon was dead right. Prayerlessness lies at the root of all eldership woes and complacencies, of all tensions between the 10 “many things” spies and the “one thing” Caleb and Joshua. When I speak of prayer, I mean the intimate, reality-based, rambling conversations with your One God. Singing, worshipping, petitioning, waiting, writing, journaling, seeing, envisioning, receiving instruction kind of prayers. EM Bounds said, *“Prayer—secret, fervent believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness.* Robert Murray McCheyne put it this way: *“I ought to pray before seeing any one. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o’clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David says: ‘Early will I seek thee’; ‘Thou shalt early hear my voice.’ It is far better to begin with God - to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another.* And what of John Wesley’s famous outburst, *“Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer!”*

Discipling others in the One Thing. Discipling can be learned, along with its subset skills of

envisioning, extending grace and truth, discerning of spirits and motive, active listening, verbal warfare, keeping a man on the hook, and the like.

But, the signet of being able to disciple, is a man on fire for Christ. Anything less, and pleasant Pharisees raise up after their own kind (Michael Eaton once said you would absolutely love having a Pharisee as your neighbor!) Part of effective discipling is also throwing off unhelpful models of the past, including heavy shepherding and (most prevalent) pastoral counseling devoid of apostolic-prophetic intentionality. Most vitally, you must knit your One-Thing heart with your One-Thing leader, else you will forever be raising up men and homegroups and marriages that fly in parallel formation to the true One-Thing arrowhead. This is not a skill to be learned, but an active decision to plunge in and push in and keep an open ribcage towards your pointman.

Humor that reminds One Thing People of the joy set before them! In my tenure as a lead elder, I was sorely tempted merely to bring a man on because of his wit. Abraham Lincoln purportedly would never, ever hire a grumpy looking guy to the White House, no matter how strong the recommendations from his Chief of Staff. "I'll take the happy guy," he would say. A

few times in my tenure, I asked a leader, "does this level of moroseness help in your marriage and sex life?" If no, then why on earth would he

be so silly to think that it would add to the romance, verve, vitality, lightness and *joie-de-vivre* of the church and leader team? I do not speak of intensity, upon which I personally thrive, but morbidity, Eeyore Church International stuff. The stuff of worried, many-thinged men. Let's recapture humor. God gave us all the muscles we need to smile. More will happen and go wrong in a One-Thing base church, and if the elders have not learned how to carry heavy loads in a light yoke by then, it will be crushing... *Proverbs 18:14 "A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?"*

One Thing Non-Negotiable: Majoring on the Majors. Some elders get stuck in small church mode, insisting that every pastoral matter be churned through in every elders' meeting, wanting to introduce topics like brighter light bulbs for the parking area or nitter-natter about not having enough umbrellas when it rains. All that elder succeeds in doing is convincing the big-chested guys never to have him and his wife round for supper!

Prayer is the
open road in the
blizzard.
Prayerlessness
lies at the root of
all eldership
woes and
complacencies.
When I speak of
prayer, I mean the
intimate, real,
rambling
conversations
with God...
singing,
worshipping,
petitioning,
waiting, writing,
journaling,
receiving
instruction
kind of prayers.

I want compelling, stimulating men around me. I know we need to administrate well, but that is also what deacons serve into, last time I checked! Too many elders fill their lead guys' head with every detail, every blow, every crisis, every event. And the One Thing gets stubbed and blunted. We will not keep our leader in the dark, but we need covenantal awareness and skill in rolled up summaries, two-line emails and two-sentence text messages that say it all, and say it redemptively. But then let's major on the majors! Prayer meetings and Sundays, the growth of the saints and deacons, private investment, joy, vision, worship, prayer, purity, armor bearing your leader, apostolic partnering... *all massive!* Your life circumstances and struggles and holidays are minors in light of the One Thing, and should be between you and the Lord almost all the time. Self-manage well.

Some co-elders make it their mission to keep their leader as informed as possible about their unfolding life story, a form of ecclesiastical face-book-in-the-flesh. No. Your life exists now to serve and build the church. You must always be part of the solution, and never part of the problem. Make that your default, not *"nobody knows the troubles I've seen, so let me tell them..."* Let's ask God for clear discernment to separate the stones from the scaffolding in building this spiritual house with His Son! Die well, in other words, so you can live for the One Thing.

A One-Thing Willingness to Leave When God Opens the Door. The bigger a One-Thing church becomes, the more cozy and comfortable it can become, the larger the salaries, the wider the benefits, the more often the translocal financial support. This is the

