

HOW
to
BELIEVE

Restoring the *Passion* of Worship

Tommy Tenney

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CHAPTER 1

FALSE FINISH LINES AND SCENTED DOORKNOBS

Stopping Short and Missing Out

SOME MAY CALL IT BLASPHEMY, but I must tell you that I have attended enough “good church services” to last me a lifetime. “Good” just isn’t good enough anymore. I don’t want to hear any more “good” singing and I don’t even want to hear any more “good” preaching. In fact, I am bored with myself! Would you be interested in tasting something “good” when you know the “best” is waiting in the kitchen?

I know my comments sound extreme, but they are mild when placed in the context of what I really desire: I want God to show up in His *shekinah* or tangible glory. Compared to Him, everything and everyone else is reduced to a warm-up act filling time until the Real Thing enters the room. I am afraid that we have built a religion and a lifestyle around the appetizers while completely forgetting the main course!

We experience a taste or a fleeting hint of God’s glory every time we find ourselves in places where what we call “revival” has broken out. Since this “glory” is a “spirit thing,” it defies scientific definition or quantifiable verification. Instead there is a certain “feeling” or inner sense of God’s approaching presence that warns us something very large and powerful is drawing near.

When this happens, we tend to handle the situation much of the time like

inexperienced runners in a sprint race. We explode from the blocks in eager pursuit of God's presence and continue at a fast pace until we begin to feel the discomfort of an all-consuming hunt for the trophy of our heart's desire.

Some of us feel our strength failing and our senses becoming dull to things around us as we gasp for breath. With one last burst of desperate energy we stretch forward and lunge toward the line...only to stumble forward and fall several yards short of the finish line. By stopping too soon, by failing to press forward all the way through to the finish, we are racing to false finish lines and fail to seize the prize.

The Bible tells us that on a mountaintop in Israel, three disciples sleepily cracked open their eyes just enough to see Moses and Elijah standing with Jesus in a cloud of glory (see Luke 9:28-32). The disciples suddenly woke up and Peter interrupted the Son of God to suggest that everyone stop at the false finish line to build a monument to the event. Peter used the term rabbi, or teacher, when he spoke to Jesus, and he suggested building three separate structures as if he possibly felt that Moses and Elijah were equal to Jesus. Perhaps he had no idea that the best was yet to come.

Moses had waited more than ten lifetimes to see what was about to come to pass, and I doubt that he was interested in Peter's false finish line. He wanted nothing less than to see God's glory revealed. Then the Father interrupted Peter while he was still talking and corrected the disciple's earthbound perspective when He said, "This is My Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him" (Luke 9:35 NIV). Then everything and every person faded from sight except the exalted Lord of all.

Too often we stop at false finish lines because our flesh gets excited. We want to interrupt God's revelation of Himself so we can build sand castles in honor of the first premonition of His appearing. We are so busy saying, "It is good we are here," that we don't hear God say, "I want to join you there too."

I AM TIRED OF RACING TO FALSE FINISH LINES

It is no longer acceptable merely to have some good services, good

music, and good preaching. We must meet God Himself. I am so weary of “almost” services that at times I tell people in our meetings, “If you came here for some good meetings, you’ve got the wrong model, the wrong preacher, the wrong place, and the wrong day. Come back another day. But if what you are after is God, then welcome to the brotherhood of the burning heart.”

It was to the lukewarm church of Laodicea that Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him...” (Rev. 3:20). The Holy Spirit is shopping for the place of the next outbreak. He is standing at the front door of our churches looking for someone like David who has prepared a place for His weighty habitation—a place where worshipers are willing to prop open the door of Heaven with their upraised hands so His glory can come down and stay among them.

God is looking for a person, a church, and a city that will hear His gentle knock and open the door for Him. The Scriptures continually picture the Lord knocking on doors in both the Old and New Testaments. We see Him prophetically knocking on the door of His own house in the Song of Solomon, seeking the attention of His Beloved, the Church (see Song of Sol. 5:2).

Why would the door of His own house be locked? It is because He’s given away the key. He told Peter the apostle, “I am giving you the key. Whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven” (see Matt. 16:19). The Lord gave us the key to His own appearance when He gave us the ability to open the windows of Heaven and close the gates of hell. The latch is on our side! (But are the windows painted shut with man’s traditions?) The Lover of our souls has persistently knocked at the doors of His House, but we respond exactly like Solomon’s bride:

I have taken off my robe—must I put it on again? I have washed my feet—must I soil them again? (Song of Solomon 5:3 NIV)

God’s betrothed Lover and Bride has become too comfortable. She refuses to open the door because it isn’t convenient. The cost of intimacy

seems too high. The discomfort of it all has bred an apathy that urges us to move too slowly and casually when our Beloved knocks at our heart's door. Ominously, the knocking stops—in alarm we finally rouse ourselves like Solomon's lazy bride. When we finally run to the door to unlock it, all that is left is the fleeting fragrance of where He used to be.

I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had left; He was gone. My heart sank at His departure. I looked for Him but did not find Him. I called Him but He did not answer
(Song of Solomon 5:6 NIV).

This is the sad state of the overly contented Church today. We may find ourselves barren as David's wife Michal was. As we suggested earlier, could it be that David was never again intimate with her? The disgust she had for him locked the door to intimacy, joy, and fruitfulness. The Church's reluctance to pay the seemingly high cost of intimate worship is the root cause of our barrenness.

The Bride of Christ has grown accustomed to living in the King's house in His absence. If she would return to the passion and hunger of her first love, she would never be so content unless the King Himself were present with her in the house. Instead, the modern-day Church seems to stir just enough at the Master's knock to moan, "No, not now. Don't You see that I'm too comfortable to get up right now? Can't it wait? I have a headache.

After all, I have already taken my shoes off and propped up my feet. Do I have to open the door for You right now?"

WHEN THE KNOCKING STOPS

The most alarming time is not when God comes to knock on your door. It is when the knocking stops. Reality returns with a shock the moment it dawns on us that our Beloved is no longer knocking. We instantly forget the importance of our comforts and lounging lifestyle when the divine knocking stops.

I rose up to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with liquid [sweet-scented] myrrh, [which he had left] upon the handles of the bolt. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and withdrawn himself, and was gone! (Song of Solomon 5:5-6a AMP)

The Amplified Bible tells us that when the king's betrothed bride put her fingers on the bolt of the door, they came away dripping with the liquid myrrh left behind by the king. All she had left was the fragrance of where he used to be....

I'm afraid that if we don't open the door when our Beloved knocks, when the Dove of the Holy Spirit settles; if we fail to open the windows of Heaven through our repentant worship; if we remain unwilling to create an opening for God's glory to enter our world, then at some point all we will have left is the fragrance of where He used to be. Some are happy with that—they are content just to smell the fragrance or feel the tingle of where He used to be—but I am no longer interested in past visitations. What about you? Vicarious visitations through the pages of history cannot satisfy me any longer. I'm weary of reading about revival—I must meet the "Reviver."

That reminds me of a grieving husband or wife who hugs the pillow and smells the fragrance of a spouse who is gone. Even when someone loses a spouse in the natural, the grieving process should come to an end in due time.

The Church has memorialized the visitations of the past as if her Spouse has passed away and all future meetings (except the meeting in the sky) are out of the question. I'm sorry, but I don't want to cuddle up to the hollow memory of what once was! I want Him! I long to see Jesus in all His power, vitality, beauty, and glory. Show me Your face!

WOULD GOD REALLY STOP KNOCKING? (IT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE)

It is time for us to spring up from our ivory couches of complacency to answer the gentle knock at the door. You and I are hearing that knock right now, but what bothers me the most is the fear that, at any moment, the knocking may stop. Don't think that I am proposing some new doctrine or odd interpretation of Scripture here. This has happened before!

During the "triumphal entry" of Christ into Jerusalem, people threw their clothing and palm branches into the street to pave the way for Jesus as He rode an untamed colt. The disciples shouted praises to God with new levels of passion and excitement, saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38). That really angered the religious Pharisees in the crowd because they rejected the idea that Jesus could be the Messiah.

When the Pharisees demanded that Jesus silence His disciples, He told them that even the rocks would cry out if He told His followers to be quiet (see Luke 19:39-40). His words as He looked out over Jerusalem describe what it is like when He stops knocking:

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another,

because you did not know the time of your visitation”
(Luke 19:41-44 NKJV).

I knocked and you didn't answer!

I visited and you didn't receive Me.

The Gospel of Luke says Jesus looked at Jerusalem and wept. I believe He wept with the intensity and grief of a spurned lover being rejected by his beloved. He said, “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34b NKJV). I am not saying our salvation is in jeopardy; I am saying we could easily miss the moment of our visitation by the *shekinah* presence of God. We could miss the opportunity to give God that for which He longs the most—our intimate worship and communion.

BARTIMAEUS COULDN'T SEE JESUS FOR HIMSELF

Frankly, we all need to be baptized with the spirit of Bartimaeus. This is the blind man who ignored the disapproval of the crowd to cry out to Jesus for mercy (see Mark 10:46-52). Bartimaeus couldn't see Jesus for himself. He was blind and had to believe in blind faith the testimony of someone else who told him, “Jesus is close.” We must confess, “I'm blind and I can't really tell how close He is, but if somebody around me says He's near, then I refuse to let Him pass me by.”

Sometimes the cares of the day and the weariness of life can temporarily blind us or so numb our senses that we can't perceive the nearness of God. That didn't stop Bartimaeus. Why should it stop us? When you can't see, feel, or sense the presence of God, that is the time to find someone you can trust who can sense His presence. When this witness tells you, “He's close, He's here,” take them at their word. Go for it! Begin to lift your hands and cry out to Him by faith.

Sometimes all you need to know is that He is near. Hungry cries from your heart will attract Him closer. After all, doesn't God's Word tell us, “The

sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise”? (Ps. 51:17). God cannot turn away from brokenness. Tears turn on the faucet of God’s compassion.

On the other hand, what happens when you know He is close and do nothing about it? Bartimaeus was just a blind beggar on the side of the road outside the city of Jericho, but he touched the heart of God with his hungry pleas while the people of Jericho evidently missed their visitation. You see, Jesus was exiting on the far side of the city when He encountered blind Bartimaeus. He had already passed through the entire city and nobody cried out for Him until He passed beyond the walls.

This begs the question, “When He comes, will He stay?” The people of Jericho missed their moment! Unlike the village in John chapter 4 where Jesus stayed several more days, Jericho’s visitation was never turned into habitation. One blind man “saw” more than the entire city and delayed Deity long enough for a miracle!

JUST TELL ME—IS THAT HIM?

As Jesus passed through the gate, the blind beggar on the side of the road turned to someone standing nearby and asked a question:

“Is that Him? Just tell me, is that Him?”

“Yeah, yeah, Bartimaeus; that’s Him.”

“Then you better get out of my way because I’m about to lose my dignity.”

Hear me, friend. You can’t preserve your dignity and seek His Deity. You can’t save your face and seek His face. At some point you are going to have to lose your spiritual manners. You will have to leave your Pentecostal, Baptist, or Presbyterian protocol behind you. You need to forget what you are supposed to do when, where, and how. You will have to reduce it down to the basics: “Is that Him? I think He’s in the building! I think He’s close.” I don’t

know how you feel, but I refuse to let Him get that close to me and pass me by. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Would Jesus pass us by? Absolutely. Jesus would have passed by the disciples when they were rowing a boat across the Sea of Galilee in the darkness of the night, but they cried out to Him (see John 6:16-21). He would have walked past the blind man, but Bartimaeus called out and kept calling out until Jesus turned aside to see him. Jesus would have walked past the woman with the incurable bleeding problem too, but she stretched out her hand and touched the hem of His garment by faith (see Mark 5:25-34). In the end, Jesus walked through Jerusalem countless times over the course of His brief life on earth, but the religious people of that ancient city missed the moment and the hour of their visitation.

One of the keys to turning visitation of the Spirit into habitation of the Spirit is recognizing Him. Has it been so long since you’ve “seen” Him? Would you recognize Him if He came on a colt instead of a stallion? Would you embrace His visitation in humility as much as in power?

Would you believe me if I told you that Someone is knocking at the door of the Church right now? He is literally knocking at the door of His own house because He has given us the key. I don’t want to see the Church miss her moment or hour of visitation. If somebody would ever open the door to Him, we won’t be left to talk sadly about what He smelled like “the last time He knocked at our door.” We will be walking with Him and fellowshiping with Him. Perhaps you sense something gripping your heart that makes you want to shout, “Lord, don’t pass me by! Jesus, have mercy!”

*Father, I pray right now for a spirit of Bartimaeus to grip
Your people. May we lay aside the garments of pride that
identify us with the blind and lift our voices in worship,
“Jesus, Son of David!” We lift our voices in repentance,
“Have mercy on us.” We worship and repent and cry out,
“Don’t pass us by!”*

Why don’t you forget about your manners right now? It is time to lay aside your religious protocols, the things that dictate what is supposed to

happen and when. God has always preferred spiritual hunger over spiritual ritual. Are you going to miss your moment? If you can feel Him edging closer and closer, then don't let Him get this close and pass you by, even while reading this book. Remember that God is shopping for a place to break out. He is knocking at the door. I can almost hear Him say to us, "You know what happens when I visit a church. You've not yet seen what happens when I visit a city. Open the door and let Me in!"

