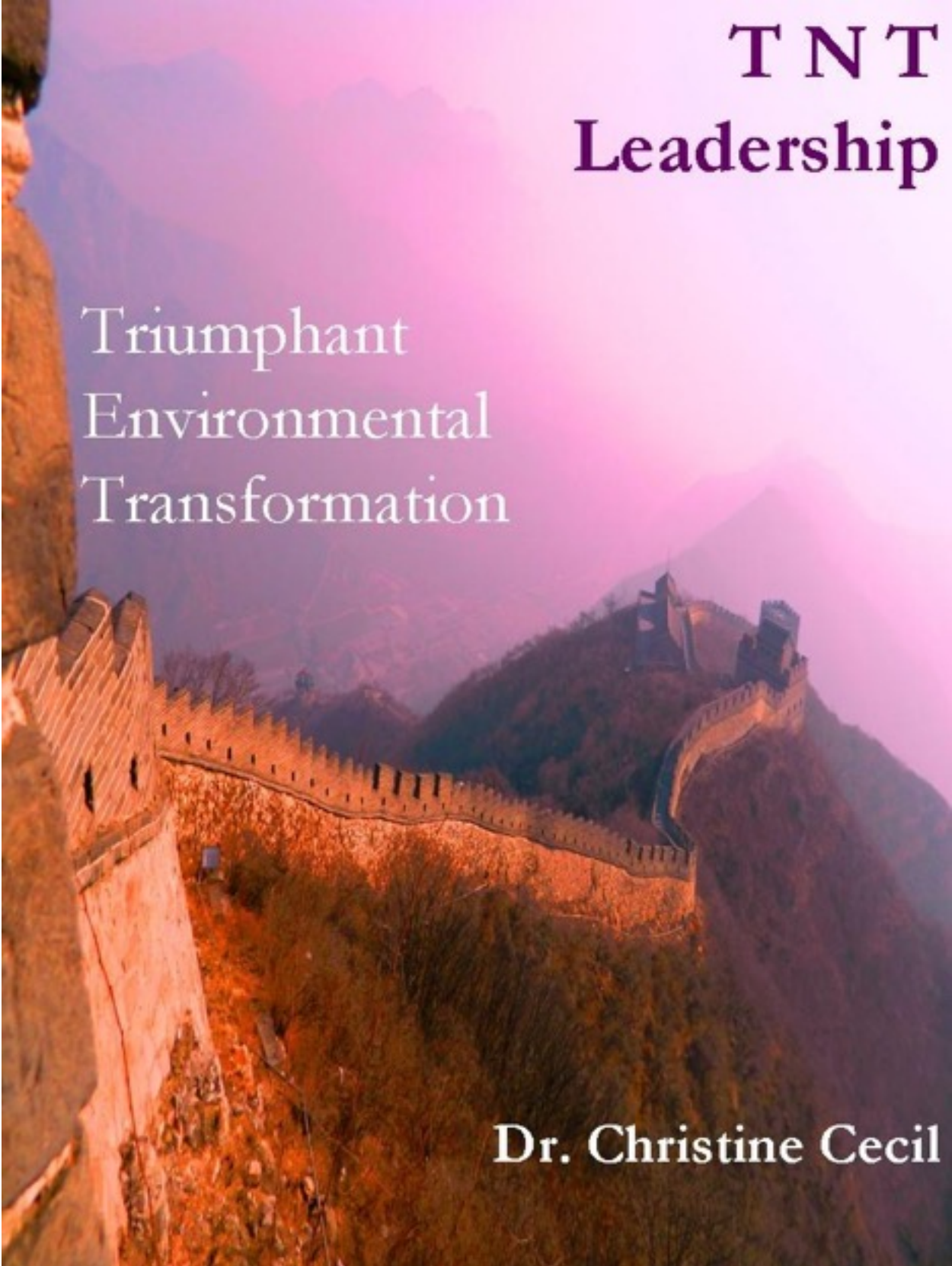




TNT Leadership

Triumphant
Environmental
Transformation

Dr. Christine Cecil

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ISBN: 978-1-5136-1942-2

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This book is for
Every person who wants to regain what was lost
By countries and companies and families
In every angry workplace
To stop the rat race, to cease the hectic pace
To win the human race

PREFACE

Once the Great Wall of China was built, the people rested comfortably, safe within that boundary. Yet, Barbarian hordes invaded China successfully no less than five times immediately following construction of the wall.

The attackers did not break down the walls. They did not dig under or climb over; they simply bribed the guards at the gates. Then, the Barbarians proceeded to plunder.

The work of people who build and maintain walls is much different than those who destroy and tear down. Builders must overcome critics, avert direct attacks, and stem the unceasing tide of erosion.

I needed only to observe a linen closet in disarray, a front lawn left untended, or city streets for years unpaved, to confirm the tendency toward disintegration and disorganization. Disorder calls for no skill. Change requires no special creativity, only passivity. Sprawl and a populous do not define a city.

Examine the walls of your life. Perhaps there are signs of wear. Weeds grow through the cracks. Perhaps once solid foundations have been reduced to mere piles of rubble.

Disintegration was a common disease in the time of Jesus. It's called leprosy. Lepers lose the ability to feel pain. This lack of sensitivity and inability to feel causes the body to deteriorate.

The disease of disintegration remains common today. I lack integrity. On the one hand, I say I'm a Christian and regularly attend church and worship the Lord. On the other hand, I'm a person of the world -- a businessperson, worker, mother, wife, and friend.

Integrity, like the word integer, is a word that suggests wholeness. Lives characterized by integrity are not compartmentalized; integrity is consistency between both personal and professional self. Integrity is about living my purpose. It's about knowing who I am, where I came from, where I am going and why I am here so as not to be blown about by the winds of every new idea.

Leaders who stem the tides of erosion build dynamic teams, teams capable of explosive accomplishment. These leaders win hearts, heads and hands to align and mobilize people toward shared goals that restore broken walls and repair shattered lives.

I wasn't that kind of leader. I didn't live my purpose. Fear paralyzed me. I was deluded about the foundation of my faith; I feared that if I reached out to others I'd be contaminated and lose my position seated in Christ at the right hand of the Father. The thought that I might lose my own salvation terrified me so I turned away from my own flesh and violated the second commandment to love my neighbors as myself.

Ideas can be insidious and subtly influence. I didn't witness because I didn't realize the revelation of the book of Romans. Nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

If you are excited about living a life of integrity and not being a "Sunday driver", then this book can teach you how to create change in the world outside of "church". The book contains a step-by-step process for evangelizing environments.

Evangelizing environments is the process of being and bringing Christ's love to transform a particular setting and set of human relationships. Christ promises His presence in the unity of Christian community. Christ promises to give strength to those who take the battle to the gates. When we walk in the gospel of peace, we drive out darkness and usher in the kingdom of light.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. (Psalm 24:7-10)

Broken down walls demand people who will stand in the gap. Are you one of those people? If so, can you imagine a better place for an "everlasting door" than a gap in the wall? Accept the invitation to restore the desolate places, to reclaim what was lost, to set the captives free. Accept the invitation to experience the power of TNT.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Many leaders don't seem to know whether to give employees a pat on the back or beat them over the head. They alternate blaming and shaming employees' vanity, with promoting and proclaiming their humanity. It just seems easier to pretend the numbers aren't down and make work a playground.

So, it's no surprise when employees get confused, frustrated, apathetic or angry. They don't know what they're supposed to do, why or how. They don't know if they're supposed to get ahead, get with the program, get team spirit, or just get out. And everybody is tired and wants to just get on with it.

One potential underlying reason for all this confusion, consternation and malaise may be the effect of paradox. It's that sinking, trapped feeling that comes with the idea that there are only two options, neither one is particularly appealing, and both options lead to the same place anyway¹.

Paradox creates problems. First, leaders appear and are often experienced by their followers as inconsistent, hence the phrase "not walking the talk". Next, followers, caught in the grips of paradox, often exhibit anxiety, anger, or apathy. And, leaders and followers are both drained of energy. Leaders who are either people or project oriented get confused about whether they should act with justice or mercy while trying to decide if they're here to serve others or themselves while basing their decision-making on past performance or future projections.

When leaders realize why their task is the relationship, the paradoxes are resolved and perhaps render greater results and repaired relationships. When apparent opposites are reconciled leaders may act more consistently, align followers more powerfully, and experience greater energy. The truth resolves tension. The truth clarifies confusion. The truth sets people free.

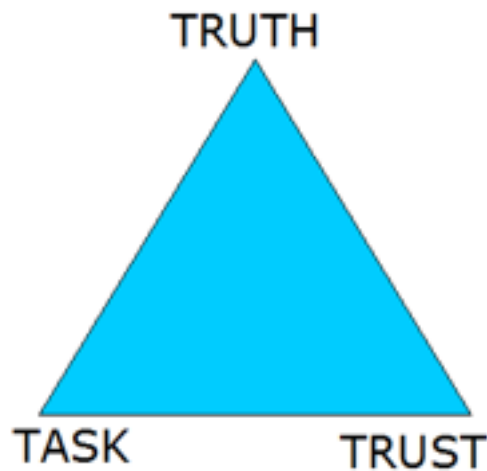
Table 1. Typical Leadership Problems and the Pervasive Paradigm with Accompanying Paradoxes

Problems	Leader Paradigm	Paradoxes
Leader Inconsistency Not walking the talk Because they're torn	What do you know?	Relationships or Results
Follower Anxiety, Anger & Apathy Not doing the job Because they're uninformed	What can you do?	Justice or Mercy
Leader and Follower Lack of Energy Because everybody's worn	Who do you serve?	Self or Other
	Where can you be?	Past or Future

Why Leaders Lead: Task or Trust/Projects or People

One paradox is the tension between concern for people or production. The false dichotomy between task and relationship leadership styles is both dispelled yet integrated in a uniquely Christian worldview of the purpose of leadership. That is, tasks and work exist to allow leaders to develop and display competence. Competence brings leaders into connection with others who trust based on the caliber of work performed together. Those tasks and trust are in turn, foundational to the ability to share the Truth with individuals – the truth about the situation, problems, and more importantly the Truth that all people are innately selfish, yet uniquely created, deeply loved, innately precious beings.

Figure 1. The Leader's Task is to Build Trust and Share Truth



The idea that it is a leader's task to build trust to share truth is grounded in key assumptions. First, leaders have a primary preference for one dimension over another: task completion, building trust relationships, or disseminating and revealing truth. Yet, a balance of all three is required. The second presumption is that task effectiveness precedes trust, and trusting relationships precede the ability to share truth. Third, the depth of the truth we can maximally disseminate is proportionate to the amount of trust we build through performing shared tasks.

This unique view of the purpose of leadership also resolves a possible paradox between the constancy versus relativity of Truth. In the Christian worldview, the Truth is not simply a thing; the Truth is a personality. "Jesus said I am the way the Truth, and the life." Therefore, when I lead people to truth, I lead people to a person -- a person who is constantly trying to come into relationship with us -- the Truth is constantly relating.

Albert Einstein, in his theory of relativity, provides a possible metaphor for this view of a constantly relating Truth. In Einstein's theory, the speed of light is constant. It never changes. Yet, as we observe and interact with the light, our view of the light constantly changes. That is, our view of the light is entirely relative to our position in or in relation to the light. The light is a person who is constant and constantly relating.

Leaders, possibly perceived as unpredictable, might take a lesson from the light. People are not created to define personal worth through the number of projects completed, the profits rendered, or the number of widgets produced. Neither are people designed to please others and derive self-worth from external accolades. Projects are not solely the point; they are platforms -- launching pads to lead people into the light. Projects are not purpose. The purpose is people -- to point people to Truth. In order to do that, a leader's standards are constant and the leader is constantly relating.

The leader's conduct, in the context of relational connections, reveals character. I had a supervisor who overlooked the poor performance of one of her direct reports. Her

behavior dishonored the effectiveness of the tasks, disregarded the truth, and actually worked to undermine trust. Her desire for likeability cannot be compared with the ability to earn and keep trust.

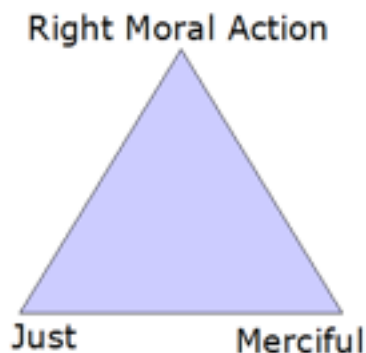
I worked with another leader who set policies and then violated them. He rewarded performance indiscriminately and appeared capricious. The larger pattern of his actions aligned with his overriding objective to consolidate power. He destroyed trust, disregarded the truth, and task effectiveness diminished.

When leaders realize their purpose is the passionate pursuit of Truth, they dispel the paradox between tasks and relationship. A leader's purpose is to walk in the truth, honorably complete tasks, and build trust with the overarching purpose to share truth.

Justice or Mercy: Act fair or Lead Compassionately

Walking in the Truth appears difficult. Many leaders are torn between the desire to act fairly or to act with compassion and generosity. Yet, neither justice nor mercy is a sufficient standard by which to measure leadership behavior. It is not enough to be fair or to be kind, or even both. Leaders are required to act right.

Figure 2: Right Moral Action Encompasses Justice and Compassion



The very word “right”, in Latin, is the word *legere* meaning to lead straight². Yet, you might argue that there is no right or wrong. Such a statement is irrational, illogical, and self-defeating (I once had a student tell me that there is no right or wrong. I simply asked him, “How do you know you’re right?”)

Leaders can know if their actions are right by analyzing their decision-making process and examining their motives³. Any action proceeds from some kind of resolution to take action. For example, before I eat an apple, I make the decision that I am going to eat

² Webster's New College Dictionary

³ Charles Finney How to change Your Heart. http://www.gospeltruth.net/1836SOIS/02sois_how2change_hear.htm

an apple. That resolution proceeds from a subordinate choice; the choice I make to achieve some end or attain some goal. For example, I choose to eat apples because they are full of vitamins. That subordinate choice may or may not proceed from a supreme choice, that is the choice I make simply because it is the right thing to do. I choose goodness for goodness sake.

For example, I can train you how to give negative feedback to someone. I can give you many tips and techniques to allow you to share bad information more politely and more effectively. However, if your belief that giving negative feedback is an unkind, undesirable process has not been in any way altered, all the techniques in the world won't be much help. You simply will avoid giving bad news.

In order to elaborate on the notion that beliefs impact actions, try this short demonstration. Hold out your left hand as if to receive an item in the palm of your hand. Look at your wrist and run your fingers along the soft skin, rich with veins. Imagine you have a deep and wide cut on this area. The wound is infected and festering with puss. Ugh! If I were to try and place a bandage over this infected wound, would it heal? It's unlikely the wound would heal unless I'm willing to dig in and scrape out the infection, cleanse the wound completely, and then place a bandage on the hurt.

It takes courage to clean out wounds. It feels lousy while you're doing it, but only a cleansed hurt will heal. This is the gift of feedback, loving someone enough to tell them the truth, in love. Once your beliefs about feedback and what you value change, then you'll see adjustment in your actions.

Action that proceeds from right motives is right action. Behavior that proceeds from a self-serving motive rooted in subordinate choice may or may not yield results, but it will not be right action. Self-serving action can render superior results and noble actions may render ineffective results. The reason is the litmus test for right action, not the results.