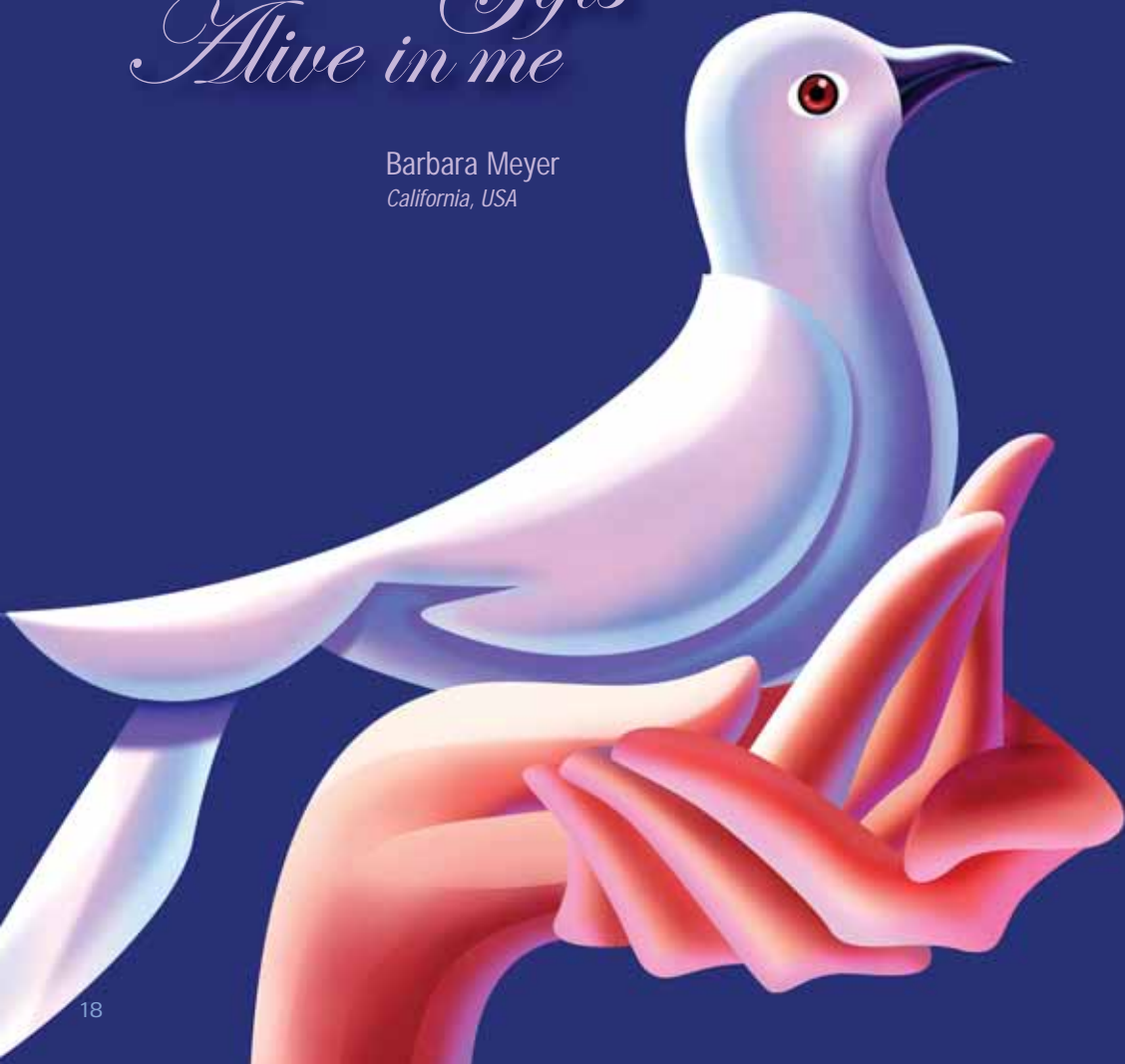
movement becoming a machine. The 'One Thing' becoming many things. Check your own heart often for machine-like tendencies. This is not an endorsement of the restless, nomadic spirit, but many elder teams get constipated, excuse the French. Know also that for many elders (not all maybe), their finest hour of training, authority, anointing and preaching power will only come when God gives them their own flock. So stay sacrificial, and be one of the 300 dog-like, water-lapping soldiers of One-Thing Gideon. How else can you raise up a wild church, for heaven's sake? And please, if you want to have a future in a One Thing church, don't get cynical about the mistakes and blunders of One Thing pioneers who have gone before you. "Huh, that church plant didn't work, did it?" In the name of being honest or funny, what we are really doing is giving our ears to the spiritual reports of the evil spies, who only want to petrify you with stories of failures, giants and clusters of grapes gone rotten. If our Canaan is a myth, if God is ho-hum about the nations, if there is no resurrection nor reward, we are the most pitiful of many-thinged men.

But Jesus has been raised from the dead and there is fire in His eyes. He has asked the Father to make the nations His inheritance. He is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. He is driving the money-lenders out still. He still is saving, healing, reaching, judging, giving and miracle-working. And all through you and me. No Plan B, as the saying goes in One Thing circles. Go for it! God shows no favorites, but favor will rest heavily in these days upon His One Thing men and women! †LT

Nick Davis
Pretoria, South Africa

*How I
Keep
the Gifts
Alive in me*

Barbara Meyer
California, USA



for me, the gifts of the Spirit are not like an object or possession to own or display, nor are they like a talent or an ability which I hone as a skill. Rather they are a dynamic part of my relationship with God—with my heavenly Father, with Jesus, and with the Spirit. They are kept alive in me only in the life of my relationship with God. So, how does that apply to keeping the gifts of the Holy Spirit alive in me? What does the “how” look like?

My prophetic gifting is perhaps the prime example of a gift that is only real and alive within the relationship I have with God. Abraham Heschel in his book, **The Prophets** says,

“Having an idea of friendship is not the same as having a friend or living with a friend, and the story of a friendship cannot be fully told by what one friend thinks of the being and attributes of the other friend... An idea or theory of God can easily become a substitute for God, impressive to the mind when God as a living reality is absent from the soul. The prophets had no theory or “idea” of God...To the prophets God was overwhelmingly real and shatteringly present...They lived as witnesses, struck by the words of God, rather than explorers engaged in an effort to ascertain the nature of God.