PUT YOUR HUNGER ON DISPLAY

If there was a little baby in a church service who got hungry, do you think that baby would be impressed or bothered by the fact that Tommy Tenney is standing in the front of the room preaching? Do you believe that little baby would stop to think, “Uh oh, that is the pastor up there, I had better be quiet”? If that baby gets hungry, things are going to get noisy. Do you think that baby would worry about who is watching, who is listening, or what all the dressed-up adults are doing? No! That baby is going to put its hunger on display because all it knows is this: “If I don’t get some nourishment or some help, I’m going to die.” Do you think this is what happened in the Gospel of Matthew?

Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?”
(Matthew 21:14-16 NKJV)

The Greek word translated as “crying” in this passage isn’t referring to polite little cries of joy or soft sobbing. It literally means “to scream, to call aloud, to shriek, exclaim, intreat.”¹ I think too many of us are just too concerned about the approval of men to pursue the presence of God. We need to become like starving little children crying for help.

It’s time for you to put your hunger on display. Become like a little child and say, “I don’t care who hears me. I don’t care who sees me. I’ve got to have You, Lord! I’m so hungry.” Display your hunger like Bartimaeus did on that miraculous day. Attract the attention of God and ignore the approval of man.

EVEN LITTLE BABIES KNOW WHEN GOD COMES CLOSE

Many times I will look across an audience when the presence of God seems to draw near and I'll see scores of small children weeping uncontrollably. I know I didn't say things to scare them, and nothing I said would appeal to their immature intellects. Yet even the babies in the auditorium know when He is approaching. They know when He comes close to the door, and so we see tears come trickling down their innocent faces. I usually take some time to reassure these little ones because I don't want them to be fearful. I just want them to understand that we're getting close to the gate. We are about to open the door for God to come in, and when you get close to that door you can almost feel the winds of Heaven whipping through your hair.

It's time to say, "I refuse to get this close and back off. I'm not interested in false finish lines anymore. I can't live another day with just the fading scent of God's 'yesterday presence.' I may not make it, but I'm going for it. I may not get His attention, but it won't be because I didn't try."

I really wish all of us would just forget our dignity and remember His Deity. Somebody needs to pray, "God, I'm going for it. I want an encounter with You that I can't get over." If anybody ever does get Heaven's windows open, everybody will be blessed by the fragrance of His presence! If you feel you need to be in a church building and hear someone tell you the altar is open, then perhaps you are not desperate enough. Bartimaeus made his own altar from the dust of the road. Nobody told the woman with the issue of blood, "If you touch the hem of His garment..." No, she created a promise in her desperation and God honored it.

You can build your own altar from the hunger of your heart right now. I don't care whether you are sitting in the front pew of a church or the back booth of a bar or perhaps in your living room at home. It doesn't matter. It is time for everyone who is hungry to cry out to God,

"I'm not going to let You get this close and pass me by. I am desperate

for You! Have mercy on me!”

Endnote

1. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), s.v. “crying” (#G2896).

CHAPTER 2

BUILDING A MERCY SEAT

SOME HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH a visitation of God's presence and some have not, but all of us want more of Him. We welcome God's visitation, but our real desire is for habitation, where His presence lingers and lives with us every day. What can we do to make Him feel welcome all the time instead of just some of the time? We know that His will is for His permanent presence to bless our cities and nations, but how do we get Him to stay?

God spoke to me about this through a good friend of mine who has an apparent genetic disorder. This disorder causes him to be grotesquely obese. He can't be more than 5 feet 8 inches tall, but he seems to be literally as big around as he is tall. I've been told that when he was 12 years old he already weighed 300 pounds. He has struggled with weight all his life.

I remember times when we sat down together and he would start to weep, saying, "I know people laugh at me." This man has a strong anointing on his life, and he is one of the true apostles in the Body of Christ. God taught me something from an insight this man shared with me. I want to share it with you.

My friend is so heavy that it inhibits him socially. He told me, "I have very close friends who would love for me to come visit them. We regularly spend time together in restaurants, but I would love to just sit down in the intimacy of their homes and fellowship with them. Yet, I can't." He began to weep and big tears ran down his chubby cheeks. The next thing my dear friend said would change my view of "church" forever.

“Tommy, when I drop by their homes,” he said, “I will stand at the foyer with my hat and coat on the whole time [it’s usually cold in the northern region where my friend lives]. I never take them off until I scan the room. I’ve been there before.” Then he looked at me again and said, “I’ve made my mind up. I’ve broken my last chair. I refuse to sit in a seat that looks as if it won’t bear my weight. I won’t be embarrassed anymore. I just won’t visit if I have to do that. So I scan the room from the doorway.”

“I hear my friends telling me in all earnestness and sincerity, ‘Come in, sit with us, drink some coffee,’” he said. “The whole time I’m talking to them, I’m scanning their living room and kitchen to see if they have added any furniture this time that will hold my weight. I knew that there was nothing there during my previous visit.”

NO THING IN YOUR HOUSE CAN HOLD MY WEIGHT

With a sigh, my friend said, “Those visits often end in sadness because I have to make the excuse, ‘Well, I need to go on, I can’t stay.’ The truth is that I’m only leaving because there is no furniture in their house that can hold me.” He told me with tears in his eyes, “I usually get in my car and just weep. I go back again some time later in hopes that I will find something to sit on,” he said. “You would think people would look at me and know I can’t just sit anywhere.”

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated as “glory” is *kabod*. It literally means weightiness or weighty splendor.¹ In a sense, God has the same problem as my friend. I wonder how many times the “weighty glory” of God has visited us but not come in? How often does He stand at the back door of our assemblies with His glory still hidden by His “hat and coat” while He scans the room?

We stop to count our spiritual goose bumps because we feel a cool breeze enter the room when the heavenly door opens. We tell one another, “Oh, God is here! He’s visiting us again.” Our singers rejoice and the band picks up the pace, but all too quickly it escapes us because we don’t have what He is

looking for. Most who have experienced visitations ask the question, “Why won’t He stay? We begged Him to stay. Why can’t we keep these moments?”

The answer is very simple: We haven’t built a mercy seat to hold the glory of God. There is no place for Him to sit! What is comfortable to you and I is not comfortable to the *kabod*, the weightiness of God. We are happy to sit in our comfortable spiritual recliners all day, but the seat of God, the mercy seat, is a little different. It is the only seat on earth that can bear the weight of His glory and compel Him to come in and stay.

God is looking for a church that has learned how to build a mercy seat for His glory. When He finds a house that has paid the price to build Him a resting place, He will come and He will stay. That is when we will see a revival that is unlike any we have ever seen before. I am convinced that we don’t even have a word for it. This kind of revival can only come when God comes in His weighty glory and takes His seat of honor in His house—to stay.

IF YOU BUILD IT, HE WILL...

When the Lord reminded me of my friend’s story, my mind began to race. Another important piece of the puzzle had snapped into place. We must learn how to build a mercy seat, I thought to myself. Then I remembered the line from a motion picture I saw during a transoceanic flight that greatly affected me the first time I saw it. The motion picture was *The Field of Dreams*, and the line that came to mind in that instant was, “If you build it, He will come...” a lesson David learned.

The southern region of the United States is generally recognized for its “southern hospitality.” Since I’m a southern boy, I thought I understood some of the basic principles of hospitality. I felt that way until God sent me, unasked, on a journey that led me to invest about 30 percent of my ministry among the Chinese that year. (I still minister quite often in mainland China and Taiwan.) He said, “I’m going to show you something about honor that most westerners do not know.”

I learned that Oriental people have an ability to give honor that surpasses anything I have ever witnessed anywhere else. We practice hospitality in the West, but we are kind of casual about it: “Oh, hi. Come in. Sit down if you want to.”

It is not that way with the Chinese. They are very careful to focus all their attention and energies on their guests. They put their guests’ well-being first, and they work tirelessly to put their guests’ comfort, peace, and happiness above their own. The way the Chinese carefully prepare in advance for their guests’ arrival is an open statement declaring that those guests are highly valued and respected. They even carefully reserve the traditional seat of honor...the chair furthest from and facing the door.

GOD, WE KNOW HOW TO GO ON WITHOUT YOU

Frankly, I think we have lost our ability to honor God in our churches. We sing our praise songs with enthusiasm for a little while, but as soon as some of the more radical people in the congregation begin to press into genuine worship, we start glancing at our watches. We might as well say what is in our hearts: “Okay, God, we sure would like it if You would come, but if You don’t do it pretty soon, we know how to go on without You. We have a schedule to keep, You know. We can’t let First Church beat us to the Me First Diner.”

I don’t think we realize that His answer is, “Go on. It’s okay. Maybe I’ll catch up with you some other time.” My Bible says that Jesus wept over Jerusalem and her people when they missed their hour of visitation. I wonder if God weeps over us when we grieve His Spirit by clinging to our agendas, schedules, and dinner forks instead of lingering, pursuing, and wooing Him with our worship and adoration? (Who will be held responsible for causing our cities to miss their visitation too?)

This sad scenario goes on service after service. We go through the motions of religious duty week after week and year after year thinking we

have “arrived.” The truth is that the machinery of rote religious practice will clank on long after the oil of God’s anointing has drained out. Inevitably, friction is created when men try to function without the oil of gladness that comes only from His presence. Eventually everything will come grinding to a halt when the religious machine of man seizes up.

When God revealed Himself to young David in the sheep fields, a longing was born in David’s heart to have God’s presence close to him day and night. The same thing is happening across the globe in our generation. God is raising up millions of God chasers who are being consumed with a longing for God’s presence. We all need to learn from King David’s experiences as a God chaser. We know he met disaster in his first attempt to return the Ark to Jerusalem, but he was successful his second time around. He was able to open the heavens over Jerusalem through sacrificial, sweaty pursuit of God’s *shekinah* glory. Now it is our turn—and our cities’ turn!

SOMEBODY HAS TO TEND THE FIRE!

David did two things to make sure God’s presence remained in Jerusalem. First, he prepared a place for God’s presence by constructing a tabernacle without walls or a veil. Second, he did something special once the Levites arrived at the tabernacle and set the Ark of the Covenant in place. He created a “living” mercy seat of worship in the tabernacle so God would be pleased to sit and remain in that humble sanctuary.

David learned a vital secret somewhere in the process of bringing God’s presence into Jerusalem. He learned that if you want to keep that blue flame there, somebody has to tend the fire! “Do you mean we have to throw logs on the fire?” No, you don’t fuel that blue flame of God’s *shekinah* presence with earthly fuel. You fuel it through sacrificial worship. We have no right to call for the fire of God unless we are willing to be the fuel of God.

David was simply following the heavenly pattern Moses had received for the mercy seat:

And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered

work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat (Exodus 25:18-20 NKJV).

The wings of the cherubim that Moses built touched each other as they encircled and covered the mercy seat where the presence of God would sit just above the lid or “covering.” If you read this passage closely, you will notice that the two golden cherubim weren’t cast or poured into molds. God said that the gold used to form the covering cherubim had to be “beaten” into the proper shape and position.

The way we can build a mercy seat is to take our positions as purified, “beaten” worshipers. One problem is that God still requires mercy seat worshipers to be formed of gold tried in the fire (purified), conformed (beaten) into the image of perfection, and moved into the proper position of unity for worship (see Rev. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). This speaks of purity, brokenness, and unity—the three components of true worship under the new covenant of the blood of Jesus. Brokenness on the earth creates openness in the heavens.

It is interesting to me that when gold is refined over extreme heat, the first things to come to the top and be skimmed off are the “dross,” the obvious impurities and foreign matter. The last thing to be separated from gold is silver, a lesser precious metal that often blends with the raw gold ore. We often have a hard time separating the “good” from the “best.”

THE HAMMER BLOWS OF LIFE WILL BEND US GODWARD IF...

Too many of us just want to be pre-formed or pre-cast in a quick and easy “one-two-three revival formula.” I can’t give that to you. However, I can tell

you that your wings of worship can be created only one way. They must be beaten into the proper position and the proper image. The hammer blows of life will bend us “Godward” if our responses to life’s challenges are right. Sometimes we respond wrongly to what life sends us; then the adversity beats us out of position. Instead of becoming “better” we become “bitter.” This means that our wings of worship will not be where they are supposed to be; they will be in the right place but in the wrong position—in church but with a wrong attitude.

God intends for the hammer blows of life to move your wings of worship into position so as to create one who “in all things gives thanks” (see 1 Thess. 5:18). The apostle Paul knew about this. He wrote, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). He wrote these words while under Roman house arrest and awaiting the verdict of Caesar. Paul could declare, “Every time you hit me, all it does is teach me how to worship!” His visit to the third heaven came while being stoned at Lystra! Anybody want to go there now?