The implications of such statements are at least twofold. First, if my motives are selfish I can never be engaged in right moral action. I must then ask myself, how, as an innately selfish being, I might ever achieve right motives. Second, even though I can observe behavior and the effects or results of behavior, motives are much less readily discerned. Consequently, I should diligently avoid the propensity to judge others.

The impact of right moral action on dissipating the anxiety, apathy, and anger of followers is based in the fact that motive, means, and manifestations of power are inseparable. In other words, what leaders do, why and how they do it all impact followers. This is why your paradigm or belief system is so crucial to the work of environmental transformation. Anyone can teach you about change, but only one person can bring about change.

Figure 3. Means and Motive are as Crucial as a Leader's Manifested Actions



Furthermore, leaders who are purposeless, lack knowledge of strategy, and are unaware of the environments in which they find themselves will have followers who are apathetic, anxious, or angry.

Figure 4: Culture Trumps Strategy and Purpose Trumps Culture



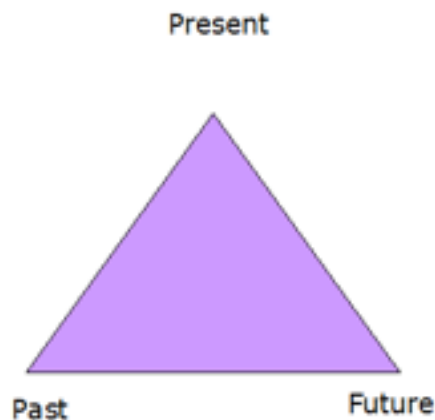
When people know what to do and how to do it, but don't know why, they're apathetic. When people know they're purpose and how to fulfill it but don't know specifically what tasks to accomplish, they get frustrated and angry. When people know what needs to be done and why, but don't know how, they feel anxious. When people know what they're supposed to be doing, how to do it and why they're doing it, they create aligned action.

When a leader attempts to passionately pursue truth, the means and manifestation of the power behind that purpose will vary. The motive will not. When motives are right, leaders act fairly and compassionately to allow followers to grow from past mistakes while planning for a fruitful future.

Planning Based on Past Performance Versus Future Projections

Many people experience guilt, shame and blame over what happened in the past. Others live in fear of what may happen in the future. Life and leadership are lived in more than mere moments. To remain purely in the present is to deny the past that developed and shaped me and to deny what God has done in my life. To deny the future is to deny what will be and to ignore my destiny. TNT is about yesterday, today, and eternity.

Figure 5. Appreciate the Past, Anticipate the Future, and Live Powerfully in the Present



In addition, leaders are concerned with what's going wrong as well as what's going right. Both are gifts. What's going right in my life is an opportunity for gratefulness and abundance that can be shared and bless others. What's going wrong is a gift that is shaping me and molding me, building my character and testing and strengthening me. What's going wrong is a directional indicator of where I can grow.

Leaders who observe behavior can help develop the gifts of their followers. Gifts are revealed through a patient process of listening, questioning, and helping others to see the Truth. This straightforward process is called five whys⁴.

When something is going wrong, TNT leaders ask why and keep on asking until the truth of the issue is uncovered. One why reveals a surface response, another why reveals a secondary concern. A third why results in anger. A fourth why leads to tears. Five whys reveal the Truth. The five whys work best when there is trust.

In the context of trusting relationships, followers are freed from protecting their pain with anger, anxiety and running away. They are able to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses. Pain clogs the pipes. Power pushes through anger past pain and lets people live powerfully in the present. When people are free to live powerfully in the present, they have more energy. With that energy, they can choose whom to serve.

⁴ Sandler, D. (2003). *You Can't Teach a Kid to Ride a Bicycle in a Seminar*. BayHead Publishing.

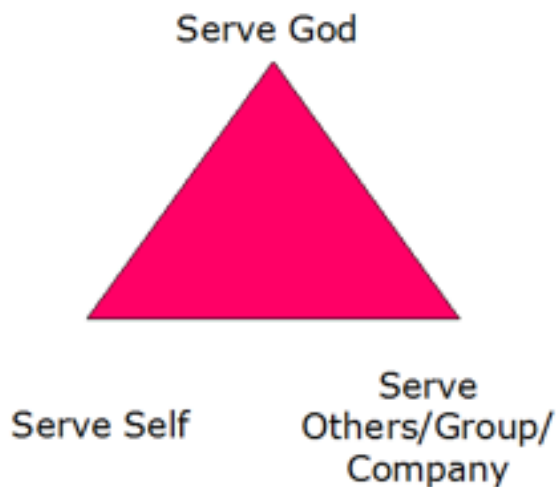
Serve Self or Serve Others

There seems to exist pervasive tensions between individuals and groups, self and others. However, as long as your motive is to serve yourself you're simply self-serving. Wrong motives may yield right results, but no action from a wrong motive can ever be right.

Readers may suggest that all behavior is inherently selfish. We're hard-wired to love, protect, hunger for ourselves. That may well be true. Yet, if we are hard-wired for violence and aggression, perhaps it's possible to remain peaceful. We're hard-wired to lust, covet, want, yet it is possible to remain faithful, share, and to shine in a world where the standard has become Mine! Mine! Mine!

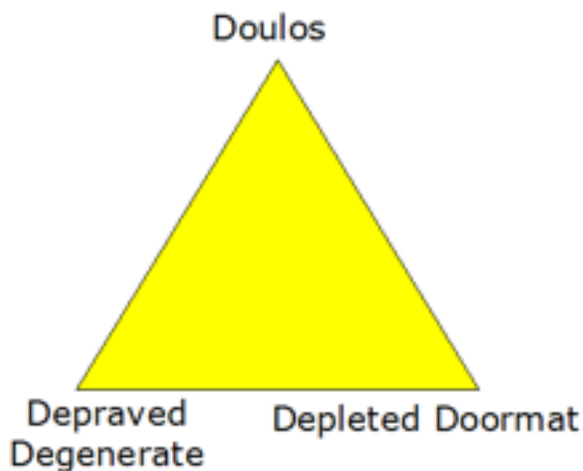
It is futility for the self to understand its self. We simply cannot heal ourselves. We can find others to help us untie the knots of our lives. Or perhaps, we can look beyond ourselves, beyond companies, or groups, or significant others, to an even greater force to take the pain and the suffering, all the knots, and weave them into a magnificent tapestry.

Figure 6: A Leader's Power is Predicated by Their Purpose



When leaders love themselves, they say what others want to hear. When leaders love others, leaders say what they think those people need to hear. When leaders love God, leaders say what God wants to be said. It's power, pure energy out to others, from God, through me – that's TNT.

Figure 7: TNT Leaders Don't Have to be Driven



A doulos is a servant. We all serve something or someone -- our families, our friends, our desires, our dreams. A doulos is someone freed from self to live as a servant of love. Leaders don't have to vacillate between serving others or satiating self. Leaders don't have to choose between being a doormat or bulldozer by running into others or getting run over. It's the freedom that comes from living in service to the living God. When I live to take care of my father's business, He takes care of mine. So, if some of our problems with leadership lie in paradoxes, perhaps the power for change resides in our paradigm.

ASSESS YOUR PARADIGM

A paradigm is simply an outstanding example. Paradigms are important because we become what we behold. The extent of what we see will determine who we can be. If we eye the apples of the world, we'll think their fruit is sweet and sooner or later we will eat. If we see beauty, goodness, and what's true, we become that too.

Paradigms are patterns to follow. The word literally means to show side by side. In the Christian faith Jesus Christ embodies the consummate paradigm.

What we look at we become. We are what we see -- that's why there's so much talk these days about vision and why there's so much smut on T.V. To change the world, teach people, show them who they can be. They learn best by looking at Jesus shining through me.

I had a paradigm of how I believed people change and grow in Christ. First, they experienced some crisis or pain that showed the need for pain. Then out of fear and hurt, they turned to God. God then convicted them of their sin, broke them and brought them to their knees, then, through the washing of the word of God built them back up again in the power of the Holy Spirit. I think that much of my paradigm still holds true. Yet, I forgot one crucial ingredient.

In the 1970's, a country and western singer crooned a ballad called "Me and Jesus". It went something like this..."Me and Jesus, got our own thing goin'. Me and Jesus got it

all worked out. Me and Jesus don't need anybody to tell us what it's all about." That's how I felt. Me and my do-it-yourself Jesus made it just fine.

It wasn't that I didn't need doctrine. I just didn't want anyone to have authority over me. I didn't trust any concept of community. I lived in pride and worshipped a version of Jesus I created for myself. If I couldn't be God, I determined to be the next best thing, and no one else could tell me anything.

What I have come to realize is that the fear and pain signaled a need to change. The Holy Spirit in a loving relationship with my faith community, made me able to change. I had a safe relational setting that made me able to change.

- Surrounded me with love
- Stayed and never left me
- Spoke words of life and never judged me
- Served me
- Sacrificed for me
- Stable and steadfast, he shared with me

People who love us can represent the heart, head, and hands of Jesus. Loving relationship, fueled by the Holy Spirit, can give the strength needed to change. People change in relationship. People change in community. People change with the power of God's word.

You've heard it said, that as a man thinks so he becomes. So, if I can change your thinking I can change you and the world around you. If that's true, what do you need the person and work of the Holy Spirit to do for you?

Recently, I had a conversation with an individual who told me he had a problem with pride. He said "I'm the head of the household. I need to change and figure this out or my family won't work". I tried to reason with him saying that you can't just think differently, you need to acknowledge that it's not a head problem, it's a heart problem. I tried to persuade him logically and rationally that thinking differently was not going to solve his problems. What irony, using head logic to persuade someone that their head logic is not working.

Many Christians equate witnessing with talking. I think bearing witness includes talking and also means that other people witness the light we bear. Somehow hamsters might provide a clue as to this kind of leadership Jesus intended us to do. I have a scientist friend who conducts research for the purpose of helping people who are sight impaired to be able to sleep. It seems that without visual cues from the light, a person's entire rhythms are disrupted.

When a person who cannot see is exposed to the light, light excites molecules and changes the actual shape of tiny molecules in the person's brain. The light ultimately sets the person's internal clock. The light brings the person back into balance.

So, my friend studies the effect of light on hamsters and what he found has applications for evangelization. Light particles act like little packets of electromagnetic radiation; light is absorbed in discrete units. Therefore, there exists reciprocity between duration and intensity of exposure to light. In other words, a big burst of light for a short period is as effective as a little flash of light over long periods to help bring these creatures back into balance. A lack of balance often signals the need and creates the desire for change.

What makes people want to change?

In my life, pain and fear and frustration made me want to change. I hurt. I didn't want to hurt anymore. While pain prepared me for change, pain wasn't my path to freedom. Pain was the pointing device but not the enabling device.

I had a dream one night. Holding my infant son in my arms, I walked through an underpass. Out of the shadows, unsavory characters started to accost and harass me.

A clean-cut gentleman came alongside me, took my elbow, and gently steered me through the darkness. I accepted his help because there seemed to be no other choice.

Yet, when we emerged from the tunnel, he steered my child and I into a waiting van. The van sped up into a deserted region, into a mountain compound. My child and I lived as hostages there for years. Imprisoned, we suffered abuse and faced starvation.

Then, years later, the captors rewarded my good behavior with a brief furlough into the little country town below the mountain compound. Yet, somehow I offended my captors. A vicious and violent enforcer came to punish me for some trivial disobedience. He raised a lead pipe to beat my and my child about the head.

I didn't run. I didn't try to flee. Instead of longing to be free, relief washed over me when my original captor came to rescue me. I surrendered to the one who bound me for years and years. I clung to what had caused me so much heartache and tears.

Psychologists have a term for the behavior I exhibited in my dream; it's called the "Stockholm Syndrome". In a well-documented bank robbery, in Stockholm Sweden, the criminals held a young woman hostage for days. When her ordeal concluded, the young woman, released, married one of the terrorists.

In order to survive, the young woman ingratiated herself to her captors. She humanized herself so they wouldn't kill her. In making herself dear to them so she could live, they became dear to her.

I suspect that there are many people living as prisoners of the Stockholm Syndrome. We're holding onto our old familiar fears because they steered us to safety some time in the past. These fears are costing us productivity. We're living far below our capability. They suck our energy and our vitality. The thing to do is to want to get free. Safety and freedom are not the same things. Yet, people need to feel safe to get free. This

freedom and safety may not necessarily be a change of circumstance or situation; it's a change in relation that is the conduit for revelation.

What Makes People Able to Change?

One of the most powerful stories of a changed life is in the Old Testament. In Job 42:5-6, Job says, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes." There is simply no substitute for a face-to-face encounter with the Almighty God to change a life.

In the New Testament, the approach is the same. Jesus appeared to the woman at the well. His words went right to the heart of what troubled this woman. She changed and the entire city changed as a result.

I've often wondered why God, who at any time, could reveal Himself to men, didn't just zap down here, blind us all like He did to Paul and get us all saved. What I overlooked is that Paul couldn't see until He came into community.

After being released from a German concentration camp, Corrie Ten Boom went back to witness to those who caused her so much pain and anguish. She didn't shout in the streets, send them leaflets, or even preach. She lived with the people God wanted her to reach.

In another dream, I'm trying to give birth and I'm holding a key. I'm accosted again by four hoodlums; they to wrestle the key from my hands. This time I ran from them all. I held tight to the key and ran into the street. I approached a big mail truck for help. There were three drivers in the truck. I pounded on the windows to be let in. Then, I woke up.

You're trying to give birth to something new, a dream, a promise of what you can be. Those old fears are fighting your flight to freedom though they know you hold the key. Your best bet is to run to the big three – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The message being sent by the mail truck is the sacrificial love, the power of the Trinity.

In the old days, mail came by pony express on long rides through rugged terrain. Then there came a train, after that the telegraph, and the plane. Now mail flies through fiber optics and on the internet. I think we can send messages even faster and clearer yet. We need to find new ways to deliver the mail.

Excruciating pain, frustration, loneliness, and depression are all symptoms of the need for change. The word depression literally implies a feeling of being pressed upon. While these difficult hardships make people ready to change, I think wanting to change requires the hope that change is even possible. I think the desire to change comes from a promise of what can be through connectivity.

TNT Leadership and Environments that Change Lives

If you're surrounded by individuals or maybe even a company that's experiencing some kind of pain such as economic losses, health issues, hardships perhaps these are all symptoms and signals of the need to change. Like a body part that's bruised and sore, the pain is a signal or a symptom. Pain is not the problem. Whatever is causing the pain is the problem.

If a leader treats the symptoms without addressing the underlying issues, it's like masking a major medical malfunction with medication. It's irresponsible and harmful.

If the surgeon leaves the patient with no hope and faith in the possibility of recovery, the prognosis is equally poor. Any doctor will tell you that people who believe that they will get well, often do.

And, if a leader, like the surgeon, cuts deep into old wounds and then leaves the patient without follow-up and home care, the results are worse than if the surgeon had never cleansed the wound.

Pain signals a need for change. Faith and hope help people want to change. Loving, supportive, safe environments filled with the light of Christ make people able to change.

I believe that a safe environment full of love and peace and calm is crucial to allow people to grow and change. In poor soil, even the best tree may rot. Yet, in good ground, even the most infected root may recover and heal.