That expresses what being prophetic is for me. The prophetic gift is not, for me, hearing data or information, nor the foretelling of future events.

It is part of my relationship with God. It is hearing God. It is God sharing with me a picture or giving me a package of understanding. It is God sharing with me His heart and His perspective on a situation, or telling me what He is going to do. However, my relationship with God did not begin “full grown and fully developed.” I had to get to know Him and as I did I came to know his voice more and more clearly.

If you go into a large stadium filled with people all you can hear, really, is noise. But if there is someone you know well in the crowd, their voice isolates itself from all the others and you hear just that voice—especially if they say your name. It is the same with recognizing a voice on a phone. The first time someone calls you, you may not recognize their voice, but soon all that is needed is a “Hello” for you to know it is your friend. This is what it was like for me as I grew to know God better and better. At first it was very difficult to know if it was the voice of God speaking to me, or if it was my own thoughts or the memory of something I had heard somewhere. But as I have gotten to *know* God, His voice is easier to identify *amidst the noise* of my thoughts and memories. And my gifts have grown—and my understanding of them has grown—as I have grown in my relationship with God and in my knowledge of Him.

The things within my relationship with God that I find are crucial to keeping my gifting vital

(continued...)

are pretty simple things: openness, belief and obedience; time spent with Him in worship and the Word; study; as well as relationship and interaction with others who have the same or similar gifting. Though it sounds very obvious, I have found that it was key for me to be open to the idea that gifts are real, and in their very nature supernatural. In my humanness it was all too easy to explain it all away and ignore the voice of God. I had to believe that God could and did give gifts and anointing today, and would give those gifts to me. Then little by little I learned that as I walked in obedience in the gift, it grew. When I got a word from God, if I stepped over my fear and shared it, I found that the next time I got a word it would be “louder” and much clearer. If God gave me an instruction, and I chose to believe it was God and to act upon it in obedience, the gifting as well as my confidence and security grew stronger and stronger. Inside of me, it was like I heard, “oh, that’s what it is like.”

Time is a key element in every relationship. And again, obviously, time with Him is crucial for my relationship with God. Sometimes the needs we see as we minister become pretty consuming and we get busier and busier “doing” ministry. I must have time with God—worshipping him, sharing my heart with him, getting to know his heart, talking to him, listening to him—or ministry, especially what he says through me, becomes mechanical and flat and lifeless. My time in the Word must be time with him whether it is devotional time or time of study. He is the main character and hero of every book in the Bible. More than just learning doctrine and forming a theology, when I spend time in scripture, I have

learned about God’s heart and personality, and thereby I have come to know him more personally. As I listen to his voice, increasingly the scripture becomes for me the word spoken to me by the Living Word. I also find that as I spend time studying, there is more inside of me—a greater capacity of knowledge and truth available from which the Holy Spirit can speak to me.

There is a wonderful word: synergism. It means: *the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements, contributions, etc.* I have learned that my life and relationships within the Body of Christ are hugely important for the health and growth of my gifts. There is an increase in life and strength—a *synergism*—in my gifting when I spend time, especially time ministering in team, and when I grow in unity with others who have the same or similar gifting. I find that it is like turning up the power knob on my gifts.

Keeping my gifts alive is a result of keeping my relationship with Jesus vital. Unless I maintain a deep, love filled relationship with God the gifts degenerate to mere activity that at best parrots real ministry. We have all heard it said often that we must love the Giver, not the gifts; it is said often because it is so profoundly true. ††

Heschel, Abraham J. *The Prophets II*. Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 1962. p. 1

Dictionary.com. Based upon *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*. Random House, 2006.

Naturally **Supernatural** Churches

Consider the following:

- An older man, not a deacon or an elder, prays for a young man to be healed of cancer . . . he is.
- A young couple befriends the parents of their daughter's school mate. In a few months the school mate's father makes a decision to turn his life over to Christ.
- A policeman displays a godly temperament and patience in his duties.
- A teenage babysitter reflects a godly lifestyle and the child's parents begin investigating Christianity. The parents get saved, grow in God, start a home group, and eventually come on to eldership.
- A family takes in a homeless single mother, she gets saved.
- A grieving widow is full of joy despite her

circumstances.

- A teenager is involved in a tragic accident, some believers at work befriend him, he turns his life to Christ and is now a leader in the church.
 - A godly and responsible, but unemployed, husband believes God to provide money for the rent. With no foreseeable reason to expect anything, he simply trusts Him. The rent gets paid.
 - A woman overhears a conversation in the produce department of a grocery store by two others discussing where they could find a good church. She invites them to hers and within a couple months one of them, a 70 year old grandmother, gets saved.
 - A nurse reflects the mercy of God and a consistent life in her workplace.
- These are just a few of hundreds of real-life



(continued...)

scenarios played out in one local church. In them, we see the supernatural power of God working itself out in the lives of regular people. You could simply say it's *natural people behaving supernaturally*. This is what it means to be "Naturally Supernatural"—normal, everyday people living in and embracing the power of an awesome God. It's real people using the gifts God gave them to serve others without fanfare or religiosity.