When the worshipers around the mercy seat come into their position, God can move into His position and occupy the middle ground between them.

The beaten gold cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant were only a poor earthly representation of the heavenly reality. Moses saw the pattern on the mount when he peeked into Heaven and saw the throne room in a vision. He was instructed to recreate that heavenly vision, and it is as if the closest he could come on earth was to create solid gold cherubim that only had two wings. The seraphim surrounding God’s true heavenly throne have six wings.

The mercy seat on the Ark was only a representation of God’s true throne in the third heaven. The throne in the heavenlies isn’t situated on a two-dimensional plane, so it can’t be described solely with width and height measurements. The Ark of the Covenant featured two cherubim mounted on the flat cover of the Ark. In contrast, the Scriptures describe the true throne of God a multidimensional and surrounded by worshipers on all sides, much like a pearl suspended in glass or the sun in the middle of our solar system. The Bible says there are six winged seraphim on both sides of the throne and

more above and beneath as well. These worshipping seraphim cover their faces with two wings while covering their feet with two more wings, and flying with the third pair (see Isa. 6:2).

Even though the cherubim on the Ark amounted to a “cheap earthly imitation” of the heavenly reality, there is still so much mystique about the Ark that Hollywood producers made millions of dollars simply by talking about the “lost ark” in an adventure film.

When will the Church realize that God isn’t looking for the lost ark; He knows where that is. He is looking for “the lost worshipers” so He can replace the lost glory in the earth.

THE SUDDEN WEIGHT OF HIS COMING ROCKED THE EARTH

The “mercy seat” rarely if ever appears in the midst of religious pomp and circumstance. Under the covenant of Christ’s blood, it only comes between two or more living sacrifices. Paul and Silas were far from the ornate temple and the synagogues of Jerusalem and Israel; they were bloodied and battered with their feet locked in stocks deep in a Philippian jail cell. Yet at their darkest hour, these men began to pray and sing to the Lord in worship and adoration. All they did was bring together their battered wings of worship and the glory of God descended from Heaven to join them there. Their worship created the “mercy seat” for God to come and sit between them—even in jail.

You may be “in jail” even as you read these words. Perhaps the circumstances of life have locked you up and thrown away the key. There is a way of escape. “Worship” a hole in the heavenlies. God will come down. He promised. What He did for Paul and Silas He will do for you.

The sudden weight of His coming rocked the earth and shook the foundations of their prison. Not only did the weight of God’s presence free His worshipers, but it also opened every door and freed every prisoner in the vicinity! Our worship can set captives free. God’s visitation in power led to

the salvation of the same jailer who had put the stocks on the feet of Paul and Silas.

Don't fear adversity! The cherubim were formed of beaten gold. And worshipers formed of fire-purified gold and beaten through adversity and trials in our day, refract the light of God's glory in the house a lot better than quickie pre-cast versions. Every hammer indentation, every pick and awl mark, and every crease of transformation under pressure of pounding is another reflector for the multifaceted glory of God.

When we worship in spirit and in truth, the glory of God will come. What we will experience at that point is simply a precursor of what will happen on that great day when the King of Glory personally returns to the earth for the second time. The first time He came, He carried His glory lightly because He walked in humility. He tiptoed through our world so He would not disturb His creation, much as an adult tiptoes through a child's playroom to avoid breaking the toys.

The next time Jesus appears, He will be astride a horse and will come in unrestrained power and authority to repossess the entire house. When His feet touch the top of the Mount of Olives, His *kabod*, His weighty glory, will be so great that the Mount of Olives will literally split in two. The eastern gate will suddenly open to allow His "real" triumphant entry. The first was just the rehearsal. Next time He will be in costume! And every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (see Phil. 2:10-11).

EVERY UNHOLY THING WILL BE LEVELED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF HIS GLORY

Do you know what will break open the gate of your city? Do you know how to split apart the mountains that block your way to revival? Just do what Paul and Silas did in prison. If you can sing at midnight with your back beaten, your feet in stocks, and your cell door locked, then you can usher in the manifested presence and glory of God through your worship. Every unholy thing will be leveled and every bond will fall away under the weight of His glory: "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations

of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed" (Acts 16:26 NKJV).

All this happens when the beaten wings of worshipers touch, creating the mercy seat of God. The New American Standard Bible says God is "enthroned upon the praises of Israel" (Ps. 22:3). I am told that the Japanese translation of the original Hebrew text for this verse literally says that our praise "builds a big chair for God to sit on." Jesus also told us, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). That means God comes to dwell in the "middle" of us when we begin to worship Him together.

What would happen if God literally moved His throne from Heaven to sit in the "big chair" we have built for Him? I think He might say, "Michael, Gabriel, I'll see you. The sons of Adam built a chair for Me. They built a living mercy seat just for Me so I can once again dwell among men."

DAVID FUELED THE FLAME OF GOD'S PRESENCE WITH 24-HOUR WORSHIP

How can we recreate or "compete" with the kind of worship God receives in Heaven? David instructed sanctified Levites to keep fueling the flame of God's presence with 24-hour worship every day. (Don't get into legalism and think, "I have to help my church set up a 24-hour prayer vigil." If God tells you and your church leadership to do it, then do it. If not, ask Him what He wants you to do and do it.)

Remember that you can beg for God to come all you want, but until you prepare a place where His weighty glory can safely dwell, He may visit but He cannot stay. I don't know about you, but I am tired of visits. Somehow we have to reclaim the ability to host the Holy Ghost. David knew how to do it.

David surrounded that Ark with worshipers so that the glory of God would keep flickering. For the first time in history, Israelites, pagans, or heathen could stand near mount Zion in Jerusalem and literally see the blue flame of God's glory flickering between the outstretched arms and dancing

feet of the worshipers in David's tabernacle! How could this be? It was because David's tabernacle was a place marked by open-veiled and unfettered worship.

I often illustrate this concept of surrounding God with worship in public meetings by calling up three or more volunteers to join me in front of the audience or congregation. Almost every time one of the volunteers will step into position facing the audience because that is the way we have been conditioned. I'll tell the volunteer (for the benefit of the audience), "No, son, don't face the congregation or the choir. Stand right here and lift up your hands in a posture of worship toward the One on the throne."

(This may explain why the world can't see God when it looks at the Church—it sees only us. That is probably because we don't stand in the gap, and we prefer to face the world instead of God while performing our religious duties. There is too much of man in the church, and too little of God.) Facing man can only cause us to respond to man's approval. For "mercy seat" worship, you must turn your back on man. Seek the face of God. Lose the fear of man—and gain the fear of God.

THIS IS THE MIRACLE OF GOD'S FAVORITE HOUSE

David did more than surround the Ark of God with sanctified worshipers. He made sure that their primary focus was to minister to God through praise, worship, and adoration. The Levites, the Old Testament ministers of worship and praise, stood between the world on the outside and the unveiled glory of God on the inside.

For the first time since His final walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God found a house where there was no veil or dividing walls between His glory and the frail flesh of men. It wasn't needed because the worshipers had become the veil and protective walls as they surrounded God's glory with a covering cloud of repentant, sacrificial worship and praise. For lack of a better term, I call this precarious place between the porch of man and the altar of God "the weeping zone." This is the miracle that made David's humble tent become God's favorite house.

Two key Scripture passages may help you understand why David managed to build a tabernacle without a veil or walls without seeing people die by the hundreds or thousands. First, God said, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezek. 22:30). Secondly, John seems to describe the two components of God’s glory when he wrote, “We beheld His glory...full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

FORGET WHAT PEOPLE SAY; ONLY ONE OPINION MATTERS

If you really want an outbreak of the glory of God in your church and city, you will have to forget about what anybody else except God thinks. Real revival happens only when true worshipers forget about man and turn their full attention and adoration toward God. We must forget about the opinions and approval or disapproval of people. We need to forget what they look like, forget what they are saying, and forget what they are thinking. Only one opinion matters.

I wish that God’s people would ignore everything but what God wants. It is time for the centrality of Christ Jesus to so overwhelm and overpower us that we become totally disconnected from the distractions of the realm of man. I’m not talking about becoming so religious that we are absolutely no good to God or man. Some people say that you can become so heavenly-minded that you are no earthly good, but I’m not sure that is possible. In fact, that phrase is a good description of the “weeping zone,” that place between the porch of man and the altar of God. Can I tell you what you do in that position? The weeping zone is the place of intercession before God’s throne where you step into the gap to intercede for others.

TAKE A STAND BETWEEN THE GLORY AND SINFUL MEN

A plague of sin and death is sweeping across our nation and the world

today. This is no time to run or hide. This is the time for you and me to enter the weeping zone with our priestly censers of worship and take our stand between the living and the dead, between the weighty glory of God and the unprotected flesh of sinful men. The moment Aaron carried the coals from the fire of the altar and mixed in the incense of worship and prayer, he became a bridge between two worlds.

God has a heart to see all men saved, but He depends on you and me to fulfill our ministry of reconciliation in the weeping zone. He has called us to become bridges between the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness. The greatest Bridge of all is Jesus Christ, our great High Priest who ever lives to intercede for us before the Father (see Heb. 7:25). When you and I enter the weeping zone, we come alongside the Great Intercessor and face the throne, reaching out for God with one hand and for man with the other. We are called to intercede in worship until God and man have met together.

When you stand in the gap, you are literally stopping the judgment of God and moving aside the obstacles of the enemy in the second heaven. As we noted earlier, John said, “We beheld His glory...full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

If the two components of God’s glory are grace and truth, then that explains why there always had to be a veil separating man from God’s glory. The world needs God’s grace, but His truth is attached to it. The truth is, we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (see Rom. 3:23). We need His grace—but we can’t stand the “truth.” His truth is equivalent to His judgment, and apart from God’s grace through Jesus Christ, none of us have a chance. That means that if God’s manifest presence—the thing we are praying for—rushes out and encounters unrepentant flesh, then the truth or judgment of God will instantly obliterate it just as light obliterates darkness.

FOLLOW HIM TO THE WEEPING ZONE FOR THE LOST

Jesus Christ did a finished work on the cross, and He extends the free gift of life to everyone. Our “ministry of reconciliation” involves taking up His

cross daily and following Him into the weeping zone for the lost. When repentant, bloody-handed, sacrificing worshipers take their place between the unredeemed and the consuming glory of God, an interesting thing happens.

We know from the Scriptures that judgment begins and ends at the house of God (see 1 Pet. 4:17). When God's people become worshipers and stand in the gap, they "filter" the truth and judgment component of glory. That means that the only component of God's glory that rushes past them to flow in the streets of the city is grace and mercy. This is reminiscent of David's day, when anyone and everyone could look at the *shekinah* glory of God and live because they were peering at the mercy seat between the covering filter of the outstretched arms of worshipers.

Our cities don't need better sermons or better songs. They need "gap people" who can reach for God with one hand and for the world with the other. Are you called to take a stand in the weeping zone? Can you forget what man says while reaching out to God with one hand in repentant, broken worship and reaching out to unredeemed man with the other? With that hand extended, you declare: "I am going to open the heavens and keep them propped open until revival sweeps through my city!" Like the intercessors of old, we must cry, "If You are going to kill them, then kill me. If You don't send revival to my nation, just kill me. Give me spiritual children, or I die" (see Exod. 32:32; Gen. 30:1).

Do you really want revival? Build a mercy seat for God. Prepare something that is so desirable and attractive to God that He can't resist joining you and the worshipers. Allow Him to build again the tabernacle of David in your midst. Surround Him with worship and adoration if you want to entice Him to come and stay with you. Build a mercy seat!

GOD DWELLS IN THE MIDDLE OF WORSHIP

Can you imagine what would happen if He left His throne in Heaven to come sit with us in a mercy seat composed of our praise and worship? There is a reason the world can't see Him as He is. We have never built a place for Him to sit. Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the glory of God has

no place to sit—no earthly mercy seat! Of course our furniture is simple by Heaven’s standards, and we could never pass for six-winged seraphim. How can earthly worship match heavenly worship? I don’t know, but I do know it doesn’t take much! Jesus said, “If I can just get two or three of you to agree, I’ll come in—not to the side, but in the middle of them” (see Matt. 18:20). Why? Because God dwells in the middle of the worship.

If you want the manifested presence of God to break out in your church and city, then remember that He probably won’t come to me alone, nor to you alone. His first choice and His promise is that He will come in the middle of us as we worship Him according to the heavenly pattern.

If you build it, He will come!

Father, You said that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise. We admit that our best is pitiful praise, that it cannot match the heavenly vision, that it cannot reach the heights of perfection we understand is in Heaven.

Nevertheless, according to the heavenly pattern, we delight in surrounding You with repentant worship. Rebuild Your beloved tabernacle of David in our hearts, dear Lord. Yes, we will worship You with all our hearts. Yes, with joy we will bow down before You as our Lord and King.

We call for Your manifested presence to fill this place, Father. We ask You to fill this city, to fill this nation, to fill this world until the whole earth is covered with Your glory, O God, like the waters cover the sea. Come sit in our midst on Your mercy seat!