Yet, good soil alone is not enough. The rich soil combined with fresh water, bathed in sunlight, allows the tree to thrive. The Father is the soil, the son is the light, and the Holy Spirit is the water that supports transformed lives to become rooted in love.

I've been to many, many workshops exploring reasons why people don't change. If leadership is about creating transformational change, I am infinitely more interested in why people do change and how to help them to change.

The origin of the word transform is from trans meaning change and morphe meaning form. Here's a few things that seem to connect with the ability to change.

Disciplined Attention	Trying new things	Knowledge
Absence of Fear	See change is valuable	Optimism
Not preoccupied with	Habitually stretching	Strength
Social Conformity	Education	Long-Term Thinking
Confidence	How to Implement	Vision
Examined Lives	Mindfulness	
Learning from Experience	Faith	

People change in relationship. People are transformed through trusting relationships and the truth. People are changed when they encounter the Spirit of the Living God.

Pam Farrel, the author of Men are Like Waffles, Women are Like Spaghetti, tells a story about her friend who was not a Christian. One day Pam and her friend were supposed to go to the beach together and Pam's husband was late bringing home the car so they could go.

Pam's husband arrived late, but with an armful of roses. Pam's friend asked, "Does your God make him bring home flowers?" "Yes", Pam Answered. "Well, then, that's a God I want to get to know". It seems that people change behavior when they change the focus of their lives.

Most of us are born selfish. We are focused on our own needs, wants, and drives. As we grow older, many of us develop the strength and wisdom to set aside our own desires to see the needs of other people. But either extreme of serving self or serving other is incomplete. Our desire to serve God while loving our neighbors as our self, will bless God, fulfill us, and grace other people.

People change because they are in pain and for the promise of something better. People change when they see powerful examples. People change in loving relationships. Jesus changes everything. Forgiveness changes everything.

Some ways I've seen people change is to get a solid dose of the Truth and a renewed mind. I've seen people change when they got balanced. Balance brings stability and security. Balance brings strength to stand.

Any imbalance is dangerous. When I make other people my life purpose, I care more about what other people think of me than what I was born to be. I constantly prove my worth through connectivity. I deny the reality that people who know their worth don't have to prove it through other people's perceptions of their personality.

When I make projects or even a profession my life purpose, I define my life by what others think of what I do rather than a calling that's true. I constantly prove my worth through activity. I disregard the truth that people who know their worth don't have to prove it through other people's perceptions of their projects.

It seems that many people trying to display their power, get stuck between the false dichotomy of prove it or lose it. When it comes to power, if you find you have to prove it,

prepare to lose it. Here's the reality: Real power is not in passivity, or activity, or even connectivity. Real power comes from being the person God created you to be.

When you live God's purpose for you, your competence and the quality of your connections are the proof of your character. Perceptions of value are not based in resources or possessions. In fact, various resources may cloud, clutter, or cause clamoring rather than reveal a calm, composed, compassionate character.

Power does not come from having the things I want. Power is in becoming what I want the world to be. Power is Jesus living in and through me. The ends and means of leadership are inseparable. I cannot create unity through strife; peace is sown in a heart of peace. I cannot generate love through fear; perfect love casts out all fear. All that is promised to me, I must become in practicality. I need to be what I have to say.

The power to change comes when people stop making themselves the center. The power to change comes when people make Christ the center of their lives.

J. Vernon McGee tells a story of an Evangelist who was passing out tracts to passersbys on the street. One man accepted the tract and then gave it back, saying simply, "I can't read. What is this?" The evangelist said, "It's a tract describing the love of Jesus Christ who came to save and serve." The simple man looked the evangelist up and down, " Well, I may not be able to read your tracts, but I can read your tracks." I look at you and what you do and then we'll see if this saving servant business is really true."

A problem well-defined is a problem half solved. Here's the bottom-line, when it comes to sharing the Gospel, sure you can give it. But can you live it?

When probing the reason why more American Christians don't seem to be actively winning people and places to Christ, there seem to be a few issues -- the way we walk, why we do or don't witness, and the way we witness. Some of the most angry, fearful, bitter, gossipy, backbiting individuals are people who have prayed the sinners prayer, attend church regularly, pray in private and even witness in public; I know because I've been that person. I didn't have the fragrance of joy, peace, or love. I was driven to complete the task at hand.

All my life, I'd been driven. Racing 70 miles an hour on a deserted road, I looked down to change the music and the car edged off the asphalt and into the dirt. I overcorrected and flipped the car twice and landed upside down on a utility pole. I was in the middle of nowhere, hanging in a totaled car. Sunglasses, minutes before, beside me on the front seat, now lay mangled in the dirt.

Lonely. Determined. High speed. Flipped out. Upside down. Wrecked. Unbelievably, I crawled out and kept right on going -- my own way. I had a hole in my heart that couldn't be filled. I had so much fear that I couldn't be still. I was angry and afraid. I was afraid I wouldn't have enough time, enough smarts, enough friends or

even enough food. I figured if I worked hard enough and long enough, people would love me, or at least need me, and hopefully never leave me.

I started college at 16, finished my doctorate well before 30. I was the youngest vice president, responsible for a payroll of over 80 million dollars. I had a beautiful home and a loving family. Prestige, perks, and power! I was driven straight to the top. I didn't know I was on a roller coaster headed for a big drop.

I didn't notice that everyone on the executive team was divorced except for one other couple. I didn't really care when my employee begged me to allow her to resign. She was incompetent, so I fired her and found another person who could produce.

Because if you don't produce, your expendable. If you don't drive to the goal, you might get run over. If you don't deliver, you're downsized. If I'm downsized, does that mean I'm thinner? Not me, I'm a winner. But I was the go-to-girl and in the driver's seat, or was I?

Being driven was a part of me, so I really didn't see any problem with my three-year old daughter spending 12 hours in daycare. So what if I drove half way home before I realized I'd forgotten to pick her up? I was thankful when someone else potty trained her, and I laughed when she marched around the house saying "It's all my fault. It's all my fault." Completing tasks consumed me so that I even forgot to sing Happy Birthday to my little girl at her party, and I consumed so much food that I weighed 210 pounds.

I'll tell you how driven I was. When I was pregnant with our first son, I was hospitalized for exhaustion and continuous vomiting. I worked the lap-top and cell phone from my hospital bed and worked a 12 hour day the next day. I can't remember the first year of our son's life. I didn't want to rest. I just wanted to be the best. I was driven.

I couldn't see the needs of my small son and I couldn't see the sin in my life. I couldn't see that the worry, and the anger, and the impatience, all separated me from people and a God who loves me. I couldn't see that sin is trying to do for myself what God wants to do for me, and I couldn't see how my drive to succeed polluted my witness for Christ. Oh yes, I've been a Christian since before I can remember. I've prayed the sinner's prayer more times than I can count. On the road to the successful Christian life and powerful Christian leadership, I drove right past the real work of walking in a way that would win others to Christ.

Old Testament TNT

If the problem today is an inability to lead others to Christ, perhaps the greatest need is fruit and freedom in the lives of people who are Christians. What we need is greater holiness and clear identification that we belong to Christ and a heaven focus in everything that we do. If not, we will be in rebellion to God and we will be consumed.

A reading of 2 Kings 2:19-24 explains this cycle of the lack of fruit. In the first miracle Elisha performed after Elijah was translated, Elisha took the mantle of his master and divided the water as Elijah had done before him. In Elisha's second miracle after the other prophet's translation into heaven, Elisha saved a city from polluted water. The men of the city reported that the water looked pleasant, but the water was bad and the ground, barren. So, Elijah took a new bowl of salt and purified the water source. After the miracle, Elisha proceeded to Bethel. During his journey he was accosted by rebellious youths who mocked the man of God. Bears then mauled the disrespectful teenagers.

In my opinion, the story is full of meaning for our times. The bad water signifies two things: a lack of connection with the Holy Spirit and a lack of truth. The barren ground connotes a lack of spiritual fruit. The new bowl with salt in it signifies a call for the sons and daughters of God to be purified vessels. The journey to Bethel indicates that we are pilgrims. We are strangers in a strange land -- in the world but not of the world. We need to focus on our homeland. Elisha's baldhead boldly pronounces that Christians should be clearly identifiable in service of the Lord. The youths symbolize our stiff-necked rebellion to the kingdom and rulership of Christ in our lives. The bears are simply our sins, tearing us apart; they wrench us from one another, and separate us even further from the Truth that is pure living water in Jesus Christ.

Bad Water

The water was bad. The problem in the city was that the water contained death and barrenness. The water was not pure. The water ran cloudy not clear.

As Christians, we are supposed to be pure and we are supposed to be flowing. We are called to holiness and we are commissioned explicitly by our Lord to share our faith freely with others.

Yet, many people who know Christians, experience us as anything but Holy. My non-Christian students often see themselves as principled and carrying moral power and they're often appalled by Christians who act immorally, selfishly, and well, secularly. It's getting harder and harder to tell the good water from the bad. It is no wonder people are confused, and God is not the author of confusion.

I look up into the darkness of night. As I gaze at the stars, I wonder which are satellites and which stars are real. I wonder what in the darkness is man-made and what is God's creation. I am confused about the direction of the North Star because there are just too many lights in the sky.

One of my students was once a Baptist minister and a former Chaplain in the military. Now, the Vice President of a local non-profit organization, he asked me to help him establish a program for spirituality in the workplace. I told him I would be happy to help. I would gladly establish a program that led people to the clear sparkling refreshing waters of Christ, "Jesus said I am the way the truth and the life. No man comes to the

father but by me”, but I could not participate in offering people a variety of religious teachings. Somehow, it is too easy to get confused, and I didn’t want to lead them to a polluted well. He declined my offer of assistance.

This man called himself a Christian. This man was once a Baptist pastor. When employees came to him for spiritual or occupational direction, I wonder what he offered them to drink and which way he pointed.

When United States Treasury agents want to become adept at identifying counterfeit money, they don’t spend time studying the rip-offs; the copies are too quickly changing and there are too many different sources of imitation. Rather, they study what’s authentic and original. They know the original so well that no copy can pass their test. How well do you know both the source and the summit of your power as a Christian leader? How well can others distinguish the Spirit of the Living God on the inside of you?

Christ said, “ I set before you today life and death, choose life”. How can others choose pure water when there’s no clear distinction between the Truth and muddled principles? I think people are thirsty and I want to be a water carrier. To do so, I must live a fruitful life and encourage others to bear fruit as well.

Barren Ground

In our story of Elisha’s miracle, the indicator that the water was poisonous was the lack of fruit. The ground could not produce. No fruit is a clear indication of bad water. We simply cannot bear fruit without the Holy Spirit. “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Separated from the Spirit of God, we aren’t bearing fruit.

I see caring Christian people stressed-out, burnt-out, mach 5 with their hair on fire. I’ve been one of those people. I only realized the extent of my exhaustion when encountering someone just a little more on the edge than myself.

I entered the Hallmark store to buy a Beanie Baby for my daughter; it’s a small plush toy that sparked a craze in collectible bears. Standing in line, a hurried gentleman huffed and murmured, grumbled and shifted his weight. He wanted the world to quickly know his impatience.

I sensed his rush and offered to let him go in front of me. He blew up! He ranted at me and raged against the clerk behind the counter. He oozed anger and angst.

Shocked! I couldn’t understand how one small token of generosity could so bitterly impact this caustic man. The scary part of our bizarre interaction hit me when I realized how much I resembled him.

I wore a pager, a cell phone, an electronic organizer and they all beeped. I pushed and shoved my way through life, clawed and connived and crawled over people. I simply didn't care who had to pay. I wanted my way. Now! What I failed to see that I lived my life with self at the center and God on the fringe. I worked frenetically fruit that was anything but Holy.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galations 5:22-23). What we Christians fail to see is that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifest when we walk in the Spirit. When we put our Father's business at the very center of our lives, we become pillars of peace. When we put trusting the Lord at the top of our to do list, we shift from harried to Holy. Yet, we offer many excuses for why we don't bear fruit and evangelize.

The first reason people may not evangelize is they don't know it's a command from Christ. Jesus said go and make disciples of all nations. Yet, Christians may not think they're called to spread the good news; that's the job description of pastors and priests.

Perhaps some Christians don't want to be about their father's business because they only know the costs and not the benefits. They aren't aware that the person who gives up their life for the Lord's sake shall find it. Perhaps some Christians don't evangelize because of their emotions. They feel scared and worry that others will ridicule them. They feel alone and unsupported. They feel unworthy, worthless, and that their efforts won't make any difference.

Another reason people may not evangelize effectively is they think it's an event instead of a way of life. Perhaps they think they got their evangelism ticket punched when they went to a street rally or canvassed the neighborhood with invitations to Easter service. They see evangelization as something distinct from life; like church, evangelization, for them, becomes an event you go to rather than an everyday occurrence.

Or, for many Christians they pretend to be constrained by rules that prevent public proclamations of faith, and delude themselves that their work has no bearing on eternity. I once had a devout Christian tell me that the topic at hand had no bearing on Truth with a capital "T" to which I replied, "Everything is about Truth with a capital "T".

Another reason why people may not evangelize effectively is they think they already know how and have armed themselves with a thousand scripture verses and can quote them on a moments notice. This Christian evangelist is similar to a sales person who has a lot of product knowledge without much ability to assess the needs of a customer. The salesperson approaches the prospect and bombards the prospect with all the details and desirable features of the product. The salesperson doesn't listen. The salesperson doesn't probe for needs or pain or problems that the product will solve. The salesperson simply positions the product and expects the prospect to buy without knowing the prospect well enough to say why. Hitting people over the head with propositional truth that doesn't match the evidence of our lives isn't effective evangelization.

Now, you may not appreciate the sales man analogy or like the thought of Jesus product placement. Yet, Paul says, “we must be all things to all people that we may win one to Christ”. This book is about your purpose as a Christian and your real work of leading other people to the Truth of Christ. I think it will show you how to make evangelization an every day occurrence rather than an event. There may be a million reasons not to evangelize. Nevertheless, every Christian is called to task to work worthy of their calling. When you do that, you will be shaken up, and poured out.

Bowl of Salt

I was talking with a woman who is a silk painter. She uses three mediums to create an array of colors in her creations. The first substance she uses is alkaline; when she places anything like ammonia, alcohol or vinegar, or lemon juice on the fabric, it repels the paint. When she places wax on the silk, the paint is blocked and stopped completely from spreading. When she places salt on the silk, the salt attracts the paint and draws it in. Salt attracts and enlivens the colors. Salt enhances and magnifies.

Elisha said, “Bring me a new bowl and put salt in it”. Clearly, an old bowl cannot be used to purify. It’s ironic that I am an earthly vessel of clay that contains the power of God once I am washed in the word.

This causes a real dilemma because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and yet I’m supposed to “be perfect with the Lord. The Beatitudes promise us that purity of heart enables us to see God. I believe that pure motives allow us to see God in every person we serve. Like Mother Theresa who had no ulterior motive but to love and cherish the dying on the streets of Calcutta, if my motive is to embody the love of Christ in every situation, I can see Jesus in the spiritually dead of our post-Christian nation.