The word 'natural' is generally regarded as: "normal, usual, accepted & expected; relating to the physical as opposed to the spiritual world; formulated by human reason alone rather than revelation." The word supernatural means: "departing from what is usual or normal; and relating to an order of existence beyond the visible observable universe." Super literally, it means: "above" or in this case, "above the natural." We can be normal, regular people, yet live in something that is not normal—it's *above* normal. We can participate in an existence beyond the visible observable universe. We don't have to be stuck in what's usual, expected and accepted. We don't have to "suck it up" and put up with just plodding along in this life, scratching out our meager existence.

How Can We Behave Supernaturally While Living In A Natural World?

K.I.S.S... Keep It Simple Saints! *James 1:27 (HCSB): "Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world."* James is really onto something here. He's telling us to quit playing games, quit acting spiritual, and start living what we believe. Make that phone call you've

been putting off. Restore that broken relationship. Invite those neighbors over for dinner. Feed the poor... really.

I love this quote from Dudley Daniel in his book "*Building On Apostolic Foundations*":

"What is possibly most needed is the presence of God in the midst of His people.... Without the presence of God, we have no power, no authority, no transformation and no glory to display to the nations.... Without the Spirit that gives life we have only the letter of the law to preach. Without the Spirit there is death, but when He comes there is life and with the life there is the potential for growth and fruitfulness. Genuine ministry takes place when there is an operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby He transforms us into the image of Christ through the Word of God. If this transformation does not happen, then no ministry has taken place."

We must remember that we are the ones who "do the doing" and it is God who "does the changing."

Use Our Gifts To Serve Others. I Corinthians 12 speaks about the Spiritual Gifts and Romans 12 talks about the Natural Gifts. Charismatic churches tend to emphasize the spiritual gifts and non-charismatic ones tend to highlight the natural gifts. Please don't get caught up in this debate! Let's use our natural giftings supernaturally and let's use our supernatural gifts in a most natural way, with the most excellent gift being love!

What is your gift? Are you an encourager? Do it! Do it with God's help. Do it in the power of His

Holy Spirit. Ask God to enlarge and expand you so that you may receive a word of knowledge for someone. Then you'll be using your natural abilities beyond what you'd ordinarily be able to.

Are you always *in the spirit* or *casting out demons*? Tone it down a bit. Most people don't understand a thing you're doing. And more importantly, they won't hear your message because they can't get past you! Go ahead and build yourself up in the Lord while you're by yourself like Jude 20 says. But when you're around people, remember that God says, "*Man looks at the outward appearance.*" Try not to put people off before they have a chance to get to know you.

Be Yourself. Don't try to be someone else or emulate their gift. Be yourself. Use the gifts God gave you. If you pretend to be someone else and you are "*successful*" in the world's eyes, then they've fallen in love with a phony. Just be real, accept and appreciate the person God designed you to be. Paul says in Romans 12:3 (NLT), "*As God's messenger, I give each of you this warning: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you.*"

Find Common Ground. Be like Paul who said in 1 Corinthians 9:22 (NLT), "*When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ.*" Do you excel at sports? Use that to reach others—it's easy! Are you a fisherman? Invite a friend to go fishing! It's a natural thing to do. One man in our church has a 4-wheel drive truck and has access to lots of firewood. So, he delivers firewood to those who

have need. Because he is doing what he loves, he does it with joy and represents the generosity of God. You can find some way to relate to people. Don't be a fake or a phony. Do what you're comfortable with. When you get better at that, ask God to stretch you a bit with something more difficult. You'll soon find that you're joyfully serving God.

Walk By Faith Not By Sight. We see the wonderful things of God by faith. Yes, it's faith in a very real God, but faith nonetheless. We live in a natural world, a fallen world. Sure, it would be nice to see the armies of God in flaming chariots like Elisha did. But, usually we can't. We have to earn a living, endure aches and pains, enjoy victories, eat and breathe. So, what then keeps us from becoming dull and dreary? We can see... above! We can see beyond this natural world to something far beyond; we can see something supernatural! *Romans 11:33 (NIV), "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"*

Finally, as believers with a big job to do, let's ask God to help us pull heaven down to earth. Let us begin being the salt and light He's called us to be. We need His help. We cannot do it by ourselves. †LT



From Brother to Lover

The sheer fact that I was asked to write an article about going from singleness to marriage means that all of those who are perfect at it were either unavailable or turned down the offer. Nevertheless, I hope our story will be helpful to those still in this journey, and if not helpful, at least entertaining. I married my best friend, Jill, June 2nd of last year. She and I had both joined Southlands Church in the summer of 2003. I admired her from a distance and knew that she was an amazing girl, but never saw her as more than a friend. I actually tried for the longest time to get my roommate to ask her out. After a year of me nagging him he asked her out for an informal dinner. It was about this time that my heart changed for her, so you can imagine the awkwardness when I had to inform him of my feelings and leave him with a "may the best man win," and I guess he did!

Once I worked up the courage to deliver my 15-second speech on how I felt about her, she said, "Thanks so much for being honest with me," which as all the men out there know is almost always followed by, "But I just want to be friends." As my heart was plummeting and I was considering moving to another nation to avoid the embarrassment, she followed with, "And I feel the exact same way." Later I learned why she gave the initial response. Jill had seen so many girls get their hearts broken because the guy who was seemingly pursuing them never was honest with them about their intentions. I've watched this myself as a guy, and from what I can tell, most of us men don't start out the relationship knowing it will end in marriage, so we don't communicate anything until we're

absolutely sure we want to marry her. Although this is understandable, it doesn't give us the right to ask a girl out to coffee every week for a year or chat on the phone or online with her daily, leaving her to try and guess how we feel about her. I know that this sounds ridiculous, but this stuff is happening and is unfair and plays with the heart, which we've been told to guard above all else.