Endnote

1. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), s.v. "glory" (#H3519, #H3513).

CHAPTER 3

NEVER TRUST ANYONE WITHOUT A LIMP

Wrestling with Divine Destiny

GOD'S PEOPLE NEED MORE THAN just another "good meeting" that sends goose bumps up and down their spines. We need a God-meeting that leaves us with a limp! Where are the Jacobs who will lay hold on the theophany of God and wrestle with their destiny until it is changed? Who will take hold of God and say, "I am not going to let go until You bless me"?

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Genesis 32:24-26 NKJV)

Many people wonder how Jacob could use such improper, impertinent language with God Almighty. I believe that Jacob, "the heel-grabber," used the only terminology he understood. He may have become a patriarch, but he wasn't a theologian. People of passion will desperately pursue what the educated tell them can't be caught. Jacob knew what a blessing was because he remembered what happened when his father laid his hand on his head:

"All I know is that my father's blessing changed my life and made things different, and I've got to have something

like that again. The only thing I know to call it is a ‘blessing,’ so touch me.

“I’ve got to have it. I’ve already had a blessing from the earthly perspective. Now I need it from a heavenly perspective. I am not going to let You go until You bless me.”

THIS ISN’T SOME CELESTIAL “BLUE-LIGHT SPECIAL”

All too often we approach God with a discount store mentality. Whether we come for revival, physical healing, or a financial blessing, we hope to get what we want at the cheapest price in the shortest time possible. I don’t know about you, but I have never seen God do things that way. We like to line up like we’ve found some celestial “blue-light special” with our lists of prayers and petitions. Then we say, “Bless me.” I have begun to pray that God would not answer our exact requests, but answer according to our need instead. We know what we want—but do we know what we need?

Jacob’s name literally means “supplanter” or trickster. He was a lifelong deceiver, a trickster who stole his older brother’s birthright and his father’s blessing. To say he was untrustworthy was probably an understatement. Yet Jacob came from a good family, the son of one of the most famous men in history. He grew up “in church” because Abraham and Isaac had passed down to their sons the stories of their encounters with God. Jacob had a calling on his life and a divine destiny to fulfill— but he couldn’t be trusted in his present state. All that was about to change with one encounter.

So He said to him, “What is your name?” He said, “Jacob.” And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.” Then Jacob asked, saying, “Tell me Your name, I pray.” And He said, “Why is it that you ask about My name?” And He blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: “For

I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved”
(Genesis 32:27-30 NKJV).

After one or two hours of wrestling and grappling for the advantage, Jacob probably felt pretty confident that he was going to receive a blessing. I believe he thought to himself, *Well, at some point this angelic whatever-I’m-wrestling-with, this manifestation of God, is going to say, “Okay, okay, I’ll bless you. Now kneel down right here and I’ll put my hands on your head.”* There was a surprise in store for him.

DON’T BLESS MY MESSED-UP LIFE; GIVE ME A NEW LIFE

The Lord didn’t stretch out His arm with an open hand of blessing because Jacob didn’t need another blessing on his messed-up life.¹ He needed a new life. Instead, the Lord doubled up His fist and struck Jacob in the thigh with such power that it knocked Jacob’s thigh out of joint and permanently injured the connective ligament there. As a result, Jacob limped the rest of his life.

When Jacob’s older brother, Esau, finally saw Jacob limp into view, he probably thought, *That’s not the same Jacob who stole my birthright. He doesn’t even walk the same. There is humility in his walk; there is a new tenderness in him. He is different. I can’t kill him; that’s my brother.* He wanted to kill the old brother, but he embraced the new Jacob. If we will embrace repentant fleshdeath, those who once hated us may see a new version of us.

Jacob probably wanted a blessing that would make his angry older brother submissive to him, but God blessed him in a different way. He changed him so that his brother would like him. It is time for the Church to change too.

The Church has been strutting down the sidewalks of the world in arrogance, pointing fingers of incrimination in every direction and telling everybody else to “get right.” Meanwhile, we have a proverbial board

sticking out of our eye that is a mile long. It is time for us to say, “God, I don’t know whether You will bring a blessing or a changing, but something has to happen. Teach us how to build mercy seats instead of judgment seats.”

I’M TIRED OF GETTING TOUCHED BUT NOT CHANGED

We need to have encounters with God that leave us changed forever. I am tired of coming to church and getting touched but not changed. We must lock onto the presence of God and say, “I’m not letting You go until something happens inside me and I am never the same again.”

This is the *God* kind of change that permanently wounds the old man and the old ways of doing things. It causes the death of something within us, which marks a change for the better. People should see us coming with a new limp, a new tenderness born of the day we lost our wrestling contest with God. It should make people say, “I like that person. He isn’t speaking from a place of pompous arrogance; he speaks like he knows what it’s like to come from the bottom.” That is why my motto is, “Never trust anybody who doesn’t walk with a limp.”

EVERY REVIVALIST HAS WRESTLED

Duncan Campbell of Hebrides revival fame knew what it was like to “wrestle with destiny and lose.” He said:

I’ll tell you how the Hebrides revival started. It did not really start with me showing up to preach some big conference. It started in my study. Years before, I had been a part of what they called the Faith Mission Movement in England. Before I was married, I rode my bicycle all over England spreading the gospel, preaching, and functioning as best as I knew how, and those were the beginning great days. Those were the seed beds of everything that I eventually became. In the process of that, I decided to go back to school and further my education. I came out at the top of the dean’s list and I began to be known as the Right Reverend Duncan Campbell.²

Campbell became the most renowned preacher in England at the time. The pinnacle event of the English church world was an annual national conference called Keswick Week. It is still going on today, although it is not as large as it once was. Only the best and the brightest were invited to speak at Keswick Week, and the Right Reverend Duncan Campbell was the keynote speaker for this conference year after year. Then a chance comment by his teenage daughter launched him into a contest with God that changed his ministry—and the Hebrides Islands—forever.

WHY DOESN’T GOD USE YOU LIKE HE USED TO?

Duncan Campbell was in his mid-40s and had entered what he thought

was his prime. He was working in his study preparing sermons for yet another Keswick Week appearance when his 15-year-old daughter came in to see him. Daughters are known for their ability to speak the truth without really knowing the impact of what they are saying. (Most of the things I learned from God, I personally learned through my little girls!) As Duncan Campbell and his daughter talked, she asked this question: “Dad, why doesn’t God use you like He used to?”

Campbell told an English friend of mine,³ “It knocked the wind out of my sails because I thought I was at the peak. When she asked me that question, I was preparing sermons that would affect all of England, or so I thought. So I put my pen down and asked her, ‘My dear, what is it that you mean?’

“She said, ‘Dad, you’ve told me the stories of what used to happen when you worked in the Faith Mission Movement. Why doesn’t God do that with you anymore?’

“I made some lame brain excuses and tried to theologically talk through it so I wouldn’t lose face in front of my daughter,” he said. “I held my composure...until she left the room. When she did, I fell on my face and said, ‘God, she is right!’ With my face in the carpet, I wept hot tears and said, ‘God, if You will give me back what I had, I will do whatever You tell me to do.’ Three weeks later I was sitting on the platform at a conference. I had already spoken and was scheduled to speak again. Then God spoke to me and said, ‘Get up and go to the Hebrides Islands, to the Isle of Lewis.’ ”

IF YOU GO, I WILL GIVE IT

“I said, ‘God, I’m supposed to speak,’ and He said just as clearly as I’ve ever heard anything said, ‘Duncan, on the floor of your study you promised Me that you would do whatever I asked you if I would give you back what you had. If you will go, I will give it.’ ”

Duncan Campbell left the platform immediately and leaned over to the conveners to say, “I’m sorry, something has come up. I’ve got to go.”

Within three days he was on the Isle of Lewis. When he stepped off the ferryboat and asked for the pastor, the townspeople replied, “There is no pastor. There are only three churches here; two of them are closed and one has some elderly ladies meeting in it with the postman. But if you’re looking for a religious man, the postman is the one you’ll be looking for.”

The postman was the elder in the church who basically held things together and served as an interim pastor. Duncan Campbell found the postman’s house and knocked on the door, not knowing what to expect. The postman answered the door and immediately said, “Oh, Mr. Campbell, you’re right on time. We have just enough time for tea before the meeting starts tonight.” Over tea, he explained, “The ladies and myself, we’ve been praying, and God spoke and said you were coming. Six weeks ago I printed posters that announced that the meetings would begin tonight.”

Mr. Campbell told my English friend, “It dawned on me then that God really didn’t need me. He had already prepared it, but He really wanted me.”

Duncan Campbell wrestled with God over his destiny, and he rose from his tear-stained carpet a changed man. Only a man with a limp could be trusted with what would later be called “the New Hebrides revival.” This revival gave us a glimpse of what could happen if God comes down upon an entire region! Thousands came to Christ without hearing a single sermon, without listening to a single preacher, and without stepping foot inside a church building! And this happened about a century ago, before the days of widely available mass media. This “non-tongues-speaking, much-heartbreaking” revival swept an entire region and was nothing less than purely miraculous. It began in the brokenhearted prayers of persistent worshipers and was launched in Duncan Campbell’s heart the day he wrestled with God and lost.

JACOB LEFT THE MATCH WITH A PERMANENT TROPHY OF HIS DEFEAT

When Jacob lost his contest with God, he was transformed from being a man who was out to take care of Number One any way he could, into a prince

of God's chosen people. He wrestled with God over his destiny and left the match with a permanent trophy of his defeat. It was the match he needed to lose for his own good. He needed a change if he was ever to move on into his God-ordained destiny. The Church needs a change too.

If we are going to move to the next level, we must shift our emphasis away from God's hands to His face. I travel so much that I particularly cherish the time I'm home with my children. One time when my youngest daughter was six years old, I came home and she climbed up in my lap in the recliner. I was tired and was reading the paper or watching the news on television, but she was determined to get my attention. She reached up with those chubby little six-year-old fingers and grabbed my face. At that time she still had a little bit of a childish lisp, and she turned my face away from the distraction and said, "Wook at me, Daddy. Wook at me."

Then she just smothered me in kisses, and I gave her a hug before trying to go back to my paper. Once again she grabbed my face and said, "Wook at me, Daddy," until she finally got my attention. After 15 minutes of kissing and incredible cuddling from my six-year-old, she finally melted my heart. Children usually want something when they begin to act like that, so I gave her a big hug and asked her, "Andrea, what do you want?"

She said, "Nothing. I just want you, Daddy."

I loved on her a little more and she just rubbed my face with her little hands and looked up at me with those big brown eyes while she cocked her little head to the side. Then she sealed it all with a smile and the words, "I wuv you, Daddy."

"Come on, what do you want?" I said, thinking that if it went on this long it was something big. Three times I asked her, "What do you want?"

Each time she said, "Nothing, Daddy. I just want you."

Finally I told Andrea, "Come on, get in the van." We drove into town and

I said, “What do you want, baby girl?”

Once again she said, “Nothing, Daddy. I just want you.”

Then we pulled up in front of a much-advertised toy store, and her eyes lit up. By that time my heart was so melted that what I wanted to do was just go in and say, “Okay, baby girl, just tell me which half of the store you want. You can have this half or that half, it doesn’t matter.” I said, “Pick out whatever you want!”

IS THERE ANYBODY HERE WHO JUST WANTS ME?

Do you know what she got? A little bottle of soap bubbles with the round wand that you blow through to make floating bubbles. Suddenly it became really obvious that she really didn’t want anything. She had just wanted me! And because she wanted me, I would have given her anything. How often we come to church services to present our petitions, prophesy this, and say that, while God says, “Is there anybody here who just wants Me?”

The highest level of worship is when we push aside His hands and pursue His face! His face means His favor. In the biblical days, when people wouldn’t turn their face toward you, that meant you were allowed in their presence but did not have their favor. Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years without seeing his father or being before the king’s face (see 2 Sam. 14:28). He could live in the city, but he couldn’t enter the throne room.

It is possible to live in the Kingdom and not see His face—to enjoy the covenantal protections of the firefighters, the police, and city infrastructure—but not have the favor of the King. For how long has the Church not been pursuing the true favor of God? We’ve lived in the Kingdom, demanded what’s ours, and got it! As the Father fulfilling the selfish request of the prodigal, He gave him his portion, knowing what he was going to do with it. It is an abuse of blessings to take from the Father’s hands to finance your journey away from the Father’s face—to elevate “blessing” over “Blesser”!

We must mature to the point that we can say, “It’s not His hands,” and

push His hands aside to seek His face and say, “I’ll be a servant” and “I just want to be where You are.” Then our worship is no longer self-serving to get something; instead we begin to just give everything to Him. Instead of “bless me,” it becomes “bless Him”! We no longer give to get, but we give out of passion!

There’s a shift coming, and to those kinds of passionate people, He will give the ring of authority and the robe of blessing. He knows now that they won’t squander their relationship by pursing His hand instead of His face. God is also determined to change the way we “have church.” Presence over presents! He longs for the worshiper who will go after the “Giver” more than the “gifts”! Are you that person? Are you a restorer of God’s favorite house?