Then Elisha went to the source of the water and cast in the salt. We need to be cast out instead of clumping together in our cozy pews. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”. (Matthew 5:16)

How often do you put truth on display so that observers can feel, taste, see, and hear the difference between the world and the Truth? “For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt”. (Mark 9:49) Salt stings. Salt preserve. Salt flavors. What good is salt if it loses it’s savor, it can no longer preserve. “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”. (Luke 14:33-35)

We've lost our salt when we were destined to shine. Oh, to reclaim our rightful position as God's regents. "And those who turn many to righteousness shall shine like the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever."

Bethel

I think many of us have relinquished our right and responsibility to turn others to righteousness because we're confused about where we're going and how to get there. We forgot that the Road to Bethel is a three-step process. The first stop on the road to Bethel is the process of justification. Without the law, we wouldn't even know we are sinners. Psalm 19 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul". In light of the law, we know we are unworthy to enter into the presence of God.

I've heard it argued that it's not fair to hold the world accountable for a law comprised of 10 rules they may never see and hear. Yet, God clearly reveals Himself to all men through creation. So, in the plight of our own devastation we look for a way of salvation. Everyone wants to know how to avoid hell and head to heaven.

Once we've relished the concept of grace, we get confused. We assert that we are no longer under the law. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster"(Galatians 3:24-25). Because "by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39) we throw out the law of our Heavenly Father once we've got the baby Jesus. We forget that the key is three.

Figure 8: The Trinity Testifies to the Truth



The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him. Saved by grace, I relish God's mercy. Yet I'm caught in a pre-destination double-bind. If I am elected to receive mercy and salvation despite all my sinning ways and other people aren't, then perhaps God is petty and prejudicial. I vacillate between snippets of scripture: "God is no respecter of persons". Yet, He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He promises that "whosoever will, may come" to Him, and it's His desire that "not one would perish, no not one". Yet,

“whom He foreknew, He chose before the foundations of the earth”. Confused and paralyzed, I choose not to evangelize because I think that he came to set the captives free and I’m not sure what that has to do with me.

On the other hand, if I am not elected, predestined, and chosen before the foundation of the earth, then I chose God. Therefore, I am more righteous than others who do not choose God. When I place myself in the driver seat of electing, I question my own salvation because if I chose God, I can un-choose Him and might someday lose Him. So I don’t witness and evangelize because I’m afraid of losing my own salvation.

Pre-destination or precarious salvation -- either way, I find myself paralyzed in great consternation and what I need is revelation. It is all God. He creates in me the desire to both will and do His good pleasure. It’s His power that saves me. It’s His good pleasure to transform me. Every good and perfect gift is from God. A work He has begun, He is faithful to complete. He is the author and finisher of my faith.

It’s God’s will that not one person would perish and He chooses to work through His people. Instead of wrestling with limited understandings of pre-destination, I need to get got busy living a Holy life and helping others. I’m supposed to go out to the highways and the byways and bring everyone to the feast.

A friend gave me a t-shirt that somewhat resembled the logo of the popular reality television show “Survivor”. Only, the words had been changed. Instead of saying, “outwit”, “out play”, “out last”, the shirt read “soul survivor -- out witness”, “out pray”, “out fast”.

We are His witnesses. We are bearers of the Truth. We are chosen. There is no savior other than Him. He declares it. He shows it. Our eternal destination is secure because none can deliver out of His hand. Salvation is the work of God. Because He saved me, like Isaiah, I can say, “Lord, here I am”.

For any baldhead worth their salt, the second stop on the road to Bethel is to be used by God while becoming conformed to the character of God. Sanctification is not how we prove our worthiness for salvation; it’s the proof of our salvation. We are called not because we are good but so we can do good.⁵

Yet, in the passionate pursuit of holiness, our balance becomes precarious. The extremes dilute our witness and make evangelization largely ineffective.

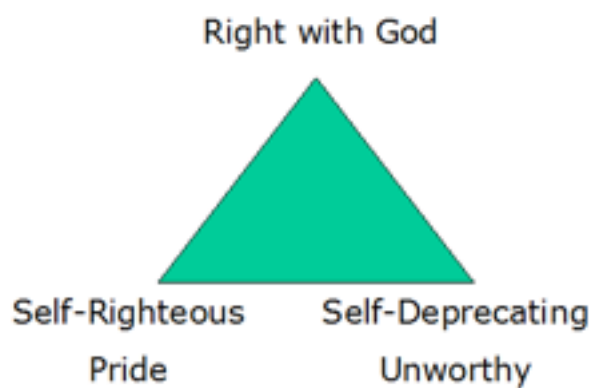
The first extreme is to ignore the necessity for sanctification and simply absolve our selves of the aspiration to be Holy. Somehow, I think this happens when we equate liberty with license. We even cite scripture saying that we no longer serve the law because the law was created for man. Man was not created for the law.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee’s Bible Bus Radio Program

Galatians 3:27 tells us to “Put on Christ”. Yet, instead of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, we seize what pleases us. Confusing such license with liberty in Christ is anything but Holy.

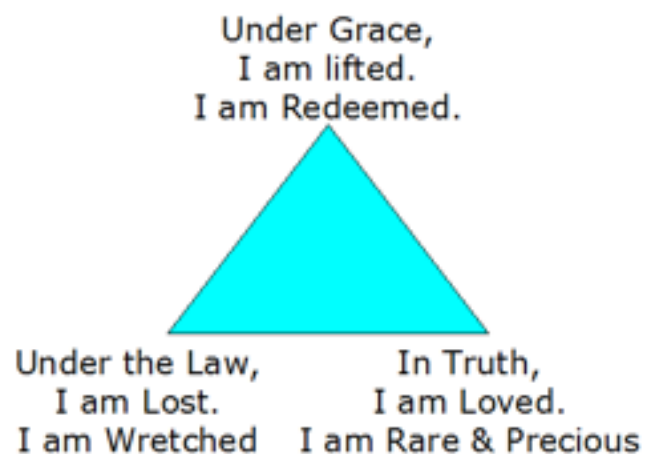
Then there are others of us who forsake God's will and flounder in a life of pleasure without purpose. I tell myself that I live my life for the Lord. Yet, I am really concerned about making myself look good. For those of us who are zealous without discernment, we encounter the danger of becoming holier than thou. I can easily become judgmental rather than trying to save people from judgment.

Figure 9: TNT Leaders are Righteous in Christ



It is only in the righteousness of Christ that anything can be accomplished. The law points me to my sin and my utter helplessness to achieve any righteousness. The law leads me to know my need for justification. Grace is the source of that justification and out of his mercy springs my desire to serve. As I serve, I am conformed to the image of my creator.

Figure10: Grace and Truth Fulfill and Surpass the Law



Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh. They are Holy but not Holier than thou.

There are three stops on the road to Bethel. First, we desire to escape Hell. We're a bunch of lawbreakers, liars, with deceitfully wicked hearts and all our righteousness is as filthy rags. Yet God, in His infinite goodness gives us a get out of jail-free card known as justification through Christ Jesus. The second stop on the road is the process of sanctification. Because we love our Lord and are so awed by His goodness to us, we desire to serve Him and obey His commandments. This process of obedience and desiring greater holiness is called sanctification. The third stop, when we have been sanctified, is the opportunity to be glorified and, after being conformed to the image of Christ, it culminates in our communion with Christ in Heaven.

Figure11: A Christian Pilgrim's Progress



The process of serving is the process of sanctification and the fruit of service is the third stop on the road to Bethel. Glorification is a servant's reward because the greatest of all shall be the servant of all.

We are sinners who surrender, serve and ultimately we sing the praises of our Lord with Him in heaven. Hebrews 8 tells us that some day God will write His laws on our hearts. He will be merciful to us in our unrighteousness and remember our lawless deeds no more.

Cherish His law, hunger for holiness, dispel the darkness with deeds, and bask in His abundant infinite, unsearchable, awesome mercy. If we try to evangelize in any extreme: the law alone, or only grace without the truth, or works without grace, we will risk losing the race. When fighting the fight of faith, know that Bethel is in the balance.

Baldhead

In the story of the purification of the city's polluted water, Elisha's baldhead clearly distinguished him as a prophet. Even self-centered, abusive teenagers easily recognized Elisha, by his baldhead, as an ambassador for the Lord. That's why the teenagers taunted him. That's what God wanted from him; God is looking for people who stand out.

Perhaps you've seen a popular contemporary film called the Untouchables. It's a story set in the 1930's depicting Elliott Ness' crusade to stop Al Capone's bootlegging, violent stranglehold on the city of Chicago. The love of a faithful wife bolsters Ness. With his companions, a small, loyal posse, he does some good, and enforces in law what is first done by example. It's a classic clash between good and evil that begins when Ness takes a stand.

It seems to me that we have very few identifiable Christians in the marketplace. Perhaps one reason we don't have more baldheads is because we forgot where we came from and where we're going.

I once heard a story about an expatriate sent as an emissary to France. The Ambassador was given unlimited funds and resources with only one rule, when the Ambassador returned to his homeland, anything he had sent home during his stay in the foreign nation, he could keep. Anything he used or kept for himself during his stay, he lost.

I'm an Ambassador. Bethel is my home. I have a lovely mansion waiting there for when I return. Only work of eternal value will be stored-up for me there. I am a pilgrim in a strange land.

I forget that I'm a sojourner. It's been so long that I looked homeward that I forget the one who gave me my commission. I am focused on myself, my fun, my problems, anything but the Lord.

Other times, I compartmentalize my commission and tell myself that my current tasks have nothing to do with Truth. Being an Ambassador becomes a costume I put on and take out for Sunday show. I rationalize that I'm not really required to represent my sovereign to foreign nations at all times.

And on still other occasions, I try my best to live the life of an ambassador, yet I seem to frequently fall short on resources. It is then that I must say "The Glory of the Lord is my strength. Whom shall I fear? What can man do to me?" I must depend on the Lord to keep me on the straight and narrow because the road to Bethel is in the balance.

We lost a balanced approach to how to get to Bethel. We got confused about how we prepare for eternity. We tried to throw out the law. We learned that by grace we are saved and that not of ourselves lest any man should boast. We tried to tear down the law that shows us just how far we fall -- short of God's best, any holiness test, and even healthy relationships that would give us some peace and rest.

We went one of two ways. Some of us have greedily grabbed grace and then gloated with gout rather than, in fear and trembling tried to work our faith out. We've said "We're no longer under the law" and got grace, so now we can fling sin in everyone's face. We forgot that we're supposed to run a race. We collected our get out of jail free card and

instead of cherishing the gift we're off romping in a Baltimore Place Hotel or buying up everything on Boardwalk.

Or, beleaguered by guilt and shame, we played the "earn God's love" game. We tried to drown our guilt in good works to get grace. We kept a frenetic harried pace. The very people who praised peace couldn't keep it. We didn't seem to have much gratitude for the gift of grace that gives us so much freedom and latitude. We never knew the extent of what forgiveness could do. So the Holy became the harried. The peace lovers looked put out. Those who should have loved the law were lawless. Those who should have been hungering for holiness out of a well-spring of gratefulness wandered off that straight and narrow.

Yet, Jesus promises us that not even the smallest part of the law shall pass away until He returns. He further states that love doesn't destroy the law. Love fulfills it. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love never boasts. ...Against such there is no law. Love is real and active; you know love when you see it at work.

Here's what James says in one of the most practical books in the Bible. In Chapter Two, verses 14-26, James makes a compelling case that faith and works go hand in hand. He states flatly that "faith without works is dead" and "that a man is justified by works and not by faith only". But don't just take James' word for it.

God Himself, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to John, evaluates each of the seven churches by their works. Read Hebrews 11, which recounts all the works that were done by faith. When we reach Bethel and bow before the Almighty Sovereign Creator to behold His awesome glory and hopefully collect a crown, He is going to evaluate what we did. And whatever we did, will be powered completely by grace – faith and work subsumed under the awesome majesty of the grace of a good and mighty God.

For a long time, I think I lived in active rebellion to the House of God and the Truth. I wasn't ready to shave my pride, yet I wanted to be crowned with glory. I asked the Lord to let my head reflect the light, but I wasn't prepared to stand exposed where others could laugh and jest and poke fun at my convictions. I wanted miracles but not meekness. I asked for healing not humility. Oh that we all had bald heads!

If we think there are no consequences for rebellion, we mock God. We risk being consumed by sin. While multitudes languish in the valley of decision, while the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision -- we care more about popularity than our purpose. We are more intimidated by the pressures of our day than the presence of the living God. We wander and wonder about predestination and use it as an excuse for not being Holy and avoiding evangelization.

Many people may not evangelize because they don't want to stand out or be different; they like to keep a low profile. If you believe that God is a person who personifies goodness why wouldn't you consider the possibility that Satan is an evil person who

personifies bad. If Satan is a personality and not just some ambiguous, amorphous notion of badness, perhaps he's smart enough to know that you belong to Jesus. Now, if Satan knows you belong to Jesus where do you think Satan has a better chance of defeating you, when you're nestled under Jesus' wing or when you're driving off on your own?

Here's an illustration. In medieval times, dangerous way layers and vagabonds lurked in the forests. So, the King established the high road as the King's Highway. The King's soldiers guarded and protected travelers who were easily visible, out in the open, and exposed on the high road. It didn't mean that an ambush might not be attempted, but on the high road, travelers could anticipate safe passage.

Stay on the high road. Get Bold. Get Bald. You're easily seen. You're also protected. It's when we get off the straight and narrow, that we find ourselves threatened with bears.

Bears

The stock exchange short hand for prosperity is a bullish year. Conversely, a bear market signals disaster. In rebellion to the law of love we are torn from ourselves; we forget our purpose to glorify God and to love His people. We are ripped from those we love and those who love us. Finally, we are wrenched from a creator who desires to love and restore us.

I know what it is to go astray and then be attacked by bears. Years ago, I invited Jesus into my life. Then, I tried to work things out my own way. I didn't let Him love me; I simply chose to do what I wanted. It reminds me of a story I once heard about two newlyweds who sat snuggled right close to one another whenever they drove in his pick-up truck. As the years passed by, the wife asked her husband why they had grown apart and why they didn't cuddle side by side anymore. "Honey", he replied. You may have slid away, but I'm right here behind the wheel where I've always been." Jesus is right where He's always been, and I didn't ask him for help.

Years later, I still churned and earned. I left a mountain religious retreat early because I had "work I had to get done". Anxiety pressed in on me. I could never simply be in one place. I had to keep moving. I had to keep doing.

A clear sunny day suddenly turned to driving rain and sheeting snow. My convertible car wasn't equipped for these conditions. As the car skidded and slid through the treacherous mountain highway now shrouded in gray, I cried and prayed. I begged God to get me out of this mess. Alone and scared, I could only blame myself for trying to take control. The car fishtailed and I inhaled. I'd never make it off the mountain.

Then, I saw the most beautiful sight! A great big orange savior – a snow blow pulled right in front of me and scraped and salted and paved the way to safe ground. God was right there where I needed him, even though I didn't deserve Him, plowing the way ...

You know, the rest of those ladies, who left the conference on His time, didn't encounter one ounce of snow. God plowed the roads of my life for years while I drove myself. Yet, I still didn't trust Him to lead me, until leadership of another kind surrounded me.

We were discussing the leadership development consultant. He came to train the hospital staff on matters of customer service and ideas of influence and motivation.