What I've found helpful is just some honest communication throughout the relationship about where things are and where we see things heading. If you want to take the relationship to a deeper level, just ask her if she's open to it; don't expect it. Likewise, ladies, don't let the guy get just shy of proposing before he's told you how he feels. You are only setting yourself up for disappointment. Rather, treat him as you would a brother until he's requested something more. We told ourselves that we'd take it slow, but somehow we had built into our minds and hearts that this was going to be a very short process and within months we'd be married and enjoying our relationship in an entirely different way. However, it would be nearly two years before we "tied the knot" and because of our misplaced expectations, we had to learn some things the hard way. When you are running a marathon, it is different than when you run the 50-yard dash. Jill and I were setting ourselves up for a sprint and eventually became very tired and wondered when the finish line would ever come. This was, I believe, our biggest mistake.

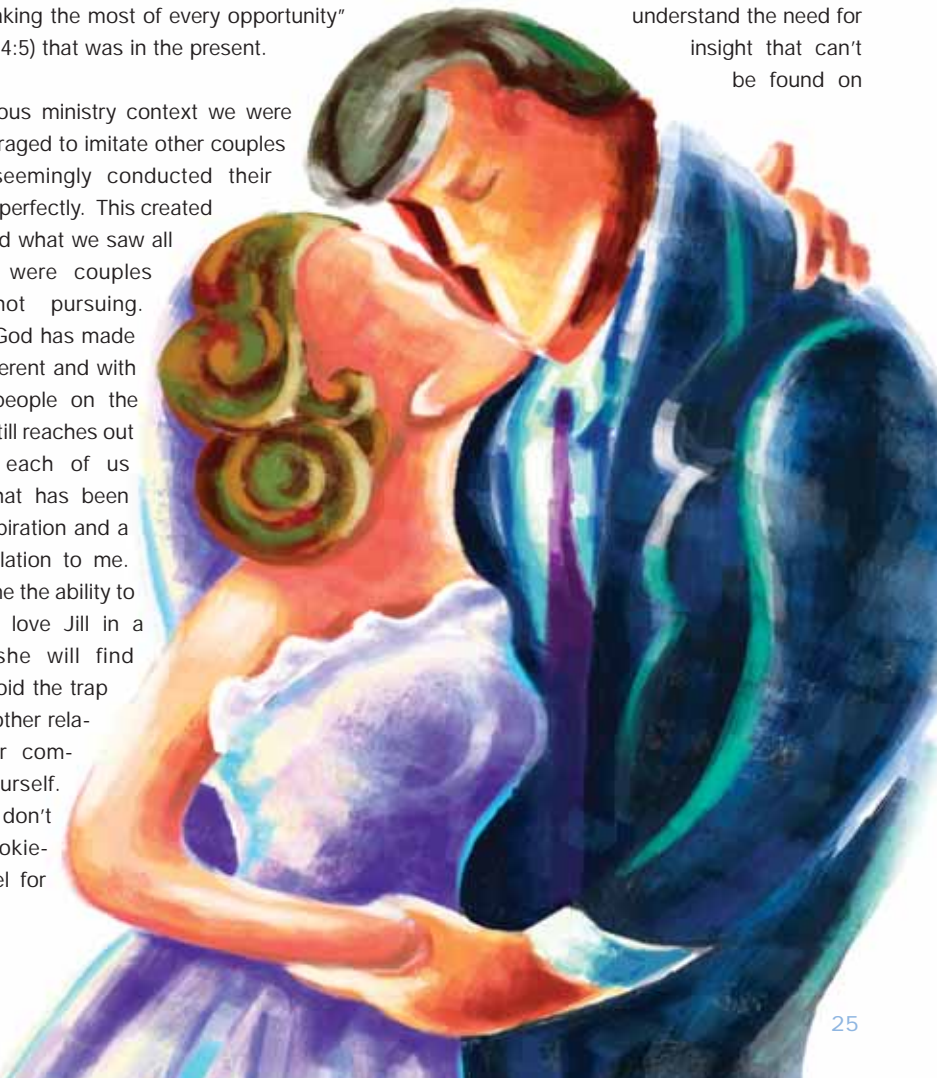
We did a lot of things really well moving from courtship to marriage, but the hurdles that we hit

along the way could have been avoided if we would had prepared ourselves for the worst and trusted God for the best. Nothing will frustrate the present like living in the future. My father-in-law, Don Shaffer, has a sign hanging in his classroom that says, "Enjoy The Process." I had to continually ask God for a grace and self-control to soak up every moment of the journey choosing not to think about all the things I could not do yet, but "making the most of every opportunity" (Colossians 4:5) that was in the present.

In my previous ministry context we were often encouraged to imitate other couples who had seemingly conducted their relationship perfectly. This created bondage and what we saw all around us were couples copying, not pursuing. Thankfully, God has made all of us different and with six billion people on the planet, He still reaches out and loves each of us uniquely. That has been such an inspiration and a freeing revelation to me. God gives me the ability to pursue and love Jill in a way that she will find special. Avoid the trap of copying other relationships or comparing yourself. Luckily, we don't find a cookie-cutter model for

dating in the Bible because love can never be reduced to a formula. Also, the importance of good accountability cannot be overstated.