DADDY, YOU CAN SIT ANYWHERE YOU WANT

One time I was away from home when I called to talk to my youngest daughter, Andrea. I said, “What are you doing, baby girl?”

She said, “I’m playing tea party, Daddy.”

I told her, “Set a place for me right now, and we’ll just pretend that I’m there and we’ll have tea.”

“I already did,” she replied.

“Well, where am I sitting?” I asked.

She said, “Well, I didn’t know, so I set five places for you.” That melted my heart!

How long has it been since the Church was so desperate for Him that we just said, “Father, You can sit anywhere You want. Here, there, it doesn’t matter. Just come.” I answered my daughter, “When I get home, Daddy is going to play tea party with you.”

All this took place in the middle of the summer in Louisiana when the temperature hits 95 degrees in the shade with 95 percent humidity. Andrea’s

little plastic playhouse was in the backyard, right in the hot sun. The minute I walked in the door with suitcases in hand, Andrea was saying, “Come on, Daddy.” I hadn’t even unpacked, but I had a promise to keep. It was time for Daddy to go play tea party.

Her playhouse was so small I’m not sure whether I got in it or put it on! My head was holding up the roof while I sat on the ground. I was barely crammed in Andrea’s little playhouse before she had handed me a tiny apron with the command, “Put it on.” She had the table set and waiting for me, and we started drinking our imaginary tea. She picked up one cup and said, “Here, Daddy.” Then she went around the table, “Here, dolly, and this is for me.” Then we sat and “supped” together. Andrea asked me, “Is it good?”

“Oh yes, it’s good,” I told her, even though we were sweating bullets in the hot sun, sipping imaginary tea.

Then Andrea said, “Here, have some cookies.” (They were imaginary cookies.) Once again, she asked, “Is this fun?”

The truth of the matter was that I was miserable, but I was with her, and therefore it was fun. So I said, “Yes, baby, it’s fun.”

Finally Andrea said, “Daddy, it’s hot and I’m thirsty. Let’s go in the big house and get something to drink.”

I said, “Come on, baby,” and I took her into the big house and sat her down at the real table. I poured some real iced tea in the glasses and sat there with her.

Then she said to me, “Now this is a real tea party.”

We’ve been playing tea party in our plastic houses too, only we call it “having church.” We are forcing God to be confined within the constraints of our playhouse structures while feeding Him make-believe worship and praise. Then we look at Him and say, “Aren’t we having fun?”

DADDY, WE’RE TIRED OF PLAYING MAN-MADE

GAMES

His answer is, “Yes,” but it is only because He will do anything to commune with us. He will even put “His strength into captivity” to come sit with us because He is so desperate for us to be with Him (see Ps. 78:61). But He is really waiting for us to say, “Daddy, we’re tired of playing the man-made games of church. Will You take us to the big house for real communion?”

I’m tired of coming home from church with nothing changed. I’d rather come back from an encounter with God limping instead of leaping—just so my destiny is different.

You may not like the feeling of frustration, but you need to understand that some frustrations are holy frustrations. Just like some hunger is holy hunger, it is planted by God to produce something. I didn’t say it; He said it: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst...” (Matt. 5:6 NKJV).

Holy hunger and blessed frustrations can produce a destiny-altering wrestling match. You should try to lose this fight...but not until you are scarred by God’s touch. God’s touch permanently shriveled Jacob’s tendon—so much so that Jews wouldn’t eat “Jacob’s” tendon from any animal. Hebrew dietary codes forbid eating things that have died. God put a handle of “death” in Jacob’s life in order to secure his future. Fleshdeath often produces future destiny. Your program may die for His purpose to live.

I think that we are so full with careers and agendas and man-made machinery that we have lost the simplicity of the manifested presence of God. We desperately need to take up John the Baptist’s motto and put it to work in our lives: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). It is time to call out the Jacobs who have grown so sick of themselves that they will wrestle with their destiny until they’ve been touched by God—even if they come home with a permanent limp and an eternal change of heart.

Change my heart, O God!

*Change my path, I pray!
Touch me with Your rod...
So I will go Your way.*

Endnotes

1. Most scholars believe that Jacob's wrestling opponent was a theophany of Jesus Christ, based on the nature of the blessing given and upon Jacob's statement, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30). This incident clearly shows that the Lord permitted Jacob to "hold his own" in the physical wrestling match to help drive home his new name and identity in the purposes of God. It was Jacob's will that "prevailed" through the test in his determination to pursue God until he received His blessing.
2. Duncan Campbell shared this with Alan Vincent in a personal conversation.
3. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

SPIRITUAL PORNOGRAPHY OR SPIRITUAL INTIMACY?

Voyeurism or Visitation?

GOD SPOKE TO A WELL-KNOWN minister one time and said, “I’ve seen your ministry; now do you want to see Mine?” He is saying the same thing to the Church right now. Most preachers learn how to attract a crowd early in their ministry, but they usually don’t learn it from God. We are schooled in attracting man’s attention, but ignorant in how to attract God’s attention.

I know how to plan a meeting, promote an event, and preach a message for maximum “man results,” but I am reluctant to follow that path anymore. I’ve been down that road, and I didn’t really like where I saw it was going. But I must say that the real reason for my disillusionment is that I’ve been ruined by His presence. Isaiah said it, so I can say it! “I am undone” (Isa. 6:5). The Hebrew word there means “ruined.” One encounter with Him ruins your appetite for encounters with man. Worship leaders also learn how to elevate the soul with the anointing upon their gifts, and there isn’t anything wrong with that. But I sometimes wonder what happened to the true worship leaders whose sole purpose is to lead God’s people into His presence for His sake?

The anointing can easily draw a big crowd, but the problem with those types of man-meetings is that you can curry the favor of men without ever seeking the favor of God. There is a better way, and Jesus demonstrated it with His life. The Bible says that Jesus grew in favor with both God and man

(see Luke 2:52). And He always, always, always put God first.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus's single focus was to hear what the Father was saying and say it and to see what the Father was doing and do it.¹ That is why Jesus, and the ministers who have followed in His footsteps, never worried about drawing big crowds. If you know God and please Him through total obedience, hunger for Him will bring the crowds to you. What would happen to our meetings if we did that? I can guarantee you that they certainly would be different from what they are now.

I am afraid that most of our carefully orchestrated church services and revival meetings would go along just fine without God's help, approval, or appearance. Judging by the fruit of some of our endless meetings, they have already been functioning that way for a long time. What a sad commentary. It's a statement on our low hunger level that we would be satisfied with less of God than He wants us to experience.

THE TEMPTATION IS TO PROMISE HIM WHEN YOU CAN'T DELIVER HIM

We have practiced and perfected the art of entertaining man, but along the way we have lost the art of entertaining God. We've already talked about the weeping zone, that place of priestly intercession between the court of man and the altar of God where we reach toward God with one hand and reach toward man with the other. Sometimes we get so involved in attracting man to our outstretched hand that we lose the desire and the ability to attract God with the other. When you can pull men toward you but you can't get God to come close anymore, the temptation is to keep promising Him though you can't deliver Him.

Time and again we gather large crowds of people under a plastic banner that proclaims, "Revival!" Then we become like some perpetual late night television co-host of the church scene, saying, "Here's God!" With practiced voice inflection and hand flourishes we invite and announce Him— only we have no place for Him to sit. In our drive to please men we forgot to please God. There's no mercy seat!

So He never really quite shows up. He just peeps out from behind the curtains (or the lattice, as Solomon said), releasing just enough of His anointing to let you know He's there, but not enough to have a Damascus Road encounter that utterly changes you.

Part of the problem is our habit of misusing terminology to artificially raise the expectations of people. We perpetually over-promise and under-produce. As I said before, if someone says, "The glory of God is here" from an upright position, you have my permission to question the validity of the comment. We are guilty of hyping trickles into torrents—but only in our vain imaginations. When people from the world walk in, they say, "It's nice in here. It feels peaceful. Good, it is God. There's no doubt about it, it's God... but how much of God?" And then they walk out.

GOD'S HAND CAN SUPPLY, BUT ONLY HIS FACE CAN SATISFY

We promise God's glory, but often at best we give a limited measure of God's anointing. God's anointing was never meant to satisfy the hunger of our souls. The anointing and the gifts empowered by it are simply tools to assist, enable, encourage, and point us back to their Source. Only God Himself can satisfy the hunger He placed within us. His hand can supply our needs, but only His face can satisfy our deepest longings. As we look upon His face, we are brought into union with our destiny, and we enjoy the favor of His loving gaze and the incomparable kiss of His lips.

There is a big difference between encountering the anointing of God and encountering His glory. I'm not really interested in the anointing anymore—not when it is compared to the glory of His manifest presence. I say that because it is the only way I know to help people understand the dramatic difference between the anointing and the glory of God.

The anointing of God in all its various forms has a valid purpose in His plans and purposes. The problem is that we have become so addicted to the way the anointing makes us feel that we've turned our eyes and hearts away from the glory of God's face to get more of the anointing in His hands. The

anointing empowers our flesh, and it makes us feel good. That is why the Church is filled with “anointing junkies” on both sides of the pulpit. Most (but not all) the antics in our services that draw fire from the world and various segments of the Church can be traced to this odd addiction.

If you don’t believe me, ask yourself why people will trample one another to get a “hot spot” in the prayer line at major conferences. Explain to me why born-again Christians will lie, scheme, and break every rule in the book to get the “best seats” in the convention hall when “Hot Evangelist What’s His Name” comes to town? Honestly, there are a lot of nationally known preachers who have fan clubs nowadays. They don’t call them fan clubs, of course, because that would be embarrassing, but it is true nonetheless. This is typical behavior when preachers and their fans become addicted to the power of the anointing.

UNCONTROLLED CRAVINGS FOR CHEAP SPIRITUAL THRILLS BECOME “SPIRITUAL PORNOGRAPHY”

We would often rather be vicariously thrilled by God’s touch on someone else’s life than pursue it on our own. Or, if we are in ministry, we can become addicted to people’s infatuation with us because of the anointing. It feels so good to stand in the flow.

Addiction turns even the strongest anointing into a cheap thrill. At its worst, a preacher’s uncontrollable craving to minister under the anointing—and a believer’s driving compulsion to receive ministry under the anointing—becomes a form of “spiritual pornography.” As in the physical variety of this compulsion, “spiritual pornographers” want to get their thrills by observing the intimacy experienced by others rather than shouldering the responsibility of relationship with God. This is the only proper channel through which we are to derive personal intimacy with God. The Lord doesn’t want us to be infatuated with His hands and the blessings they bring to spirit, soul, and body. He wants us to fall head over heels in love with Him!

We are essentially saying, “I’m not going to go into God’s intimate presence for myself. I’m going to get a cheap thrill out of sharing somebody else’s encounter with God. If they are graphic and dynamic, I’ll get enough goose bumps to get my anointing fix.” When ministers blatantly display the anointing on their life with no regard for pursuing intimacy with God Himself or for leading God’s people into personal intimacy with Him, they become “spiritual exhibitionists.” They are more concerned with the pleasure derived from their personal display of anointing than with pursuing God’s face and ministering to Him. Those who “watch” without pursuing God themselves become mere spiritual “voyeurs” whose lives lack the genuine relationship God desires for them.

We get addicted to the anointing in the same way the children of Israel did (see Exod. 19). The ministry of Moses and the miracles he did after talking with God clearly represented divine anointing, but God wanted to give the Israelites more. In Exodus 19, He invited everyone in the group to come up and hear Him speak for themselves. This was an opportunity to go beyond the anointing and taste of His glory for themselves. The children of Israel basically said, “Moses, you go talk to God and find out what He says. You can have the intimacy—just take some juicy pictures and bring the anointing back to us” (see Exod. 20:19). They didn’t want to have a God-encounter themselves because it required a relationship that involved responsibility and a death to self.

When you pay the price to encounter God’s glory up close and personal, you can’t back away from what He tells you because at that point you are “married” to Him. When you get everything secondhand you can say, “It may be or it may not be God. I can’t tell because it’s just a ‘picture of the month.’”

I have tried to send a message to my children by telling one of them to tell the others, “Dad said.” It doesn’t work. If I say,

“You go tell your sister that I said she needs to clean up her room and rake the yard,” the “messenger” of the moment loves to deliver those kinds of messages because they feel empowered, but those messages never have the same impact as the real thing.

I can still remember hearing my daughters tell one another after a “second-person message” was delivered, “You’re not the boss of me!” We say that (or the adult equivalent) to our pastors, spiritual leaders, and bosses constantly even though we are adults. All that stops when the heavenly Father shows up personally and manifests His glory.

THE ADDICTED ARE CONSUMED WITH THEIR NEXT ANOINTING “FIX”

If they don’t watch it, preachers can become a major obstacle to “God coming down” in their churches because they are addicted to the anointing. They would rather preach than worship Him until His glory comes in. The truth is that our best sermons can never equal just one word spoken directly to us from God Himself. Congregations can become just as addicted to the anointing that flows from their gifted leaders or from the gifts resident in the congregation. The addicted are all too consumed with getting their next anointing fix to worry about seeking the face of God.