She flat-out disagreed with him. I looked down while she talked on.

She wore the shoes that every waitress should wear. Big, broad, flat, worn, soft, stained. A black shoe with a thick sole, a rounded toe that laced up. Rounded toes, not pointed, implying a softness. The tread provides traction when the floors are slick. The sole is thick to cushion the pounding on two small feet carrying too great a load. The black laces said this was definitely a race.

In all the years I've known her, I've never seen her wear any other shoe. Hers is the type of shoe you picture nurses wearing. Except, nurses always wear white.

Except, nurses don't wear this type of shoe anymore. Surprisingly, the latest fashion trend in intensive care footwear is clogs. That's right, a cumbersome, clunky, chunky, chewy shoe. The type of shoe a strapping Danish maid wears as she sinks into the mud that chokes her tulips. A hearty shoe that makes a sucking noise as each step rips the shoe through the muck.

People who founded their country below sea level design this footwear. The clog is ideal for tromping around windmills, Louisiana swamps, or when outfitting for a late night foray into a toxic waste dump. This new nursing shoe does not have a soft sole.

"He wants to be God. His philosophy will tear you apart.", she said definitely. I quit gazing at her shoes and looked into her soft eyes.

"Oh, you're reading way too much into this". I carelessly dismissed her thought with a wave of my hand. "He's saying that we should strive to be like God. We are all created in God's image. We can grow into God's likeness. Grace, holiness, that sort of thing... after all, he says he's a Christian. Anyway, there's only two things I've figured out; there is a God and I'm not Him." I thought she might laugh but she persisted.

"Oh no. He's already is a god as far as he's concerned. And all his suggestions about human potential, positive thoughts, life planning -- he's one big poster boy for we don't need God. We are God." As she plainly stated her facts, her eyes stared intently as if her own focus might bring me insight.

"Well thanks for the thought", I said as I looked at my watch. "I've got to get going" and looked into my purse for an excuse to exit. "I just don't see what you see". I left her, standing in the middle of the road.

In our discussion about the consultant, my friend called me to discernment. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”. (Matthew 7:15) She encouraged me to exercise wisdom when taking-in information. She also suggested teachers are known by their fruits.

I rebelled. I went my own way and did my own thing. Bears surrounded me. I wasn't evangelizing. I specialized in compromising. Despite the fact that I knew Christ, I spent my days surrounded in spiritual darkness.

My husband worked nights so we could trade off taking care of the baby. I tucked the kids in bed and sat alone in the dark. In frustration, I cried out against all the exhaustion and emptiness I felt. For a person who was supposedly at the top of her game, I was in so much pain. Engulfed in fear, the bears pressed in on me. I had no options left. I felt like I was falling. I just couldn't hang on.

I guess I'd always known that work could drain me of everything I could give. I guess I always knew that I was selling my soul, but I thought I was losing my mind and that was just too much.

I got on the phone and frantically dialed churches until I found one women's group meeting with childcare. I got the kids out of their beds and we piled into the car. When I arrived, the auditorium was a sea of a hundred women, with their voices raised. They sang “I could sing of your love forever.” I just broke down and cried and cried. God's word the Bible says, “That as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God.” This child was home; I finally came home.

Jesus loved me enough to give His life for me so I can be a part of His family forever. The Bible says it. I believe it because Jesus performed miracles and rose again. And I believe it not because I know the Bible or because I know about Jesus; but because I know Jesus.

Even though it looked like I had everything, I specialized in wrecking my life, so I made the choice to get out of the driver's seat. When I did, Jesus took my anger and gave me joy. He took my impatience and gave me peace. He took my worries and gave me His will. He took the paperwork and the projects and He paved the way for my purpose.

Now, instead of being driven, I'm forgiven. Even when I'm wrong, it's all right because all things work together for good and I know who I have believed and He is able. A work He has begun in me, He will be faithful to complete. I don't have to be perfect or please everybody. I don't have to do everything. I don't have to push to try and prosper.

New Testament TNT

Jesus invites you to stop being driven and rest. He says, “Come follow me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest”. Lay aside your illusions of self-sufficiency. His grace is sufficient. He will provide for you.

Unfortunately, for many of us who conduct our daily affairs in a culture of secular materialism, where the only thing that counts is what we want and how we're going to get it, we find that truth is in short supply, often interwoven with a lie. While Jesus promised that "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free", we don't seem to know how to recognize the truth, and we don't seem to even know we need to get free. The truth is muddled. We aren't bearing fruit. We've lost our salt. We're heading away from and mock God. We are consumed by rebellion.

Yet, if we look to our ultimate paradigm of evangelization, we have the perfect role model in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life". "He was his method. He gave demonstrations more than explanations."⁶

I think Christ gave us a road map of how people change. In the 5th Chapter of the Book of Matthew, I think Christ told us how He would change us. First, He shows us how insufficient we are. He shows us that the human spirit is simply powerless to save us. Often, our poverty of spirit appears in the form of pain and suffering and anguish and depression in which we are hopeless to help our selves. It is often then that we search for God.

When we wake up and realize how much pain we've caused other people when trying to act in our own way out of our own strength. The prayer of Jabez, popularized by Bruce Wilkinson, shows the power of a man whose heart's desire is simply not to cause others any form of pain. That prayer is eloquent and beautiful not because of some desire for prosperity, but in it's simplicity – a broken heart that longs not to break any others.

The progression of the beatitudes shows how God's loving hand breaks us again and again to give us mercy over and over. He gives us a long lead line and let's us go, simply to show that we don't know. He asks, "Do you want your way? Go ahead and see what you get. Do you want what I have for you or what you want?" Meekness is when we give up struggling and say, every day, in every way, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."

Finally, we become completely sick of ourselves. We want righteousness. We want to do right, be right, feel right, make things right. We long for it. Because we know that there is nothing more precious than being right with God, right with ourselves, and right with others. We come to realize that without right motives, nothing we do will ever be right. At that same time, we know our complete powerless to act without selfishness unless God intervenes.

After these first four markers, we look outward and act with mercy, give to others out of pure and unselfish motives, pursue peace, sometimes even our best understanding of Truth is clothed in silence because love covers all things, and then we endure

⁶ Coleman, R. (1963). The Master Plan of Evangelism. Grand Rapids, MI: The Baker Book House.

persecution and we submit and we yield and we hope and we love and God's power just overflows in our weakest and darkest moments.

The beatitudes are a recipe for removing pride and replacing selfishness with sacrifice. Because, the Truth of the gospel is this, I can't just say it I must display it; it's not enough to give it, I must live it. We are not pushing a product that maybe people will try or buy. We are asking people to turn over their very lives to our Guy.

It's not enough to say to sheep, "Hey, there's this beautiful place over the hill. The pasture is green, the water still. Now go get it, you sheep, you." No way. Every shepherd worth his salt gets those sheep moving and walks with them, day by day, out of the valleys, across the wilderness. Yes, it's a lifetime journey, but we need more walking and more Truth talking. Freedom in Christ must be said and led.

Figure 12: Leading People to Freedom in Christ

Task	Trust 	Truth	
H	H	H	
H	H	L	
H	L	L	
H	L	H	
L	H	L	
L	H	H	
L	L	H	
L	L	L	

This chart reflects, I believe, not necessarily the maximal effectiveness for engaging people to believe that Christ exists or even that He is Lord. Even the demons believe. Rather, it is the beatitudes blueprint for leading people to freedom. That is, the complete and total freedom that comes from making Christ Jesus Lord of everything, trusting Him with every decision, great or small, believing Him for everything, placing our meager lives in His hands and begging for His will to be done.

This chart is also not intended to dissuade those who are already called into ministry. The Bible clearly states that some are apostles, others teachers etcetera. Rather, this

chart may encourage followers of Jesus who think that a formal position in church hierarchy is what offers legitimacy for leading people into holy, righteous lives. Lack of formal position does not preclude the expression of Holy Ghost power. In fact, the most powerful model for leading people to freedom is a sanctified believer, living and working side by side with non-believer's to change their paradigm.

Such an approach to evangelization is similar to the idea of a Hologram. That is every soldier has the mind of the commander. Every messenger says only what is intended by the sender to just the right person at just the right time in just the right way. Believers, in-powered by the Holy Spirit, share tasks, build trust, and deliver the truth of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit working in those who do not know Christ.

And these messengers, these foot soldiers, unite. The watchmen speak with one voice. Their leadership is both centralized and totally decentralized. Their approach is both totally customized yet completely generalized; I share a message that is distinctly for you yet millions of believers around the world are doing exactly as I do.

It is interesting to note that this type of completely customized evangelization is juxtaposed in the 8th chapter of the Book of Acts with the false power of Simon the Magician. This sorcerer astonished the people with his power and many said that he displayed the power of God. When Simon saw the awesome movement of the Holy Spirit in Phillip, he tried to purchase God's power with money. Peter rebuked the sorcerer and prayed that his heart would become right in the sight of God. Peter knew that wrong motives never lead right.

In the next verses, the Angel of the Lord commissioned Phillip and told him to go into the desert. The Holy Spirit even told Phillip how to proceed; Phillip literally ran to catch the unbeliever. Phillip met the Ethiopian and began with a simple question. The Ethiopian asked to be guided through the scripture. The Ethiopian asked to be baptized. Phillip went into the water with him. The Holy Spirit commissioned and directed. Phillip inquired. The Ethiopian requested. Phillip responded. The Spirit whisked Phillip away.

What a contrast between the two men. Simon went in his own will. The Lord sent Phillip. Simon claimed to be someone great. Phillip claimed nothing. Simon tried to overpower people with his greatness. Phillip met the Ethiopian in his need. Simon astonished multitudes with sorceries. Phillip served one person quietly. Simon thought power could be bought. Simon elevated himself. Phillip got down and went in the water. Simon preached himself. Phillip preached Jesus. The Holy Spirit started, guided, and finished the work.

If this encounter with the evangelization efforts of the Holy Spirit were not clear enough, the next verses detail the miraculous conversion of Saul. God does not need us, yet He chooses to work through us. The lower we go, the more His power will show. It is the mind of Christ in every believer. It is the mark of the Lamb; His is perfect self-sacrificial love. The very hands of Jesus wipe millions of modern day feet as we prepare the way

of the Lord. In humbleness, in holiness, in hope – we occupy until He comes; we return to Bethel; we return to the house of the Lord.

TNT leadership is designed to teach Christians how to occupy environments. Occupying is not hanging out. Occupying is active engagement against the enemy. It's the know-how to actively win people and places to Christ.

There may be many reasons why people don't live the gospel. They may be against it, afraid, ashamed, or untrained. If you are against the gospel, you may be surprised how easily this model adapts to your own innate ideas about love and peace and joy. But I caution you. It is the spirit of the Living God that provides the explosive power in TNT Leadership. The end and the means are inexorably inseparable. You cannot bring about triumphant love with good intentions or even a willing human spirit. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit says the Lord."

When you start talking about change, people don't. When you create a loving dynamic where you freely admit your own weakness and insufficiency, others are able to reveal their own. In revealing weakness you become strong.

So, if you're afraid, ashamed, or untrained, join the club and be set free to fulfill your purpose in glorious service of the living and almighty God. "A work He has begun, He will be faithful to complete". The first step is to clarify your purpose.

ASSUME YOUR PURPOSE

Purpose is defined as the intent of a thing. It is an end to be attained, resolution, and determination⁷. Purpose is the reason for being. Purpose defines, dictates, and demands potential.⁸

The opposite of purpose is purposeless. Purposeless is synonymous with aimless and meaninglessness⁹.

The reason many leaders are concerned with purpose is they've learned that the very best plans will flop if they don't fit with the people and the place. Whatever leaders plan and strategize to do will never work unless the people and the place are with you. Purpose is like rocket fuel. It energizes, ignites, and inspires others to follow you. The compelling why is what makes people want to fly.

Purpose is distinct from vision. Vision is a picture of a desired destination. It is future focused and not presently and immediately experienced. Vision is dependent upon the

⁷ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1988). Merriam-Webster Inc.

⁸ Munroe, M. (1992). *The Pursuit of Purpose*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishing.

⁹ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1988). Merriam-Webster Inc.

place while purpose transcends any one time or space. Vision is a picture not yet realized but created in the mind's eye. If vision is where, purpose is why you want to go there. Purpose has always been and will evermore be. Purpose exists independent of my understanding, realizing, or even comprehending, yet is uniquely and distinctly fulfilled through me.

When you connect people to their purpose you get passion and power expressed in priorities. Passionate people work as if lives depend upon it. Priorities are proof of purpose. There are several places to look to see if people are living their purpose through their priorities. Look in your checkbook, and see where you spent your money last month. Review your day timer or calendar and see where you invested your hours. Were those days filled with joy and fulfillment and work and play, or are you hard-pressed to recall how that time floated away? What do you talk about? What do you most think about when you're by yourself? These things are your priorities and if you're not careful, the priorities and pressures of the present may crowd out the passion and purpose to which you are uniquely called. When you know who you are, you'll know what to do.

If you don't know your purpose and the truth about who you are, your first choice may simply be not to search. You cannot know the truth about who you are because there is no such thing as truth. This is atheism; there is no definitive truth or ultimate reality. The end result of this belief is nihilism. Life is without purpose, meaning, and is pointless. Friends don't let their friends deny the existence of Truth.

Another choice is to search for the truth about who you are anywhere and everywhere because you believe that all is truth and truth is in all. This is relativism and it suggests that one person's opinion about your life purpose is as good as the next. The consequence of this belief is also emptiness. If I used this approach, I might have believed a high school guidance counselor who said I wouldn't amount to much. Well, her opinion is just as good as mine, right?

A third place to look for the truth about your purpose in life is inside of yourself. Under the tutelage of a master who has evolved into a higher consciousness you may awaken your innate divinity. According to this approach, you will surely become god when you acquire enough esoteric knowledge, which is insight only understood by the specially initiated.

While the prospect of secret knowledge sounds rather elitist, the primary concern I have with this theory is that if you are a god, wouldn't you know it? Or, perhaps, it's just better to let sleeping gods lie. I guess the benefit of this approach to discovering your life purpose is that you get to be a god and therefore never have to gratefully accept the gifts of the creator or praise His glory. The downside is you have to rely on yourself, your smarts, and the wisdom of a teacher who might be less than divine themselves. "I think I can, I think I can...What if I can't?"

Another place to look for purpose and identity is in creation itself. The moon, the stars, the earth will perhaps give clues to who I am and what I was born to do. Unfortunately, if I look to the earth, or any other created thing such as angels, beauty, or wisdom, for information about who I am rather than looking to the creator, then the purpose of preserving the earth, or that created thing, far surpasses any reason for my existence. I serve the earth; the earth no longer serves me.

One more approach to discovering life purpose could be to seek out the wisdom of a god. One view of god is he is all-powerful and punishing. My purpose then becomes to appease and perfectly please this god. I would prefer a totally just and totally loving god. This god really loves me and wants to be in a relationship with me, not because He needs me, but just because He cares for me. Preferably this deity wouldn't burden me with a lot of rules to earn his favor. He'd give me 10 rules for healthy relationships. He'd love me. He'd correct me. In my book, that leaves Jesus Christ the only son of God who is one in being with the Father, begotten not made, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, died, risen after three days and coming again in glory.