I had a really great young guy ask me recently, "So when we turn 21, does that mean that we won't need accountability any more?" This question is an honest look into a fatherless generation that really doesn't understand the need for insight that can't be found on



(continued...)

myspace or facebook from a peer. My answer to him was, "When you turn 21 is when you really will need accountability because you can easily start to compromise values, rationalizing that you are old enough to do so." Join me in killing the "lone ranger" mentality and look to those who've gone before us to help us. I also wrestled with how many couples to be accountable with but in the end found it helpful to just pick one.

When there are multiple people all holding you accountable, invariably the temptation is to confess struggles to a different one each time which creates a huge dilemma because no one person or couple knows where you're really at. Find a couple who's marriage rocks and tell them everything. Lastly, dream. This generation has very few places to look to see a relationship that is worth modeling. My encouragement to you is

Prophetic Promises to Empower Prayer for China

Rob Rufus
Hong Kong

Recently, Glenda and I spoke to two very dear friends in our local congregation who have worked for Christ deep into China for many years. We wanted to grow in faith regarding the challenge of China and our time with them was richly rewarded. We live in Hong Kong with 7 million precious Chinese people on a geographical pin prick. Starting just 30 minutes drive north of us there are another 1.3 billion precious Chinese people of which over 1 billion have never heard the gospel once. As I have interviewed Chinese mainland people I have been appalled at their total absence of any knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The challenge of working into China is to know something of the developmental history of the church and to honor that history in order to safeguard us from being guilty of reintroducing into China what God had to remove from China at such a price from 1949 onwards. Before 1949 most forms of western denominations with their religious traditions and structures were in place in China. There was the unbiblical separation of clergy and laity. Most of the clergy were western and most of the power, wealth and influence were in their hands. Churches owned their own buildings and many were settled and comfortable with very little of the supernatural. When communism took over and threw out the western

pretend that the days before you, until you are married, are blank pages anticipating an exciting adventure to be told as one season ends and another begins. The old cliché still holds true, “In God, your past does not have to equal your future.” You decide what the pages will say. We love being a “prophetic people” which has been described as “seeing the future, preparing for the future and then becoming the future.” Dream

about what you want your story to be, get alongside a married couple who can help you reach that, and then write the pages of a story that’s worth being told because it brings glory to God and inspiration to others. †LT

missionaries it had several powerful and positive effects.

1) Traditional denominations disappeared!

2) In the absence of their pastors, the priesthood stood up in a new fervency and became carriers of the gospel in aggressive passionate evangelism. We need to honor the courage of the dear western missionaries and the great sacrifices many of them made to bring the gospel to China. They sowed the seeds. At the time they were evicted there were only about 1 million Christians in China. Soon after they were evicted, the gospel spread much faster without them. There was an acceleration of evangelism, signs and wonders and miracles similar to the book of Acts. By the early 1980’s there were over 40 million Christians in China and today those figures are estimated to be over a hundred million!

3) With the removal of the intellectual western world view to the supernatural, the miraculous erupted in the church in China.

Biblical culture comes out of eastern thinking. People with a kingdom consciousness live from the invisible to the visible, the unseen to the seen, from the eternal to the temporal and not the other way around. We are currently citizens

of heaven seated there in Christ and downloading into the earth realm through the currency of heaven which is faith. Faith is always superior to intellect. Hebrews 11:3 says, *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”* The scripture is clearly saying here that it is by faith we understand. It does not say we have faith because we understand but it says we understand because we have faith! This distinction describes and defines the different approaches to reality between the east and the west. The so called faith that comes out of understanding is an intellectual belief system that does not produce miracles. The realm of true faith is superior to the intellect because it accesses God’s realm.

Some elderly Chinese people were given two statements followed by a question, *“Coffee does not grow in cold climates. Great Britain has a cold climate. Does coffee grow in Great Britain?”* That’s a question that any five year old in the western world could answer very easily. But the overwhelming answer amongst the elderly Chinese people was, *“We do not know, we have never been to Great Britain.”* Eastern culture says we know nothing about signs, wonders and miracles and masses being saved if we do

(continued...)

not visit it or experience it! Western culture says we know everything because of deductive reasoning, because our note books are filled, we've read the manuals and been to the seminars. If the church in the western world in broad general terms were secure, humble and filled with integrity we would readily admit that we do not have the supernatural presence of God in manifestation in our midst as the church in the book of Acts did. We would have to admit that our denominational and dispensational theology have contributed to that, as well as the fact that we have gotten into bed and cuddled up with the pervasive world view of western culture. We have carried into the church the conditioning and indoctrination of a world view that makes us comfortable with the absence of cripples walking, blind eyes opening, angelic visitations and masses being saved and added. Probably the greatest challenge of China is to not allow a traditional western concept of church to be imposed upon them.

4) The loss of their buildings (confiscated by the government) coupled with fierce persecution precipitated a profound sense of fellowship amongst the believers who met from home to home sharing, supporting and standing with each other in love and zealous prayer. As a result church was not limited to church buildings. The philosophy of the underground church in China for the past 45 years has been "Everyday is a Sunday, every Christian is a preacher, and everywhere is a meeting!" Brand new converts felt empowered to contribute.