“Why doesn’t God just take back the anointed gifts He gives those addicted preachers?” He doesn’t work that way. Once He opens that door of anointing in a person’s life, His gifts and callings are without repentance (see Rom. 11:29). Once a preacher goes over the line into pure anointing addiction, God won’t “hold them back” by removing His gift. He simply backs away from them personally because He is more committed to character than to talent.

When the character runs out and the talent or gifting continues, a person is skating on thin ice, and eventually he or she will fall through. Any gift from God that is separated from His abiding presence will deteriorate over time. (That may be a pretty good description of what has happened to many of the great denominations in the Church that were founded upon solid truths and genuine experiences in God at one time.) Why don’t these spiritually bankrupt ministers just go back to their first love? They want to keep standing up before the people even when they know that their private testimony doesn’t match their public anointing.

WE HAVE PROSTITUTED THE VERY PROCESSES OF GOD

Let me assure you that there is a big difference between a one-dimensional representation and the real thing. We have prostituted the very processes of God by pursuing what comes from a man as the complete representation of God. Some people talk about things of the spirit as if they were there, but they are only talking about what they've heard. They have not had a legitimate encounter themselves, so their description of God comes across in a flat, single dimension. That's the difference between looking at a picture of your child or stroking the hair of that toddler you love.

The Church has perverted and prostituted its anointing by chasing after the approval of man when that's not the real purpose for the anointing. When God first introduced Moses to the anointing oil, He said:

And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: "This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you" (Exodus 30:25-32 NKJV).

It seems incongruous that the Scripture says, "shall anoint" and "not... on man's flesh" in the same passage. Not on unconsecrated flesh! Dedicated death-to-self flesh is ready to be anointed.

Psalm 133 shows us how this anointing oil was used when it says, “It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments” (Ps.133:2). The Israelites made the anointing oil by the quart because when it was time to anoint something, they poured, smeared, drenched, and on occasion sprinkled heavily. Just think about Aaron, the high priest.

ARE YOU READY FOR GOD TO RUIN YOUR CARPET?

How much oil would you have to pour over a grown man’s head (perhaps a man who was careful not to cut his hair) to make it run down his beard (a full beard), and then run down his full-length priestly linen garments so generously that it drips off the hem to the ground at his feet? I don’t know how much it would take, but I can guarantee you that if God recreated that event in your church, it would ruin your carpet. (And whoever stood in proxy for Aaron would need a new hairdo.)

I want the kind of messy services that have “divine intervention” stamped all over them. When men anoint men for man’s approval, they use just enough to win the applause and raise the goose bumps. When God anoints man, He nearly drowns us with His fragrance just so He can stand to come near.

That is the way the “first church service” went. Read the second chapter of Acts and explain to me why the disciples stumbled and staggered out of an upper room so inebriated in the Spirit that people accused them of being falling-down drunks. How seekerfriendly was that? Peter had to refute the accusations with the logic of a lawyer and power from on high to tell them, “Look, it’s too early. The bars aren’t even opened. And smell our breath, anyway.” Seekerfriendly or not, the first church of 120 Spirit-filled drunks held an altar call, and 3,000 people came to Christ.

We need to see that happen in some of our services. I’d love to see God’s anointing wreck us and wreck the church. I’d love to see people stagger out of the building just dripping with oil. I can tell you this much: We wouldn’t

look sane, we wouldn't look normal, and we certainly wouldn't be considered "seekerfriendly." But a service like that can only happen because God showed up. Which would you chose—clean carpet or clean heart; nice hair or an oily but fragrant mess?

WE MAINTAIN OUR COMPOSURE AT THE COST OF OUR CONVICTIONS

Does it shock you when I tell you that the world is tired of the "normal church"? It may be all that we have, but it hasn't done the job. I am not saying that we need to become a bunch of mindless fanatics, but the truth is that our greatest temptation is the desire to maintain our composure at the cost of our convictions.

We are not where we ought to be, and we are not doing what we ought to do. Why? Because we think we have a reputation to maintain. Reputations mean nothing to God. I am thinking of a King who made Himself of no reputation and took on the form of a servant just so He could do what He needed to do (see Phil. 2:7). You can't seek His face and save yours. You may lose your dignity in your pursuit of His deity.

Frankly, I've noticed that we need those unpredictable services that force us to lose our composure because that is often the only way we will allow God to break something open. Again, you may lose your dignity in your pursuit of His deity. When the people of God commit themselves to see the heavens open in their church and city, they become pregnant with the purposes of God. Those people will inevitably end up in a "birthing room" when the divine matrix of Heaven will open to release the glory of God.

If you have never been there, let me assure you that the typical birthing room is not a place of composure. I have been there in the natural as chief spectator (my wife was the participator). I learned firsthand that a woman goes to death's door to bring back life. In the same way, Calvary was not a place of composure. It was a bloody birthing ground in which the Son of God

went to the grave and back to bring us new life.

WE'VE SANITIZED THE CROSS AND REDUCED THE COST OF COMMITMENT

The “church with a reputation” has managed to come up with “salvation in a package” where converts simply walk up front and shake somebody’s hand in one neat and tidy event. Sometimes churches will even provide hankies to dab the tear that may or may not form in the corner of one’s eye. I understand the thinking behind all that, but I have a nagging image of how our salvation was originally delivered. I keep seeing the beaten Christ robed in bloody garments, and I wonder if we’ve sanitized the cross and reduced the cost of commitment too much. He died naked, indicating a total loss of dignity. Even in the throes of dying! He lost His dignity, and we seek to preserve ours.

God is actively courting our love, but we think that things get too messy the way they are. We want to sanitize revival until it can be offered to people in a simple, shrink-wrapped, mass-produced package that is nice and tidy. Unfortunately for man’s pride, some of the things that make God comfortable also tend to make men incredibly uncomfortable.

When is somebody going to shoulder the burden and say, “Pour the oil on me until my hair is messed up and it drips off of everything I touch. Drench me in Your presence until everything I’m around becomes an oily mess and I don’t even look or act the same. Disable me with Your touch until I walk with a limp. It will change the way my brother looks at me. Pour it on me”? Let me stumble from the upper room into the lower streets. The “birthing room,” called the upper room, disgorged uncomposed disciples to forever change the world.

FORGET SHORTCUTS: KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

Don't bother to look for shortcuts to revival or a revelation of God's glory. If you want to pursue God, then you will have to do it the same way they wooed and won, and chased and pursued Him in the past. There is no new method or path to revival. We just need to rediscover God's original recipe and quit dabbling. We have majored on the minors for so long that we have lost the pursuit of God Himself. Let me share with you some wise counsel my father gave me: The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. The main thing is Him, the centrality of Christ!

The Song of Solomon reveals the real purpose of the anointing. The Bridegroom calls to His bride and says, "...How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!" (Song of Sol. 4:10 NKJV). The true anointing should cause God to say to His Bride, the Church, "The way you smell to Me ravished My heart." There is something about the fragrant anointing on the prayers, praise, and worship of the saints that intrigues God.

If we can direct the sweet fragrance of our anointing and our sacrifice of praise upward toward Heaven instead of horizontally toward one another, we may see the heavens open. There are at least 131 references to "anointing, anointed, or anoint" in the Old Testament and 18 in the New Testament. The anointing has several different purposes in the New Testament:

1. Most New Testament references mark the anointing of Jesus for His ministry, death, and burial as the Lamb of God, the Divine Sacrifice (see Mark 14:8; 16:1; Luke 7:46).
2. Sometimes it signifies the empowerment of human beings for divine works among men or of kings to rule under God's authority (see Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38).
3. At times it signifies God's seal upon men (see 2 Cor.

1:21).

4. It releases God's power for healing or deliverance, representing a measure of God's virtue on loan to bring glory to Him and Him alone (see Mark 6:13; John 9:6; James 5:14-15).
5. On rare occasions, it is God's way of setting apart and blessing anointed people (like Jesus) for total devotion to righteousness and the things of God (see Heb. 1:9).
6. In John's Epistle, it is a gift we receive from Jesus that abides in us and teaches us all things (see 1 John 2:27).

WE PROSTITUTE THE ANOINTING BECAUSE WE WANT TO SMELL GOOD

The primary purpose of the anointing in both the Old and New Testaments was to separate things and people and make them acceptable to God (and occasionally for kings). Unfortunately, we tend to prostitute the anointing because we want to smell good for everybody else.

According to the second chapter of the Book of Esther, after the wife of King Ahasuerus of Persia refused to show herself to his drunken banquet guests, he launched a kingdom-wide search for a new queen. A Jewish maiden named Esther was selected to be one of the candidates for the king's harem. As I said in *The God Chasers*, Esther and the other prospective brides spent "one year in preparation for one night with the king."²

Esther spent six months soaking in oil of myrrh and six more months soaking in other added sweet odors to purify and prepare her for one night with the king. All but one of the candidates would see the king once and rarely if ever see him again. The Bible says:

And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen... (Esther 2:17).

Esther also “obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her” (Esther 2:15). Can you imagine what Esther smelled like after spending a year soaking in the anointing oil? It was on her garments and embedded in her skin and hair. Everywhere she walked she left a cloud of incense, and the smell of precious myrrh was on her. When she walked through the palace, every man in the place raised his eyebrows at her and said, “Oh, look! Look at Esther.”

ESTHER WAS AFTER THE APPROVAL OF THE KING HIMSELF

I don't think Esther returned a single glance or flirtatious wink. She didn't want to waste all the time she had spent in the anointing just to win the approval of men; she was after the approval of the king himself. Can we say the same for the Church, the Bride of Christ? We have grown accustomed to wearing God's anointing to win the approval of the King's court instead of the King Himself. In Moses's day, the anointing was reserved for the things of God and sanctified or set apart flesh. To anoint anything else was sin. Too many people would squander the anointing on unsanctified, unrepentant flesh to win man's approval. The anointing can only make putrefied flesh smell better temporarily if the root is a rotten and unrepentant, proud heart.

If you are a preacher, a teacher, a worship leader, or hold any position of responsibility in the local body, don't waste God's precious anointing by running after man's approval. Use it to prepare the Bride for the King.

The purpose of the anointing is to bring God and man together in holy communion. Moses knew the difference between the anointing and the glory. He had the anointing of God. He knew the thrill of working miracles and signs and wonders through the anointing. Moses had a good thing, but he asked God for the best thing. He said, “Please, show me Your glory” (Exod.

33:18 NKJV).

I must admit, I feel the same way Moses did (although I won't compare my ministry to his). The evidence of God's power in the anointing isn't enough anymore. The gifts, blessings, and provisions of His hands are appreciated, but I want more. I want Him. I long to see His glory and dwell in His manifest presence more than I long for the blessings of His hands.

Like Moses, we have an opportunity to go beyond God's omnipresence and anointing to see God's glory. Our spirits were instantly transformed into new creations at salvation, but we still need to do something about our tainted bodies and messy souls before God can expose us to His shining glory. The blood of Jesus covers our sin and preserves us from death, but that doesn't mean we are particularly attractive to God apart from the fragrant covering cloud of repentant, broken worship.

GOD'S GLORY LINGERS BEHIND THE BLOOD - SOAKED DOORWAY OF REPENTANCE

Moses wasn't allowed to see God's glory until after his flesh had died. As I mentioned repeatedly in *The God Chasers*, my first book, the New Testament equivalent of death is repentance. We may not like it, but the glory of God lingers behind the blood-soaked doorway of repentance. If we ever want to enter into the manifested glory of the presence of God, we will have to walk through the door called repentance.

We like to avoid repentance by claiming it was all taken care of the day we received Jesus. Yes, the Lord did His part on the cross, but you and I aren't finished yet. Repentance is an on-going, daily requirement in the life of every disciple of Christ. That is why Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily [let him die to self through daily repentance], and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

We like to take pompous stands behind our pulpits, point at the choked world, and command them to repent. Will we ever learn that we will never be able to force the world into repentance—especially when the same

problems exist inside the Church that exist in the world? We are standing on fake platforms of hypocrisy that will soon crumble. The Church must no longer point toward repentance; we must lead the way with a lifestyle of repentance. We must embrace repentance as a body.

God uses His anointing to train us, cleanse us, heal us, and prepare us for His manifest presence in ways reminiscent of the way the king's chamberlain prepared Esther for the king of Persia. In the end, the anointing takes us back to the altar of God and the place of repentance. Repentance, in turn, can usher in the very glory of God.

THE ANOINTING IS ABOUT US; THE GLORY IS ABOUT HIM

If you are anointed, you will preach better, pray better, minister better, and worship better and with greater freedom, but that is not His highest purpose. The anointing is all about us, but the glory is all about Him. The anointing refers to what He pours, smears, or places upon us to help us do His will. Sometimes it acts as a “perfume” to prepare us for intimacy, as in Esther's case.³ When the anointing of God rests on you, it makes whatever you do “better.” It doesn't matter whether you preach, sing, witness, usher, pray, or minister to the babies in the back. When the anointing comes upon you, it empowers your gifts, talents, and callings with the power of God. Nevertheless, it is still the anointing, and it rests on flesh.