There's one caveat. In order to know and fulfill my life purpose, I need to intimately fellowship with Jesus, love Him with all my heart, and because He loves me and I love Him, trust and obey Him in every aspect of my life. In loving this personal, present, protecting God who knows the plans He has for me, I have to embrace the most offensive, primitive, brutal notion that God gave Himself, His own son to die for me on a tree.

I could never understand why Jesus' gruesome death on the cross might be necessary or even referred to as His passion. But, I think it has to do with being willing to die for something. The something in this case is not just an idea, a fervor, zeal, or even a conviction. In this case, Jesus is telling me that He loves me so much that He died for me. Not that He's willing, in some hypothetical, maybe someday sort of way to die. He did it. What He did was prove His love.

Have you ever known someone who told you were destined for greatness or said you were beautiful, talented, smart, funny, with a fabulous future in front of you? What did it cost them to say those things? Did they want something from you? Did you believe it? Maybe they wanted desperately to be loved themselves or to hear from you the magnificence of their own destiny. This is not a kind of love I can trust. It's a love that wants something. It's a love that lies to preserve itself. It's ultimately a selfish love. It's not the kind of love that I can really believe will reveal my purpose in life.

Jesus, on the other hand, doesn't offer us love that's trying to get something. He wants to give us all that He has. He doesn't offer us love for His sake. He offers us love for our sake. He's willing to divest Himself of all of His glory and die a gruesome death to prove it. This is a love I can trust. This is the truth about who I am in Him.

Because He is who He says He is, then I am who He says I am in Him. When I make this commitment to believe what Jesus Christ says about me in His love letters

otherwise known as the Bible, then I am not a slave, but a son, an heir to every promise in Christ. All that He has is mine. I am uniquely created to both will and do His good pleasure. There is something on this earth that I am born to do. Only I can do it. No one else can.

If I want passion, I need to embrace Christ's purpose for my life. The very word passion, from the Latin "pati" means to sacrifice. How passionate I am is gauged by how much I am willing to sacrifice to pursue my purpose. When I understand the truth about who I am, I get passionate about sharing the truth with others about who they are.

To transmit the truth to others about who they are in Christ means I must lay down my life, just as He did. When I do, I have the opportunity to be part of the greatest adventure, the most exciting, and interesting life a human being could ever experience. I can be a vessel for the most awesome and mighty power in the universe, to surrender my petty plans and perform His perfect purpose. A rich and meaningful and impactful life, a life of joy and energy, and peace and suffering and sacrifice and service, is mine when I find my passion. The first and last place to look is on the cross at Calvary to the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're a leader, are you bringing other people to the fullness of their purpose and their passion in Christ? Jesus Christ is Lord of everything – family life, community, business, and politics. Christ has uniquely placed you in strategic relationships with individuals who only you know and environments only you can influence. Your purpose is to experience and express the love of Christ in every interaction in order to transform the environments and individuals within those environments – to move people and places from death and stagnation to life and regeneration. "In order to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among those with faith in Christ Jesus."

When evaluating purpose, leaders ask not only why am I here, but who am I here for. In other words, there may be three primary people or people groups that are part of a person's purpose -- self, others, and God. In deciding to serve one primary person, there may or may not be benefits to the others. What is at issue is the leader's primary motivation for who they intend to serve and may not actually have anything to do with who is literally benefiting or being served.

For example, a rising star in the corporation sends a thank you note and a new best-selling book to one of the trustees of the corporation. The result of the gift is a benefit to the trustee. The intent of the gift may be self-service on the part of the giver.

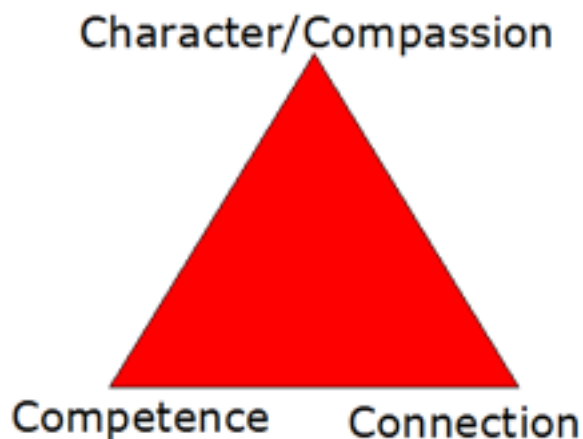
It has been suggested that it is possible to serve others or God in order to serve yourself and that may well be true. Nevertheless, in examining purpose for leadership, it is incumbent on the leader to gain personal clarity about his or her primary motives.

Table 4: Some Implications of Motives for Leadership

	Self	Others	God
Examples	My individual wants, feelings, desires, appetites	A particular company or cause (e.g., my employer, my friends and neighbors, animal rights, right to life)	Jesus Christ Yahweh <i>*note: some readers may identify self as god</i>
Results	My desires may or may not benefit others	My cause may or may not be good	Other people and myself may or may not benefit
Purpose	Get as much as I can, whenever I can	Make other people happy	Fulfill God's will
Profits	Freedom and whatever I get	Belonging and whatever the group can get	Dependence and whatever God wants to give me
Power Source	I have as much power as I have in myself	I have the power of an entire group at my disposal	I have the power of an omnipotent god
Potential	I have all the potential I think I have	I have all the potential the group thinks I have	I have all the potential God thinks I have
Pressure	Sacrifice is unacceptable	Sacrifice is probable	Sacrifice is desirable
Practical Implications	Tell people what they want to hear so they'll like me	Tell people what I think they need to hear so they'll benefit	Say what God wants others to hear and me to say

Motives drive us and are manifested in everything we do. When others watch your capability and competence, when they observe your character and compassion, even when they look at your friends and your social connections, they are seeing you. Motives underscore the manifestation of who we are revealed through our character, competence, and connections.

Figure 13: The Proof of Christ in Us



Connection with Christ

I give people the opportunity to learn about leadership and business. If you had the opportunity to learn about leadership and business from me, a largely unknown individual, or from Millionaire Mogul, you might pick him. You would forego many scintillating training sessions, flout all the newest techniques; you'd probably sacrifice many other pressing priorities to be in the presence of this millionaire. Because we all know that who you know impacts how far you go. Leadership is not simply an act or a trait or even results. Leadership is relationship. As Christians, our relationships originate in the power and sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

The reality of the gospel is that the Almighty, Sovereign Lord of Lords, King of Kings, emptied Himself of His glory and became flesh. He chose to suffer and die, and rose again for you that you might live. He wants a relationship with you. He wants you to know Him and worship Him. He chose you before the foundation of the world and even now He says, "Come to me". All dependence is worship and to worship is to depend.

If you are reading this book and have not yet learned to depend upon Jesus Christ to satisfy your every need, today is the day of salvation. If you are ready to take the important step and accept Jesus' death on the cross as sufficient payment for your sins and the sins of the whole world then there is nothing left for you to do but fall on your knees and accept and praise Him for the rest of your life.¹⁰ Dear Jesus, I realize that I've carried guilt and shame and blame when I don't have to. I realize I've tried to do things my own way when I couldn't. I ask you to save me from death. Please give me eternal life. I ask you to be my guide in good times and in bad. I ask you to be the help I've never had. I believe you are God's son. Thank you Jesus for dying for me and rising again. Help me to learn that you forgave and set me free. Teach me to love you and to let you love me. Amen.

If you have known and loved Jesus for a long time, then give Him some of your time. Sister Timothy Marie, a Carmelite nun ¹¹, teaches contemplative prayer. She suggests that each of us identify a verse of scripture that applies to our current situation and devote daily time to meditate on the heart of God by focusing quietly on that verse. For me, that verse of scripture is "Be still and know that I am God". If you could see me working feverishly, you would know why I need to ponder that verse

Moses experienced the presence of God in the desert. Moses said "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

God is on fire for you and He's longing for you to turn aside and say, "Here I am". Draw near, kick off your sandals, and get on Holy ground. If you don't make pursuing the

¹⁰ Taylor, H. (1989). *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*. Chicago: Moody Press.

¹¹ Sister Timothy Marie. I Want to See God: A journey through the interior castle. St. Joseph's Center 507 N. Granada, Alhambra, CA 91801 stjoctr@pacbell.net

heart and holiness of God your purpose, then ain't nobody gonna be plundering pagan powers and pushing into the promise land. To do big business, bushes gotta burn.

For His glory, through His grace, He calls you. His grace is sufficient. He will provide. He created you to love Him and love one another. Your purpose is love. Love is both the source and the summit of your existence.

Now, in practical terms having love as a life purpose creates quite a paradox for some people. They see compassion and competence as mutually exclusive. Love becomes some kind of sappy do-gooder notion that lacks substance, excuses incompetence, and gets run over, taken advantage of and looks like a great big doormat that sings cumbyyyah. I am not interested in that self-made definition of love, and you probably aren't either unless you were hoping to be a slave instead of a friend.

Competence and compassion don't compete. Competence and compassion exist in connection. Relationship is the reason for both your effectiveness and your empathy. The ability to effectively lead people to Christ originates in a triune dynamic. This dynamic incorporates your character, which is observed in your competence and caring and compassion, which determines your ability to forge connections.

Your purpose is not the accumulation of possessions, but whatever resources you have will be used for God's glory. Your purpose is not even to know the Bible in the purest sense because many people search the scriptures but still don't find Jesus. Yet, your knowledge of scripture will keep you on the straight and narrow and the sword of the Spirit that is the word of God will be a mighty weapon in your hands for tearing down strongholds. Your purpose is not a project or a profession; however, your projects and plans will position you to witness. Your purpose is not even to live for another human person although you will love and lead many to the Lord. Your purpose is the process of becoming conformed, in relationship, to the image of the awesome, self-sacrificing compassion of Jesus Christ so that you can love the Lord with all your might and love your neighbor as yourself.

In the process of sanctification, you are becoming a living revelation of the manifestation of Jesus. You are becoming the character of Christ.

Character: Who am I in Christ?

The origin of the word character means an engraving placed on an object to indicate ownership and a relationship. Those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are conformed to His image.

One place to look for your purpose is in the past and painful experiences of your life. It is in your deepest pain and suffering that God may be preparing you for power. He promises that His strength is made perfect in weakness. Paul told us to "Gladly boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ might more fully rest upon me". God pumps power into the places of pain because He knows that then, the Glory will never be ours

to claim. Shame and fear and desolation, these are the places on which he chose to establish a great nation.

Another, perhaps even more telling picture of a man or woman is how they handle success. Humility and mercy are character qualities often forged under adversity; they may disappear altogether when people become successful.

It's easy to confuse our roles (things we do such as mothering, being a friend, or a great employee) with our identity (who we are in Christ). Our identity in Christ never changes regardless of our roles, involvements, or His purpose and plans for us.

Competence: What am I to do?

Many of us go through life trying to prove our worth. We work and work to try and be the best at what we do. We try to find our identity in a job well done. Or, we live our lives for the opinions of our friends and try to prove our uniqueness by the caliber of our associations. In reality, we don't prove our worth by our work. Rather, our work is proof of Christ's character in us.

In the Bible, the book of Acts follows the gospel. Great signs and wonders were done and people believed in Jesus Christ. Like the saints of days past, we are Christ's living testimonies in today's fallen world.

Many of us know this and so we are constantly looking "out-there" for opportunities to optimally serve God. When talking about God's purpose for our lives, we get excited speculating about what we want to do, the ministry we hope to build, lives we will change. We know Christ delights to give us the desires of our heart. We know if we seek first the Kingdom of God all these things will be added unto us, and we can't wait to see those things. Nevertheless, I think there are great pitfalls in looking to the future while neglecting what God has given us to do today. In the parable of the unjust steward, Christ makes it clear that today counts. Your current job counts.

If you're not honorable while working at Mervyn's, it's unlikely God's going to give you your own ministry. If you aren't walking in love in business dealings with people who don't know Jesus, chances are you won't get to lead and feed God's little lambs. This is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it. Wherever you are right now, find an opportunity to do good and do it.

I think there is tremendous possibility in living fully in the present. When God revealed His name to Moses, God said, "I am that I am." While we know that our Lord is both Alpha and Omega, past and future, God chose to reveal Himself in fully present, active, abiding terms. When you stay fully present and engaged, you have the opportunity to connect powerfully with other people.

Connection with Others: Who am I with?

I cannot give what I haven't got and can't lead people without being in relationship. I know many fine Christians who are extremely competent and know an abundance of scripture, but they are terrified of intimacy. They do not want to open themselves to others because they've been hurt in the past.

Yet, change is a painful and difficult process that requires tremendous amounts of energy. If Christians do not lock arms with those who are perishing in the valleys of decision and share their energy source, how will anyone see the light. Leadership is risky business.

Here's a personal example. I qualified as a lifeguard in my High School years. While I never had an ocean rescue, I spent many hot summer days perched over a small community pool envisioning an exhilarating picture of what saving a drowning victim might be like.

First, I'd spot the person going down. Or maybe, they would've already been drowning and something inside of me would have said, "Go! Somebody needs you." I'd swim out, swift and strong. I'd dive under. I'd try to get the struggling person to trust me enough to allow me to bring them to the surface. Then I'd haul my trophy to safety. All the while, I knew there might be another scenario where my victim didn't trust me and we both got dragged down into the murky deep to a mutually muddy death. To be connected to people is to risk being dragged down.

I heard a story once of two men manning a lighthouse. In the middle of a horrific storm, the younger man spied a ship being dashed to pieces on the rocks below. The older man put on his slicker and pulled on his boots and said, "Let's go." The young man replied, "What if we don't come back?" The Old man turned and looked him in the eye, "It's not important that we come back. It's important that we go."

In the fight against spiritual darkness, the storm we face sometimes seems more daunting even than death. I've been afraid for my very soul and that somehow I might be eternally lost when trying to help people possessed with so many strange doctrines. I'm downright scared to go.

Christ promises that not one sheep will be wrenched from His hand. He knew me from the foundation of the world and I belong to Him. Nothing, not power, principalities, no created thing can separate me from the Love of Christ Jesus. So when I face challenges with Christ's strength, His fortitude, His power, and God's grace, others are drawn to the Lord. I am commanded to pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Contribution: What am I to Do Where I am for the Great I AM?

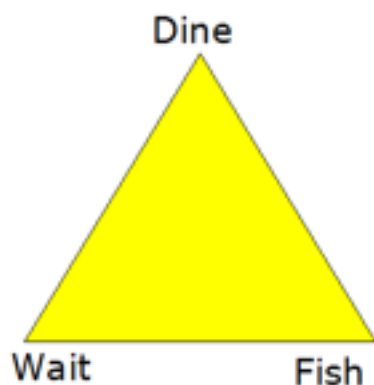
If I were to be an animal, I think I'd be a Springer Spaniel puppy. I'm constantly jumping and begging and moving and shaking and awaiting the next great movement of God.

“Is He here? Where is He? Oh boy! Oh Boy! I can’t wait to the see the master! Did you see Him? Did You?”