5) Leadership emerged not by the principle of bureaucracy, hierarchy or education but by fruitfulness, anointing, revelation and results!

In more recent years a government approved church in China has been allowed. This is called the 'Three-self church.' It is the Three-self patriotic movement under the control of the religious affairs bureau. Some of them meet in the buildings that were confiscated in 1949. They are once again hampered by all the old religious traditions of formalism and conformity to official requirements. Only about 10% of Chinese believers are part of the three-self church, while 85-90% have chosen to remain underground in the unregistered church. Up to recently, the gospel in China seemed to move mainly in the rural areas reaching primarily people of low education. One of the recent trends in China is that the gospel is reaching business profes-

sionals, judges, politicians, university professors, students, and etc. These are highly educated people, many who have been overseas. They are people with influence. They are beginning to take a stance with the government to be recognized not as the three-self church is but with greater freedom. This indicates an interesting trend that needs to be prayed for. In the past the government used to have an attitude "One more Christian, one less Chinese" but now with the church in China so indigenous together with the testimony of godly living, some officials are saying "One more Christian, one more better Chinese."

The philosophy of the underground church in China for the past 45 years has been that everyday is a Sunday, every Christian is a preacher, and everywhere is a meeting.

So how can the church in the west partner with the church in China?

- Be wise not to reintroduce what God removed from China in 1949

- Pray...

- For the church in China

- For the government in China. For the lifting of sanctions against open evangelism. For the government to recognize the church beyond the three-self church. Some Christians in the underground church say that they do not want the persecution from the authorities to lift because they are concerned that carnality will creep in. They believe it's the fires of persecution that has kept the church pure. This is true but carnality has crept in even under persecution. There is also a growing perception amongst the prophets that God is saying that the time for persecution at the intense level it has been needs to lift. China is rapidly modernizing with economic empowerment and the church will need soon to come out in the open and make its voice heard publicly in China. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 supports this type of praying.

- We need to honor and be inspired by the zeal and the amazing sacrifice of millions of Chinese Christians but equally so we must avoid being over impressed or gullible to believe every account coming out of China. Some people reporting events have personal agendas that are not pure. There are, in the west and in other parts of Asia, Apostolic-Prophetic teams that have been quietly growing in grace and wisdom over the past number of decades. Most of these teams do not have huge profile or fame in Christian circles in the western world but it is my sneaking suspicion that they have been prepared in obscurity by the Holy Spirit to live in humility and not self promotion. I believe they are about to be entrusted with the stewardship of profound

grace investments into China. They will not bring "hierarchies," "celebrity thinking" and huge financial resources to "buy," "own" or "control." They will serve with great signs and wonders and also with clear rich theology as well as a revelational perception of the Apostolic model of New Testament life.

The church in China with all its zeal and sacrifice still has:

- Immaturity in some areas

- Serious problems with legalism and heresy

- Human control and new divisions creeping in

- Marriage problems

- Lack of a clear Apostolic model. This makes them vulnerable to every new wind of doctrine and the embracing of cultish behavior in some cases. Clearly Ephesians 4 reveals that the calling of apostolic ministry is a ministry of grace and wisdom that effectively addresses these dangerous drifts and helps to keep the church going forward in health.

- Over 1 billion Chinese to reach who have never heard the gospel even once

Apostolic teams in the west and in other parts of Asia that seek not to own or possess but rather to serve and partner with the church in China will see doors of opportunity open that will certainly ensure hundreds of millions more precious Chinese people saved and joined to a liberating Apostolic prophetic model of church life. I am deeply convinced that one of the last greatest harvest fields in the earth is China (along with the Muslim world and India). I believe the Spirit of God is about to meet apostolic sections of the church in the western world in a burning bush encounter and send them to Pharaoh to say, *"Let my people go that they may worship me."* And to China, "This is your time! Awake to the voice of the one who has loved you in perfection from eternity!" †LT

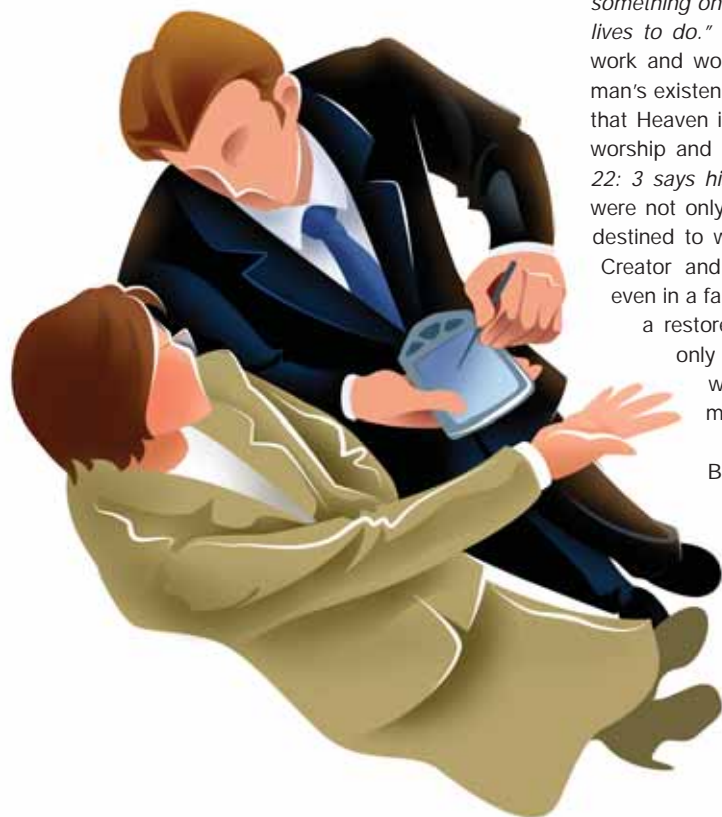
Leadership Reinvented: **The Marketplace**