The glory is different. When the glory of God comes, you suddenly and clearly understand why God said “no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:29). A more literal translation of this passage might be, “no flesh should glory in God's face.”⁴ I can testify from personal experience and prove from the Scriptures that when the glory comes, your flesh can't do anything. Have you noticed that when people have a “God encounter” in the Bible, they usually end up on their face? It is because they didn't really have a choice.

The difference between the anointing of God and the glory of God is like

the difference between the tiny blue spark of static electricity and the raw power of a 440-volt power line overhead or a lightning strike on your head! We are so busy rubbing our feet across the carpet of God's promises and giving one another tiny blue sparks of anointing that we don't realize God wants to jolt us with His 440-volt glory line from Heaven. The one will thrill you a little, but you get the feeling the other might kill you or change your life forever.

I love the anointing of God, and I am thankful for every good gift He has given us. Yet I am convinced God's first choice is for us to seek His face of favor rather than His hand of anointing. I've spent most of my life in church (multiple services up to five days per week since childhood). Personally, I've had enough anointed preaching and singing to last me two lifetimes. It's good and it's thrilling, but I must tell you the anointing in and of itself is not going to get the job done. We must have the manifest presence of God Himself on display for the world.

GOD WANTS A CHURCH THAT HAS EYES ONLY FOR HIM

Failure to discern between the good and the best can cause us to make uneven trades. Esther refused to trade the winking approval of men in the king's court for the favor of the king himself. As a result, the king told Esther right in front of her enemy, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" (Esther 5:6 NKJV). God is looking for a Bride-Church that has eyes only for Him. Then He will delight in giving her the key to the city and the life of the nation.

Don't make the mistake of prostituting the anointing to pursue man so your church will grow. Just say, "I care more for His presence than His presents. I elevate *glory* above growth." No, that is not heresy. My Bible doesn't contain a single instance of God acting worried about the size of His Church. If things go right, you don't have to worry about the church growing. Just get serious about pursuing Him. Perfume yourself with the anointing and enter into such heated worship toward Him that you don't care who is there and who is not.⁵

Set your sights on the goal of breaking open the heavens to behold His glory over your city and nation. It is easy to mark the churches that have learned how to focus anointing vertically for God's favor instead of horizontally toward men.

Just look for the glory-filled footprints of God leading to their door.

They have had a visitation.

Endnotes

1. See John 5:30; 7:16-18; 8:28-29; 12:49-50.
2. Tommy Tenney, *The God Chasers* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1998), 41.
3. This understanding is clearly supported in the Old Testament uses of the Hebrew word for anointing, *shemen*, and in the New Testament Greek word, *aleipho*. The word *glory* (the Hebrew word *kabowd* or *kabod*) always refers to the weighty presence of God Himself. The only way to see or experience the glory is for God Himself to show up in the house. Hebrew and Greek word definitions were drawn from the work of James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), s.v. "anointing" (#H8081, H8080; and #G218, G3045), and "glory" (#H3519, H3513; and #G1391).
4. This expanded meaning is drawn from the literal meaning of the Greek word *enopion*, translated as "presence" in First Corinthians 1:29. It means "in the face of" God. Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, s.v. "presence" (#G1799).
5. Please understand that this comment refers specifically to those moments when you are focused upon ministering to God. I would never advocate that you be insensitive or harsh toward others or become rebellious toward leadership in the name of "deeper worship." I'm referring to what I call "the Mary/Martha" balance. Both women were doing the right things in Luke 10:38-42, but Martha simply needed to understand that when the Master is in the house, that is the time to drop everything else and minister to Him. Otherwise, the practical duties of servanthood and preparation in the house are absolutely necessary and proper. In those times

when Jesus was not in the house, it would have been improper for Mary to sit while Martha worked.

CHAPTER 5

THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

DEAR SISTER “B” WAS A real wonder to me when I was growing up.¹ My grandfather and my father co-pastored a church in Louisiana, and at times when the spiritual climate got a little tough in a service, they would confer and then call for Sister B to sing.

Now that didn’t make much sense to me because Sister B’s voice sounded something like a disharmonious foghorn. I just couldn’t stand her singing and neither could the other kids, so we used to make fun of her (secretly, of course). Now I’m a little bit wiser. I’ve learned that if God’s presence can turn a peasant into a princess, then He can definitely use the Sister Bs of the world.

I can tell you that I’ve been in hundreds of “ark-less” meetings as a minister of the gospel when I wished I could call for Sister B. You see, my father and grandfather knew what they were doing. They called for her because every time that sister began to sing, tears would start rolling and the hardness of the service would be shattered. For some reason, when Sister B stood up to sing to God, the presence of God would suddenly be ushered in.

It was obvious that even though we didn’t like Sister B’s singing, God liked the notes she was hitting. That was because Sister B’s high notes had very little to do with the raucous tones assaulting our fleshly ears. Worshipers take note: It wasn’t the almost melodious quality of Sister B’s voice that made a difference; it was the flawless melody pouring from her heart that made the difference.

It seemed like every time Sister B stood up and sang, the presence of God would enter. There was no obvious connection between her physical voice and the sudden approach of God's presence that could be perceived with earthly eyes and ears. The beautiful melody that attracted God to our little church "on the wrong side of the society tracks" could only be heard with the "ear" of the inner man, the spiritual hearing organ of the heart. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith..." (Rev. 2:7). He was not talking about the fleshly appendages on the side of our heads. He was referring to the spiritual hearing organ to which God whispers and speaks.

GOD DIDN'T WANT TO MISS A SINGLE NOTE OF SISTER B'S LULLABY

The key to Sister B's anointing was the fact that she was a worshiper. When she stood up to sing, she was oblivious to the row of snickering boys and the other people in the pews. She sang directly to God as an act of pure worship for His own pleasure, period. As a result, God didn't want to miss a single note of her lullaby to Him (in spite of our boyish prayers that she would stop). He just had to move His seat a little closer every time Sister B began to worship Him.

If we're not careful, we can get so enmeshed in the machinery of "having church" and having a good time that we forget the purpose of worship. Our general opinion of worship is often expressed with the statement, "Well, I'm going to be a little late for church. I'll miss the worship, but I'll get there for the Word."

What we fail to realize is that as far as God is concerned, worship is His part, and the Word is our part. That means that if we miss the worship, we've missed His best part where we give to Him. Instead we selfishly skip God's part and only show up to have our itching ears tickled.

"Well, God appreciates the Word." Oh yes, I know, but I want to ask you a serious question: Do you really think God gets anything out of our preaching? Do you think He might learn something about Himself from our

anointed teaching? (The answer might be yes, but for the wrong reason. He probably listens to our preaching and says, “Did I say that? I don’t remember saying it quite that way....”)

God doesn’t get anything out of our preaching. I am not saying that the preaching of God’s Word isn’t important. I am saying that worship is more important to God than preaching because worship builds the basket or container for the fresh bread of Heaven. If you build a mercy seat, then you can have the glory of God come in, and worship is what builds the seat of God. Ask yourself this question: “What is the priority of Heaven?” To talk to Him or talk about Him?

IS OUR FAVORITE HYMN: “GIVE ME, GIVE ME, GIVE ME”?

In our miscalculated valuation of what “church” is all about, we think in terms of what we receive from it instead of what we give to Him. As a result, we have turned “church” into a selfish proposition. I am going to make a bold statement that will anger some folks: We have turned church into glorified “bless me” clubs where we come with our hands extended and a long laundry list of wants. We might as well start with our favorite hymn: “Give me, give me, give me.”

That sets up a serious clash and conflict because God comes to church with His heart hungry. Tell me, what does God eat when He gets hungry? The answer may surprise you. Jesus gives us the answer during His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4 of John’s Gospel.

Jesus had an appointment with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in the Samaritan city of Sychar, which means “intoxicating drink.”² The disciples weren’t in a waiting mood because they were preoccupied with their grumbling fleshly stomachs. Can you picture Jesus leaning against a raised wall at Jacob’s well, looking at the wristwatch of eternity and saying to Himself, “She should be coming any moment now”? God the Son had an appointment with a woman of the world. She had a blind date with destiny and didn’t even know about it.

Perhaps you can remember the day and time your destiny intercepted with deity—did you have any idea that you were about to have a God encounter? That is because God set the appointment and you didn't. While Jesus waited for the Samaritan woman to show up, His disciples were rubbing their bellies. (They weren't good "waiters" then, and we don't do any better today.) They said something like, "Jesus, we saw a Burger King right down the road there. We're going to get something to eat. We'll bring you something back, is that okay?"

Jesus just told them, "Go on, I'm going to wait right here."

THE WOMAN OF REJECTION HAD AN APPOINTMENT WITH PERFECTION

Jesus probably watched the disciples pass the Samaritan woman in the road on their way to get food. (The disciples seemed to have a knack of missing momentous moments.) The woman who approached Jacob's well had been living a life of rejection. The Bible clearly tells us that she came at the noon hour (the sixth hour), and the women typically came in the morning to draw water for cooking and in the evening to draw water for bathing and washing. I think she wanted to avoid the biting remarks and judgmental stares of the women of the town.

Jesus saw past this woman's multiple husbands and saw the need of her heart. She admitted to having several husbands but made no mention of children. Perhaps this indicates that she was a barren woman who had no children. Is it possible that she went from husband to husband searching for someone to give her children? Did she go through all that pain only to recognize in the end that the problem rested with her?

As this woman walked up to Jacob's well, she probably thought she had run into something far worse than the sharp tongues of the townswomen—there was a Jewish rabbi waiting there. I can almost hear her thoughts: *He's probably a Pharisee who keeps every jot and tittle of the ancient law of Moses—including the requirement not to have any dealings with Samaritans.* Then the inconceivable happened: The Jewish holy man said, "I would like

some water.”

She expected to be rejected, but she wasn't prepared for Jesus's request. She said, "How can You ask me that? You are a Jew, and Jews aren't supposed to even speak to us."³ In that moment, Jesus embarked on an intricate journey of leading a soul to a place of hunger by asking questions and making intriguing statements that drew her deeper into the conversation.

“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?” (John 4:10-11 NKJV)

JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT LIVING WATER AND WORSHIP

Jesus ultimately helped the woman understand that He wasn't talking about the kind of water found in Jacob's well. He was talking about living water and worship. He revealed the purpose for their divine appointment when He said:

Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.... But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:21, 23-24 NKJV).

That Samaritan woman had walked to Jacob's well with a thirst for well water, but she wound up meeting the Well of Life and discovered she was really thirsty for living water. Jesus told her, "The Father is seeking such to worship Him." The only thing that the Father is actively seeking is worshipers!

THERE WILL BE NO PASTORS IN HEAVEN

This encounter with the woman at the well is a picture of God's unceasing search for worshipers. Do you realize there will be no pastors in Heaven? There will be no apostles, preachers, evangelists, Sunday school superintendents, church board members, elders, or deacons in Heaven either. That is because the only "job description" in Heaven is that of a worshiper. On earth you can be both a pastor and a worshiper, or a Sunday school teacher and a worshiper, but you must understand that your primary calling is to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. What you do in the vineyard may vary, but all real sons and daughters passionately love their Father.

God knows all things—and He knows where everything is hidden. He doesn't need gold or precious gems, but He knows where every single ounce of gold is hidden and can place His finger on every gemstone embedded in the bedrock of the earth. Yet there is one commodity that is more precious than all the others put together for which God searches unceasingly—a worshiper who freely offers love, praise, worship, and adoration to God in spirit and truth. The pure worship of His children made in His image is exceptionally rare because it comes from only one source in all the created universe—us. Our worship is hidden under the rock of the will of man—and God refuses to violate our will and move that rock.

God is on a mission to populate Heaven with worshipers for a very good reason. When lucifer fell from glory, I believe a crucial aspect of heavenly worship fell with him. If you were used to listening to a quartet sing in four-part harmony, you would immediately miss something if one of the voices dropped out. You know what it used to sound like and what it was supposed to sound like. The moment one of those voices is removed, you would say, "Well, that's good, but there is something missing."

GOD MISSES THE SONG OF THE HEART

God remembers when lucifer and the sons of the morning used to sing His praises with unearthly beauty and power. It is as if He says, "When will that be restored?" He is still surrounded by six-winged seraphim who

unceasingly declare His glory, but He misses the song of the heart.

Despite years of research, I cannot find a single place in the Bible where music is mentioned as a part of Heaven's environment after the fall of satan.⁴ I have asked numerous theologians about this. Most people respond to my statement by saying, "Well, Tommy, you remember what the angels sang at the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, don't you? They sang, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward men.'"

At that point I have to gently direct them back to the biblical passages in the Gospels. "No, if you read it carefully, you will see that the Bible doesn't say they sang. I really hate to mess up all our wonderful Christmas plays and holiday hymns.

It won't hurt a thing to let your little children dress up as little angels and sing in a Christmas cantata, so don't worry about it. I just want you to know what the Bible actually says."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:13-14).