In practical terms, it means that like King Saul, I try to get ahead of God’s plans, only partially fulfill God’s plans, and generally get out of step with the Holy Spirit. Peter was also a person who tried to get ahead of God.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until He returned. But not Peter, Peter had enough waiting, went fishing, and the only thing he dragged into the boat were the other bedraggled disciples. They didn’t catch one fish the entire night until Jesus showed up. When Jesus inspired them, that rag tag bunch hauled gobs of fish into the boat. After the haul, they joined Jesus on the shore for a sunrise breakfast and some of Jesus’ homemade bread. Those who wait upon the Lord grow stronger. His timing is perfect and we can look forward to evangelizing and hauling in souls from the ends of the earth and then joining Jesus in an eternity of sunrise suppers. To change people and places, we wait on God, then fish for men, and finally dine with Jesus in celebration.

Figure14: Evangelization is a Tripartite Process



If you know that your purpose is to glorify God and be His witness in the earth, yet you’re still not sure about God’s specific plans for your life, look around, enjoy where you are, and bloom where you’re planted. God promises, those who are faithful over little will be trusted with much.

The sole purpose for leadership is to lead souls to Christ. “To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus”. To do this work, I need TNT. I need to shine with the light I want people to see. For additional guidance regarding implementation, please read the manual. In other words:

Spend Time Alone With the Lord Everyday
Read the word
Let the word dwell richly in you

Pray Without Ceasing
Fast Regularly
Walk by Faith
Witness in Love

The source that defines your purpose determines your power. If you find your purpose in the opinions of others, their approval is the source of your power. If you find your purpose deep inside of yourself, in the recesses of the mind, your power, there, will reside. If you look to creation rather than the designer who created it, you will find that the purpose of preserving the earth will supersede your own; your powers will be whatever the elements can provide. If you look to a punishing, distant, demanding God to define your life purpose, your power will be whatever you can earn from the rules that you can keep. If you call upon the name of Jesus Christ who is just, merciful, loving, personal, present, and All-Powerful, He promises that all that He has is yours. Even greater things than He did you will do. Once you clarify the source of your purpose, and the place where you are called to live that purpose, then assess your potential to lead lives through the Power of the Holy Spirit.

ASSESS YOUR POTENTIAL

There's a lot of talk today about uncovering your potential. Many people think of giftedness in terms of the human potentiation movement -- strengths and talents that are waiting to be developed. I am not writing, however, to people with vast discovered or even undiscovered capabilities. I am writing to people who will simply say "Here I am Lord, send me." It's been said before; God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called.

You may be reading this book and thinking..."I'm not a leader. I can't trust. I can't teach truth. Perfect! You're just the person God has in mind to put this book into action. "Blessed are the poor in spirit " who know that they can't do it all and that no good thing is in their flesh. In fact, I think the Lord delights in shaping us for His glory in exactly those areas where we feel least capable. He promises that His strength is made perfect in weakness.

One exercise I do to help people appreciate their potential is called the "Lifeline"¹². As you look back over your life, plot out the highs and the low lows. On the lifeline, you chart the successes and the failures. An examination of each of these challenges and pinnacles reveals unique gifts.

Figure 15: Everything in Life is a Gift From God's Hand

¹² The Lifeline Exercise has been around for years. Larry Bossidy with Allied Signal does it with his new directors to help them create a statement of their leadership philosophy.



Perhaps God 's perfection of our personality “potholes” is one of the heavenly paradoxes of potential. God turned the peaceful shepherd David into a mighty warrior. God made beautiful Esther the most brave. Joseph was second youngest brother sold into slavery turned second most powerful man in the world. The most fearful become fearless. The impatient learn to wait upon the Lord. The least trusting trusts completely -- this is the work God is doing. Will you take the initiative and let Him do this for you?

Initiative

In Judges 4, Deborah exemplifies initiative. As a judge and prophetess of Israel, she discerned the will of the Lord to free His people. She deployed troops and marched with them in battle. She stirred and encouraged the people to fight until not one enemy was left except the opposing leader. Another woman, plunging a tent stake into the brain of this leader, finished the work Deborah initiated.

A more current example of initiative occurred in San Diego. We experienced a school shooting similar to that at Columbine, Colorado. A pastor from one of our local churches wanted to offer workshops on parenting and grief to support the families of public school children. The school prohibited him from posting flyers on any public school grounds asserting that even the name of the church on the flyer represented a violation of separation of church and state. The pastor seized the initiative and took the school district to court. The courts found the school district clearly discriminated against the pastor, so the pastor posted the flyers. He took the initiative and opened up the way for God's presence in the environment.

Another opportunity for initiative occurred with friend of mine. She is one frazzled mom – technically she's a fed up volleyball mom. Her teenage daughter is on a competitive team. The girls fight, complain, and blame. It doesn't matter if they lose or win, there's no sense of fun or fellowship and certainly no element of faith. Meets are all day, miles away. The coach shames the girls when they lose and tells them that their time is just a waste because they didn't take first place. My friend is struggling and trying to decide if she'll pull her daughter off the team for the good of the family and her own sanity.

My friend knows that her purpose is to serve the Lord. My friend believes that the gospel changes everything. My friend has a decision to make; she has to decide if she's going to stay in the environment or get her and her daughter out. If she decides to stay, my friend needs to determine if she's going to take the initiative to transform the environment. If she decides to work to transform this team's territory into a place of peace, she will need to do leadership and enlist others to help her influence the change.

Initiative is the willingness to get things started and lead. Initiative is the ability to reach personal decisions and then act on them cooperatively to achieve lasting results.¹³ Initiative in this case is seeing the harm that is coming to teenage girls through a competitive environment and a caustic coach, and choosing to champion a change.

Risk Taking

For my friend to stand up and be counted, means inherent risk. What if her daughter thinks her mom is silly? A prude? Or stupid? What happens when a cool coach tries to turn teenage girls against a Christ-like mom? What if other moms ostracize my friend? What about when a husband begs her to "tone it down" "That religion stuff is fine for Sundays, but don't be a zealot for God's sake. You're intolerant."

I've been through it. A spirit of joy cannot abide with a spirit of striving. The spirit of competition hates and hungers against a spirit of playfulness and peace. Spirits of shame and striving fight the Word of God that lives in every believer. For, "it is not I who lives but Christ who lives in me". Yet, it is this very word, the love of Jesus, which allows Christians to take risks in loving others.

For example, imagine you are a relatively young Vice President in a major corporation. You earn a six-figure salary. The benefits and executive perks are excellent. Unfortunately it appears that the Chief Operating Officer is a graduate of the University of Southern California and he decides that all employees who have a degree from UCLA simply don't have the background and qualifications needed to lead the company into the future. While you may say that such a practice is against the law, you too, have a background from UCLA and now fear for your job.

One option is to "sit-tight" and hope that your affiliation with this group is never discovered. Another option is to make your identity known and simply wait for the consequences. A third way is to appeal to God for justice and then proceed to advocate to the CEO on behalf of yourself and those who share your background. What would you do and why?

A biblical example of such risk-taking is that of Queen Esther. Esther was comfortable and safe while her people, the Jews, were decreed to die. Instead of sidelining herself, she fasted, prayed, and under penalty of death, she pursued freedom for her people.

Risk taking is simply the willingness to pursue objectives although I may be outnumbered, ridiculed, or potentially wrong. A risk-taker is willing to build relationships and share truth. A risk-taker knows that truth in relationships always costs. A risk-taker is willing to assume responsibility and step-out for Christ.

Responsibility

Responsibility means that once I start something, I finish it, unless Christ tells me otherwise. When God commissioned Noah as His boat builder, God didn't give Noah another word until that ship was sea worthy. Silence. For more than a hundred years, shrouded in divine silence, surrounded by ridiculing peers, Noah continued to conscientiously fulfill his commission.

If I accept a challenge, I take responsibility to bulldog that challenge until it's completed. I grab hold of the goal in my teeth and do not let go until my Lord tells me so. I persevere in prayer until I'm there.

Just so you know, I have a real problem in this area. I love to plow but not pull weeds. I love to plant and hate to water. I enjoy the beginning of a thing, but really lose focus at the end. I pray everyday that God will make me faithful so I may reap what I sow.

Personal Authenticity

Authenticity is about getting real. It's not that I don't have any flaws. It's that I'm honest about my shortcomings and open about where I've failed. It's "Warts and all Wisdom" – when I am who I am it frees other people to be who they are, so that we can all move together toward becoming the image of Christ.

Recently, I met with a group of wealthy women friends and in the course of our conversation, I stated flatly, "I come from a family of partying honkey-tonkers who drank way too much". We lounged in a multi-million dollar home on a piece of prime real estate. None of the ladies were haughtily dressed. Most of them exuded a casual elegance. All of them were caring Christian women who would have been mortified to know how much they intimidated me. "Yep, a long line of martini-drinking, two-stepping luses", I shared without blinking. "And, that's why I determined that my New Year's Eve wouldn't turn into a wild night".

I explained how our neighbors gathered on a New Year's Eve for a game of backyard croquet under twinkling white Christmas lights, twinkling torches and a moonless sky. We drank hot chocolate and cider and ate warm cookies, while the kids played Twister and Sorry until we all watched midnight fireworks from the second story deck. I resolved not to make alcohol consumption a central portion of our festivities. The environmental transformation of our neighborhood was well underway.

More importantly, my candid sharing of my checkered upbringing brought surprising responses from these elegant, endowed ladies of Christ. “You should be at our family gatherings; the liquor flows”. “I grew up in a hippie commune”, chimed in another. What a relief it was to get real and not have to hide behind pretense. God put me through some painful experiences so that I can share my trials and triumphs with others who are hurting similarly. It does me no good to pretend those incidents didn’t exist. The trials are as much a part of me as the triumphs. Warts and all -- my tales are a part of God’s plan to be shared freely.

Jesus told His disciples “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”. Pure hearts don’t hide hurts. Tim Woodruff says, “The antithesis of purity isn’t immorality but insincerity, not the presence of sin but the denial of it¹⁴”. I think Jesus meant that when I’m honest about my own shortcomings, He blesses me with the privilege of seeing God in every person I meet.

In the fourth chapter of John, the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well embodies a biblical instance of this type of authenticity. This woman could not hide from the power of the word of God. Just as Jesus knew that this woman had not one husband, but five husbands, He also knows all our secret faults. Furthermore, exposed before the light of God’s word, all our petty “religious” differences about worship are stripped away. Jesus says that it doesn’t matter on what mountain or in what city we worship “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24) Next, when illusions of moral purity and divisions of religiosity are laid bare, Jesus declares He is the Christ, the Messiah. Finally, overwhelmed by her encounter with Christ, she brings all the people of the city to the Lord. Like the woman at the well, when we are authentic, we see God and we lead others to Christ.

Generosity

So, if I want to make a difference and change the way things are, I need to bring all of my resources and life experiences and share of them freely to help others. Generosity is giving lavishly of myself to the people God places in my life. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). When I set aside my own agenda, my plans, and my pride, I make friends for Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to flow into loving relationships.

One such biblical picture of generosity is Abigail the wife of a wealthy farmer named Nabal. The name Nabal means fool. David and his men, while in exile from King Saul, had long been protecting Nabal’s possessions. When David sent his men to humbly inquire of Nabal for some food, Nabal flatly refused and denied even knowing David. When David heard of Nabal’s unwillingness to help the men who had long protected and guarded Nabal’s property, David became enraged and set out to punish Nabal.

¹⁴ Woodruff, T. (1999). Walk this way: An interactive guide to following Jesus NavPress Colorado Springs, p. 140.

Abigail overheard her husband's lack of generosity and prepared a vast feast to carry to David's men. Bravely, this beautiful woman set out on horseback with her servants and food going before her. She took full responsibility for and apologized to David for her husband's actions. She graciously offered David her gifts and thanked him for protecting her husband's property for so long.

David's anger was assuaged and he was kept from harming the wicked Nabal. When Nabal found out what his wife had done, Nabal fell over dead from surprise. David ultimately asked the beautiful and brave Abigail to be his wife. Her picture of peacemaking through giving remains an example to all who wish to change an environment from angry bitterness, to wisdom and gentleness.

While generosity is not necessarily dispensing with possessions, it is always pouring self into the lives of other people. "He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it cannot bring forth much fruit. (John 12:24) It's not paradoxical; it's a fundamental principle.

Francis McNutt, an expert on healing, speaks of an Indian Congress in Montana that held generosity as essential to life. They spent hours at the close of the conference, giving gifts and sharing possessions. In this culture, the one who had the most power was the one who gave away the most. ¹⁵

Furthermore, as long as I cleave to anything it has power over me. Beauty, possessions, prestige, knowledge, whatever I love most I fear losing. When I walk in fear, I cannot walk in love. Perfect love casts out all fear, so when I am made perfect in love, nothing else will take preeminence in my life.

I do an exercise with my students; I ask them to write the four most important things in their lives on index cards. The typical responses are things such as health, family, mental capacity, dreams, and wealth. Then, one by one, I either take their index cards from them or ask them to give the index card to me. It is often quite emotional to simulate "losing" those things that are seemingly so precious. I ask the students to share if the feelings were any different when I take things versus when they give them or if they feel any different when they give freely rather than having them ripped away.

But, none of these feelings are really central to the purpose of the exercise. We are not dealing with the illusion that I have taken something precious and dear that belongs to them. The illusion is that it was ever theirs in the first place. The illusion is that anything in this life is really yours. Did you deserve to be born into a life of privilege? Who gave you your health? Who gifted you with a strong mind and body so that you could acquire wealth? Who created your children? Do they truly belong to you?

¹⁵ Francis McNutt Healing in Action Conference San Diego, CA April 27, 2003

Since we were toddlers, we've cried "Mine. Mine. Mine." My life. My things. It's no wonder we can't surrender to Christ or yield to our brothers and sisters; we're too busy clutching things. I am no better than anyone else on this point. I want to give what I want to give when I want to give it. I fear what Christ is going to take away rather than blessing and praising Him for the gift of even one more day. If only we can learn to "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you".

Christ was pretty clear on this point. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). In every day life, I don't have to hang from a cross to take up a cross. The crux of Christianity is sacrifice. Service to others is as simple as setting aside my own agendas and seeing the needs of others. Sacrifice through service doesn't mean that I vacillate between a slack hand in my own affairs and aimlessly searching for souls to serve. I simply wait upon the Lord and serve the people who are present where God places me. Opportunities to serve are obtained through assessing group presence.

ASSESS THE GROUP PRESENCE

God brings people together for any number of reasons. Individuals join together to achieve a goal such as developing a new product, get a candidate re-elected, to write a grant, or win a soccer championship. Or, people interact with each other because of geography or proximity such as neighbors on a street, college students in a dormitory, or passengers on an airplane. Sometimes, people share ideas in a book club or bible study. Frequently, people attempt to satisfy some need through association such as the Knights of Columbus, an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, or Toastmasters. A group is simply a social unit of two or more persons.

Every group has its own special feeling. The feeling, or tone, of the group is called "group presence". The group presence is the sum of ideas, persons and circumstances in a particular setting or situation. It is the spirit created in human groupings.¹⁶

What I came to realize is that there's more to individuals than meets the eye. So, there's probably more to groups than meets the eye. Watchman Nee¹⁷ clarifies the distinctive, multifaceted nature of individual people. He suggests that, like our God, we are tripartite beings. We are comprised of body, soul and spirit. Our physical bodies are in touch with the natural world and matter and give us consciousness of the world around us through our senses. Our soul, he suggests, is that which gives us self-consciousness through our mind, will, and emotions. He further asserts that our spirit gives us an awareness of God through such means as our conscience and intuition, and the workings of the Holy Spirit that resides in every believer.