Work occupies a significant portion of our lives and it is estimated that the average Christian spends almost 40% of their waking time at work compared to less than 2% at church-related activities. As work occupies a significant portion of our lives, it is important for every believer to have at least a basic theology about work. The Bible has plenty to say about work and is rich with truths that help us in practical day-to-day living and how to handle life with all its pressures and problems, joys and challenges.

Basic Theology. In Genesis 1, God reveals Himself as Creator and worker and man as the co-worker in partnership with God. God gave Adam work to do—to take care of the garden of Eden and to name the animals. It is clear from the first 2 chapters of Genesis that in God’s original plan, we were created not just to have fellowship with God but we were also created to work. Many, however, believe that work is a consequence of the fall, a curse, rather than an original design of creation.

British author Dorothy Sayers says, *“Work is not something one does to live, but rather what one lives to do.”* God always intended mankind to work and work is a fundamental dimension of man’s existence on earth. The Bible also tells us that Heaven is not only going to be a place of worship and rest but also of work. (*Revelation 22: 3 says his servants will serve him*). So we were not only created to work but we are also destined to work. God’s original plan—God the Creator and man his co-worker—still stands, even in a fallen world. Through Jesus we have a restored relationship with God that not only gives us purpose for life but for work as well. Not only does life have meaning but so does our work.

Because of Jesus, our work now has a connection with God. We are His fellow-workers, (*1 Corinthians 3:9*), as we cooperate with Him to achieve His eternal purposes and advance His Kingdom. When work is seen as part of one’s calling, legitimate work can be seen as a privilege, and we can find satisfaction



and fulfillment as we co-labor with God. *Ecclesiastes 2:24: "A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God...."*

Verse 11 of the same chapter says, *"Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."* If we are not viewing our work as co-labor with God, it can become meaningless and unsatisfying.

Dualism. Poor theology and misunderstanding has led some Christians to separate their role in the marketplace from their walk with God. Such dualism can have destructive consequences.

First, dualism may result in *full time service* being elevated above other vocations. This could result in the pursuit of 'Christian vocation' even if they don't possess the gifting or talents. This is based in a false belief that God is not really interested in secular work. The world of the marketplace is seen as secular and depraved; the church world spiritual and divine. This despite the fact that Jesus was a carpenter, David a shepherd and Paul a tentmaker who worked night and day while He preached the gospel of God. (*1 Thessalonians 2:9.*) We need more tentmakers in the Body of Christ! It is this secular-sacred split that has led to confusion about their call which leads to separating themselves from the workplace. They don't see themselves as God's fellow workers, neglect to develop their talents, and ultimately become very poor examples.

A second destructive consequence is *workaholicism*, when one devotes himself to the pursuit of success (as the world defines it), at the

expense of their walk with God. Although important, work should never take priority over God or our relationships with others.

Challenges for Leadership. As leaders, we must assist the body to understand that once saved, *we are all full-time ministers.* 2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us that He has made us *competent as ministers of a new covenant.* To be *"in ministry"* means to be taken up with the task of building God's kingdom. Every single believer has a role in that task. I believe the next move of God is going to take the whole priesthood of believers to another level which will include the ministry of all believers.

Today while most believers are *"priesting"* well—they are hearing God and reading the Bible for themselves—unfortunately not all are ministering well. As leaders, let us prepare and equip the saints to be able to minister not only in their churches, but also in their workplaces. Now is the time for the nameless-faceless generation... one so consumed with advancing the Kingdom, that they do not care about titles. For the nameless-faceless generation to rise up, leaders (*especially those with well known faces and names*) need to honestly look at structures and systems that promote any dualism, and remove them. Can you imagine a fully functional priesthood in the work place? One in which each saint is fully operating within his or her own unique sphere of influence, using their unique gifts and talents to advance the Kingdom? We will have a revival. †LT

2008

May 27-29	Rwanda
May 29-31	Botswana
Jun 2-4	D.R. Congo
Jun 3-5	Senegal
Jun 12-14	Portugal
Jun 16-20	Mongolia
Jun 23-27	USA (Los Angeles)
Aug 4-8	Brazil (Belo Horizonte)
Aug 7-9	Ghana
Aug 11-13	Nigeria
Aug 11-15	Madagascar
Aug 12-15	Zambia
Aug 18-22	Zimbabwe (Masvingo)
Aug 26-29	Malawi
Aug 26-29	Swaziland
Sep 29-Oct 3	South Africa (Bloemfontein)
Oct 6-9	Egypt
Oct 16-18	Denmark
Oct 20-22	Nigeria
Oct 22-24	Kenya
Oct 20-24	Germany (Dresden)
Oct 23-25	Ghana
Nov 17-21	Indonesia (Semarang)
Nov 24-28	India (Delhi)
Dec 1-4	Lesotho

2009

Feb 11-14	Middle East (Dubai)
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