Job 38:7 says, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The context clearly places this event at the very creation of our universe just before lucifer's fall.⁵ After the fall, I can't find any literal Bible reference to singing or music in Heaven. I don't have a problem with people who say, "Well, I had a vision and heard angels singing." I am just saying that I can't find it mentioned in the Bible once satan was ejected from Heaven.

If music fell when satan fell, then that explains why the bulk of the satanic influence in our world comes from the realm of music. Music is his venue, so we shouldn't be surprised that the first place problems often show up in most churches is in the area of music and worship. Obviously, not all music "comes from satan," but he exerts great influence through music. This also explains something else.

The Church spends countless hours crafting sermons, arranging music scores, and rehearsing choirs and singers to make sure they are just right. Yet no matter how much energy we spend pursuing excellence in those areas, I must tell you we will never compete with the world's symphony orchestras or the bands and artists featured on MTV or VH1. In fact, we are not supposed to compete in those arenas!

Before you slam this book shut and toss it in the garbage can, I want you to understand something:

Our music may never be as good as the world's music because our value system is different from the world's. We are not after perfection so much as we are after Presence.

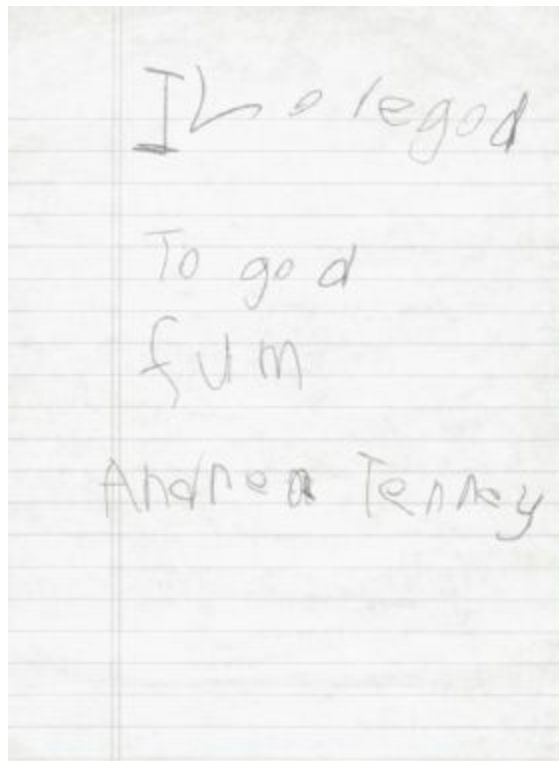
When the Church turns all its focus and energies toward the technical and professional perfection of our well-rehearsed music, our crafted sermons, and our tightly scripted services, we can unknowingly begin competing in the wrong arena. We need to stick with the one arena in which no one can compete with us—the art and ability to pull down the manifest presence of God. Technical perfection may win the praise of men, but only the anointing and glory of God can melt their hardened hearts.

At some point we've got to turn man's volume down and turn God's volume up. A Damascus Road encounter will turn a murderer like Saul into a martyr named Paul in less than 30 seconds. Perfected music won't do that, but perfected praise might attract Him, and His presence will!

WHY IS GOD ATTRACTED TO OUR PITIFUL PRAISE?

For all these reasons, I believe that music fell when satan fell. Could it mean that when God wants to hear that aspect of worship, He has to come to earth to hear it? I don't want to offend anyone, but I have to ask this question everywhere I go: Have you ever wondered why God is attracted to our pitiful praise?

The Lord used my youngest daughter to answer this question for me. Wherever I go, I carry a priceless work of art along with me in my briefcase. Sometimes I will pull it out in airports just to look at it and finger it. It isn't an oil painting, nor is it done in pastels or charcoal. It is what I call the "scrawled pencil on yellow legal pad" medium. The hand-scribbled text on this piece of art is usually hard for most people to read, but I have the fatherly gift of interpretation! Frankly, the writing is really pitiful, but you can just make out the words:



It's really pitiful by adult standards and it wouldn't mean anything to you, but it is priceless to me. Someday it will join a whole box full of other scribbled crayon masterpieces back home, and every one of them is special to me. What makes those things precious to me? It isn't that they are so artistically done, and it isn't the quality of the "writing" that endears these drawings to my heart; it is who drew them! It is my relationship to the child.

The crayon drawings from my children wouldn't mean anything to you, and the crayon drawings from your youngsters wouldn't mean anything to me. In the same way, the angels in Heaven who surround the orb of God's throne with ceaseless praise and magnificent worship scratch their heads

when suddenly the Deity leans forward and says, “Shhhh!” When they fall into an obedient hushed silence, He says, “I think I hear something....”

EVERYTHING STOPS WHEN GOD ALMIGHTY HEARS OUR PITIFUL REFRAIN

The six-winged seraphim were simply doing what they were created to do. They were crying out the praises of God in perfection and beating the atmosphere with their wings while covering their faces and their feet in humility. Then everything stops when God Almighty hears a pitiful refrain rising faintly from the chaos of the earth below: “He is holy, He is holy....” He quickly commands the angelic hosts, “Be quiet.” (I can almost hear the angels in the rear whisper to one another, “There He goes again.”)

Can you see the archangels Michael and Gabriel conversing, as they say, “I don’t know what gets into Him. Every time He hears them, He does this. That is such pitiful praise...”? We think we’re doing so well when we paint a masterpiece, when the quartet hits the final note in its best four-part harmony, when the choir brings the crowd to its feet. Meanwhile, the angelic hosts who once heard lucifer the archangel rattle the heavens with thunderous worship and breathtaking celestial music are saying, “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” (Ps. 8:4 NKJV).

Oblivious to every whispered question, God hushes the angels and says to Michael and Gabriel,

“Look, guys, I’m going to have to leave it with you.”

“Why? What is it, Lord?”

“Well, you see, I heard something that I just can’t ignore. I heard the song of the redeemed again.”

THE ALMIGHTY LEAVES HIS THRONE TO JOIN A HUDDLE OF PROSTRATE WORSHIPERS

In the twinkling of an eye, the manifest presence of God is transported from Heaven to the middle of a huddle of prostrate worshipers gathered in a tear-stained circle singing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord...” God leaves His magnificent throne of Heaven and comes to earth to be enthroned on the pitiful praises of His people. We may think our praise and worship services are wonderful while the angels in Heaven are saying, “I don’t understand. That is just a pitiful crayon drawing compared to what we do in Heaven.” God isn’t attracted by the quality of our worship or our musical ability. It is because of who we are. He is attracted because of His relationship to the worshipers. We’re His children!

I can almost hear Him explaining to Michael and Gabriel, “Now, I know they can’t sing or make the heavenly music you heard when lucifer was here. I know they can’t say it like you say it, but those are My sons and daughters.” Jesus had to explain it to the Pharisees too. He told them, “... Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?” (Matt. 21:16 NKJV).

Who can resist the sound of the lisping little voice of a two-year- old saying, “Daddy, I wuv you.” It isn’t the perfection of their diction that melts our hearts. We aren’t moved by the sheer oratorical skill of their delivery. It is the heart of simple passion that causes us to sweep that child up into our arms in a wave of emotion.

So when we lift up our “crayon drawings” to Heaven with the clumsily scrawled words, “I luv you God, fum Tommy Tenney,” He leaves the throne of Heaven and is literally enthroned upon our pitiful praise. God says, “It’s not how pretty they do it. It’s just that they are My offspring.” He would rather hear you stumble through a song with a voice like a cracked foghorn than to hear the six-winged seraphim surround Him with chants of “holy” in tones of heavenly perfection.

WE WILL SING A SONG THE ANGELS CANNOT SING

Music may have fallen from Heaven when the angelic worship leader was

ejected for rebellion, but God had a plan for restoring Heaven's music through His redemption plan for man. Satan isn't the only being equipped and anointed to sing to the Most High. Our praise and worship may sound pitiful to angelic ears, but the Bible says that when we enter that holy city, we will sing a song the angels cannot sing (see Rev. 15:2-3). When we enter singing the song of Moses and the song of the redeemed, the heavenly host is going to fall into a stunned silence for 30 minutes, as if they will be commenting, "We've never heard it like this."

Lucifer was cast out of Heaven because he wanted to illegally ascend to God's level and sit on His throne. God has decreed that the redeemed saints of the Lamb will be seated on the throne with Him—right where lucifer wanted to be and couldn't. God is literally going to use imperfect praisers to embarrass lucifer, the fallen morning star. Man, who was made a little lower than the angels, is going to be elevated higher than all the angelic host and will sit on the throne of God together with Him.⁶

JESUS SAID, "I THINK I FOUND ONE..."

Do you know what God eats when He's hungry? Worship. Do you remember the woman at the well? When Jesus told her about His living water and said that His Father was seeking true worshipers, she gave the answer He was looking for. She said, "I want that water." In that moment Jesus might have mused, *I think I found one. That is what I was waiting for.*

When the disciples came back, they said, "Lord, we've got Your Burger King for You," or "Here's Your McDonald's Big Mac, Master."

They were shocked when He said, "I'm not hungry. I've had meat to eat you don't know of." It was as if He were thinking, *You wouldn't understand it, but I've been receiving worship from a rejected woman at the well. I've done My Father's will and found a worshiper. After that feast, I don't need anything you have for Me* (see John 4:31-34).

God comes to earth because His growling hunger pains for worship draw

Him to the imperfect praise of His children, who say, “I luv You, Daddy.” He isn’t particularly impressed with our polished singing and multimillion dollar buildings. It is all pitiful by celestial standards, but it is precious to Him because He loves us.

“Red and yellow, black and white,

They are precious in His sight.

Jesus loves the little children of the world.”

He comes because we hold up childlike imperfect praise with hearts full of love—like a child reaching up and a Father reaching down.

He is out to populate Heaven with worshipers who can fulfill that missing part that has been absent ever since lucifer fell. Jesus auditioned the woman at the well in search of that “high note” of transparency and purity. He gave her the opportunity to answer a question for which He already knew the answer: Can you hit this note? He wondered, as He searched under the “rock of the human will” for a worshiper. Then He told the woman, “Go get your husband.”

She could have hidden her sin or covered her broken life with the fig leaves of a lie, but for once in her life she thought, *No, I know it’s not very pretty, but I’m going to tell Him the truth.* Then she said, “I have no husband.”

Jesus could no longer contain His excitement, and He interrupted her to say, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly” (John 4:17-18 NKJV).

This was the high note of transparency and purity He was looking for. Now He had something He could work with. He began to talk to her about the living water. By the time He was done, she was ready to abandon her water pots at the well.

She ran back to the village to tell the people she had previously avoided all about the incredible Man at the well. She was so transformed that the same woman whom the whole village had rejected now led them back to Jacob's well to meet the Source of living water. One conversation with the Master brought credibility to her—she had one worship encounter with Him, and the whole village listened.

GOD IS AUDITIONING HEARTS FOR THE CELESTIAL CHOIR

God is going to and fro in the earth right now, auditioning hearts to see who will become a true worshiper in His celestial choir. He isn't listening to the tonal quality of our voices or gauging our vocal ranges. Those things are unimportant to Him because His first concern is the song of the heart. Perhaps you are one of the many who are so desperate for an encounter with God that something inside you is pouring forth a passionate and hungry song of the heart. Can I tell you something? He is standing there right in front of you saying, "Keep singing. This is exactly what I've come for."

If you knew how close He is to you and how carefully He listens to every whispered amen and every crackle of your broken heart, you would be shocked. The only thing the Father actively seeks is worshipers. He loves and anoints the people whom most of us think are "important," like the preachers, worship leaders, and musicians, but what He really needs are worshipers. It makes me want to shout, "Come on Sister B, sing!" Don't worry, He has placed His ear to your heart to see if you can hit that note. Can you?

Father, we want an encounter with You that causes us to leave our water pots at the well of man's religion. We want an encounter with You that we cannot get over. Turn our rejection into acceptance and our dusty, dry wells into inner spring experiences. We want to give You the best part—we give You worship and praise, adoration and thanksgiving in Jesus's name.

Go on, worshiper—worship! He's listening!

God is searching for worshipers this very moment. It is the only thing that brings Him from Heaven to earth. It is the building material for His favorite house. Remember that worship is for Him; it is His best and favorite part. Isn't it time for us to encircle the One we love with unceasing worship and adoration?

Endnotes

1. Sister “B” is a fictitious name for a very real and precious woman of God whom I will never forget.
2. James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), s.v. “Sychar” (#G4965).
3. This is the “Tenney version” of John 4:9.
4. I believe music will be restored to Heaven when it is populated with the redeemed saints who alone can sing “the song of the redeemed” before the Lamb (see Rev. 14:3). In the meantime, God wants to take His seat among us on earth as we enthrone Him on our praises and the song of the redeemed.
5. Lucifer’s ministry and ejection from Heaven are described in Isaiah 14:12-15.
6. See Psalm 8:4-5; Ephesians 2:6; Second Timothy 2:12.



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