¹⁷ Nee, W. (1968). *The Spiritual Man*. Christian Fellowship Publishers. New York.

So then, if every individual has some part of them that is spirit, it seems possible that while our minds and emotions impact those around us as much as our physical presence, that our spirits also relate in some way.

If the mind, body, spirit connection is occurring and effecting the tone and tenor of groups, it behooves me to understand why some groups are more inviting than others, to learn how to assess and if necessary, shift the group presence. To do leadership and to win people to Christ, I need to learn how to energize and mobilize groups of people in the spiritual dimension.

The Bible says that, "God's word is a two-edged sword dividing soul and spirit". It seems to make sense, then, to be able to ascertain which things around us are soulish, emanating from the flesh and our own strength, and those things that are spirit. Further, it is not only necessary to know those things that are of the spirit, but also the nature of the spirit, be it Holy or otherwise. We are commanded to "Test the spirits." (John 1:14)

The clearest Biblical guideline I can find on behavioral indicators of the spirit of a group is in 1 John 4.

1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.
2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:
3. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
5. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.
6. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
7. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
8. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.
9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.
10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.
12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.
13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.
14. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.
17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
19. We love him, because he first loved us.
20. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
21. And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

According to these verses, an observation of the group presence will include whether or not Jesus Christ is lord, do people hear the truth, do they walk in love, do they testify of Christ, are they free from fear. While these questions seem individualized, similar to individuals, the spirit of groups can be known by their fruits. When I walk into the room, I can feel an air of heaviness. All the desks are disheveled. Most of the employees are coughing and sniffing with back pains and the flu. Contrast such a wretched work environment with a well-lit sunny workstation. Employees are kind to customers and one another. People are productive. They enjoy their work. I can feel when a group spirit is one of fear, rebellion, frustration, confusion and consternation or a spirit of fun and friendship and play and peace.

The group presence is a means to assess outward behaviors that may indicate the presence of Christ in any environment. These are some aspects of an environment that may suggest that Christian ideals are present. In assessing the group presence, I look for environments where truth can flourish, free from fear, and compare that to environments that are toxic to truth.

Table 5: Behavioral Clues to Assess the Group Presence

	μ		μ
Capricious Rule Setting		Consistent Guidelines	
Clique		Connections	
Cutbacks are the Focus		Capacity is the Focus	
Constant Upheaval		Continuity	
Role Confusion		Role Clarity	
Cut to Customers		Calm with Customers	
Cautious Co-workers		Caring for Co-workers	
Chaos		Creativity	

That is not to say that the only well-ordered, happy people are Christian. Rather, a first scan of a particular place to determine its overall tone may reveal the presence or absence of Christ. “God is not the author of confusion”. So, if I see people in a setting confused, unclear about processes and procedures, and muddled leadership. For example, the matrix organization is a recent phenomenon that runs contrary to biblical teachings on scope of authority. A person who has five bosses will be much less clear, goal directed, and tend toward confusion. I believe this is not God’s intention for His children.

People and places can be like gardens. There are three types of gardens I’ve observed. First, there exist beautiful, fruit bearing environments where the people planted there can thrive. Next, I’ve seen bombed-out piles of bare dirt where nothing and no one can grow because they’re decimated and devastated. The last type of garden, which seems the more difficult area to cultivate, is a beautiful well-manicured garden lush with greenery, greenery that does not bear fruit.

The three metaphors provide a model for understanding come of the places where Christians are placed. In the first instance, the place is a pile of bricks and bare dirt. Your organization needs to change and everyone knows it. Potential for improvement is readily apparent; there is nowhere to go but up. Environmental inefficiencies create the urgency for change. These places are like people who know they need a physician. In this instance, pain is clearly present. Problems are readily observable and in some ways evangelization may even be easier.

The piles of bricks and bare dirt groups need to experience success. Since you’re starting from the ground up, they need greater certainty, shorter timelines, and visible wins. Failure can be normalized because they’ve lived with it. Even small bursts of energy can make a big difference.

The second metaphor is an immaculate, manicured non-producing garden. The need for change is not readily apparent and the potential for improvement is hard to visualize. These are groups and individuals who appear to be doing great. The challenges in this garden are to create new possibilities and to show what fruitfulness really looks like. Gradual, staggered effort with small, non-threatening “pilot projects” is essential here. Failures are deadly and finesse is required over the long-term.

The leadership approach and communication strategy must be customized to your type of group. If you try to use a standardized communication approach it will probably go over like a ton of bricks. Don’t underestimate the value of waiting. Impatience and dissatisfaction can be deadly over sustained periods of time. Fertilizing and pruning must be done. That doesn’t mean people want to hear about it. The role of the leader is to focus attention on and communicate what is beautiful, lovely and worthy of praise. Half the fun of gardening is the process.

If you’re not sure how to tell what kind of a garden your group presence might be, trust the Holy Spirit and trust your senses. First, give your environment the smell test. I’m not kidding. We are the fragrance of Christ. A gospel-filled environment will actually smell different.

For example, my friends and I recently went to play laser tag at a local roller rink on a Friday night. Yes, we’re middle-aged, but that doesn’t mean we’re boring. Besides, we had a coupon. I almost couldn’t enter the building because it smelled so bad. I asked others in my group if they could smell it and they said no.

We entered the building and it was dark, in every sense of the word. I think there were only two adults other than myself in the entire place and kids as young as four years old were just hanging around unattended. I chatted with one seven year old who told me that he’d be skating until 11 p.m. until his parents picked him up.

Immediately, I started praying over the environment, silently of course. I prayed by myself for about twenty-minutes while my friends fought in the first round.

Then, I entered the laser tag area. I guess I should have been prepared that a game with a premise of shooting your friends might not be an ideal environment, but I was unprepared for the violent imagery painted on the walls and the music piped in repeatedly referenced suicide.

I’m sorry to say that if I had followed the Holy Spirit, I would have spent that entire night praying silently. Instead my heart pumped to the music and I laughed as I “shot” my friends. All fun and games some will say. NO way! I enjoyed it way too much. I’ll never do it again.

An interesting thing happened, however. When I came out of the laser tag area, almost all the lights were on. A previously dark roller dance floor was now flooded with lights.

Teenagers who had been gyrating to seductive music now seemed to be circling the floor rather than slithering. The stink of the place subsided.

Maybe my presence there had an impact and maybe it didn't. All I know is that if you came in and found your kids hanging out alone at that place, you'd have been praying all night too.

In another instance, I didn't have a sense of any particular presence. I simply walked my dog throughout the neighborhood. When we walked, I prayed. I sang hymns. I praised God.

One day, I noticed a house around the block stood empty with garbage and mattresses strewn about the driveway. The previous tenants had left all manner of filth and moved out. When I inquired of the neighbors, they told me the house had been a laboratory for met amphetamines and a repository for pornography. I had no idea that such evil was just around the corner. You may think that my walks and praise had no impact, yet I know that the spirits of that house could not abide with the presence of the living God, the presence of the living God that lives inside of every believer. "Greater is He who is in me than He who is in the world."

Power for pulling down strongholds that includes strongholds we can't even see with the naked eye. But looking back, there were clues.

God is the God of order "Let all things be done in order" God is not the author of confusion. Fruits of the spirit are peace, gentleness, self-control. While Christians don't have the market cornered on either cleanliness or kindness.

One afternoon, with three small children in tow, I trudged to the post office. Ten people in a line grumbled while two clerks diligently filled orders. The initial assessment of this environment suggested the need for a little Christian joy and peace. So, I started cooing to my little baby and the elderly lady in line behind me, whose name turned out to be Lois, started cooing over him too. A gigantic young man stood behind Lois. His T-shirt said "Big Daddy". He was pierced through every body part you can imagine.

I turned to Big Daddy and said, "Even when my son is as big as you, he'll still be my little boy". Big Daddy smiled. I then proceeded to share a story of how my son had almost died and how the Lord saved him and how grateful I am for every day. Lois shook her head in agreement. "God is so good", she chimed in.

As the time wore on in this slow moving line, my two older children got restless. I told my oldest daughter to watch her brother. Lois told me how she always made her oldest daughter watch the little ones. Then I shared a story of a friend of mine who was told to watch his little brother. While he was on watch, the little brother was hit head-on by a semi-truck and killed instantly. My friend is still consumed with guilt.

Big Daddy looked at me with weepy eyes. He shared sheepishly that while his younger brother sat in a shopping cart, Big Daddy tipped the shopping cart, popping wheelies.

Big Daddy accidentally tipped the cart over on top of his brother, smashing the younger boy's head with the metal. The younger brother had always been mentally retarded, but Big Daddy's mother said it was all Big Daddy's fault.

I looked at this gentle giant, so plagued by guilt and self-loathing. "It wasn't your fault", I whispered. "It wasn't your fault." Even though your heart condemns you, God is bigger than your heart; God can forgive you anything".

In that moment, I knew the Holy Spirit spoke through me. How could I have known this young man's specific heartache. I didn't. I couldn't. All I could do is offer myself to God, from the moment I entered that post office, as a vessel for his love – a container to pour out His healing. The Holy Spirit is not just in the relationships. The Holy Spirit is the relationship.

I think God wants me to look for in any group – opportunities to serve. He wants me to look for people who are harried, hurting, hotheads, or helpless. He then wants me to live the truth of love in dynamic relationship with those same people.

ASSESS THE PLAYERS

TNT leadership is all about the people who happen to come together in a particular place or environment. When I assess the "players", or people, in the environment, I am looking at two dimensions. The first dimension is each person's capacity for leadership. The second thing I'm interested in is how far their ideal, or purpose, differs from my own; they love the Lord and want to pursue relationships based on truth. In short, I am interested in two dimensions: how motivating and motivated they are and how they're motivated.

The first types of individuals you're looking for are leaders. These people are highly motivated, high influencers who diligently attend to and develop relationships while simultaneously advancing toward goals. They are high task and high trust people.

John Maxwell offers his own leader litmus test¹⁸ with three simple questions:

Who do you go to when you want to know what's going on?
Who do you go to when you want to get something started?
Who do you go to when you want something to stop?

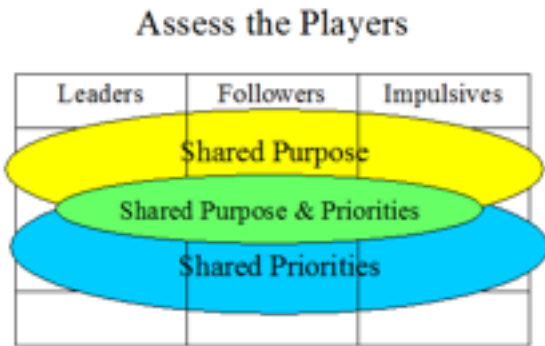
These three questions get to the heart of influence and an individual's capacity to effect the environment.

Another group you'll find in any environment are the followers. Followers are identified by how they imitate others. They lack conviction or the courage to act on it. They are not particularly motivated unless someone else gets them involved.

¹⁸ Maxwell, J. (1998). How to Evaluate Potential Leaders. Tennessee: Nelson Publishers.

Impulsives are individuals who waiver according to their whims or emotions. These people are difficult to trust because their behavior will waive with the wind.

Figure 16: Determine the Purpose and the Power of the Players



Once I've identified individuals of influence in the environment, I want to know how far their ideal differs from my own. To assess ideal, I am really assessing what spirit they follow. Is it a spirit of self-promotion or self-sacrificing love? I often ask myself a series of questions:

Do they say they are Christian?
 Do they say that they believe in Jesus Christ?
 Do they walk in righteousness? Are they fun and friendly?
 Do they actively witness? Do they share scripture?
 How would you know if they were living a life of victory?
 How do they respond when someone does something or something happens that they don't like?

When we start talking about ideals, the impulsives and followers are not as much a concern as the other leaders. The followers and impulsives will be free to come once the ground has been won.

And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us. Luke 9:59-50

But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. Mark 9:39-40

In 2 Kings 9-10, Elisha commissioned a prophet to anoint Jehu and command Jehu to destroy the house of Ahab and avenge the blood of the Lord's servants. So Jehu assembled his posse and rode to destroy the enemy. Three times,

messengers were sent to Jehu, asking “Do you come in peace?” Each time Jehu responded, “What do you have to do with peace? Fall in behind me.” In each case the messengers of the enemy joined Jehu. Jehu led the original game of red rover and then wiped out the enemy. . “For, how can there be peace when idolatry and witchcraft abound?” Those who are not against us are for us...

Perhaps you’ve seen the movie the Patriot. Mel Gibson plays a New Englander battling the British for the future of America. In a dramatic scene, the colonists lines collapse under intense pressure from superior British Troops. Mel Gibson grabs the flag and rushes into the very worst part of the fighting. Waving the standard high, he charges ahead with a rag-tag remnant of fighting men. Mel Gibson takes the hill and plants the standard as a symbol of victory. To evangelize is to be the standard bearer. It is pressing forward when it appears the enemy has won. To evangelize is to rally the remnant and take higher ground.

When God gave us His standards, the Ten Commandments, I believe that He gave us a blueprint for ideal relationships. Jesus was the perfect fulfillment, culmination, and reason for the blueprint. Jesus shows us that laws exist to serve people, not the other way around. He’s now building my house in the image of His own. Because I can’t do it myself, He takes up residence in me and perfects me from glory to glory until my house and His are one and the same. The Kingdom of God is in me. As I encounter various surroundings, people, and belief systems, I am not to be conformed to these surroundings rather I am to bring the environment into the fullness of Christ.

Therefore, I need to possess an awareness of not only the group presence but also the spiritual make-up of the individuals in the environment. Such awareness requires discernment and guiding from the Holy Spirit. There is no formula. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth.

Here’s what I do. I study people. I watch and listen and look for clues of what they stand for and where the Holy Spirit might be moving in their lives. I would like to give you specific examples and a check-list you could follow to know how to discern the spirituality of other people. I can’t do it. Some of the players who I thought were the most Godly, turned out to be the least likely to evangelize. While those I found combative and contrary returned from missionary trips and won hundreds to Christ

For example, a new employee moved into my department. When we were discussing possible non-profit organizations for charitable office giving at Christmas time, she suggested Samaritan’s Purse, the organization run by Billy Graham’s son. Next, her daughter attends Wheaton University, a Christian college.

Another example is a co-worker who wears an ancient Egyptian symbol for a necklace and carries crystals to harness energy. She surprised me. This person has a higher power and pursues peace with every person she meets. I don’t know if she knows Jesus.

A third example is a young man who says he's a Christian. He asserts that we need to search for the divine within each of us. The bible isn't really the inerrant word of God because it's been translated too many times. Jesus is a great teacher.

I'm not sure that it's my job to evaluate the hearts of these people, yet I think it is my job to try and meet them where they're at. In Acts 17:22, Paul perceived that the people were superstitious. He beheld their devotions and their unknown gods as a springboard to the Living God who does not dwell in a temple made with hands. God once winked at this ignorance, but now calls everyone to repent before He judges the world in righteousness.

I've often thought that what I do is see evil and love people in spite of it. But, my husband doesn't even try to discern the hearts of other men. He just stands up for love, loves the people around him, and lets anyone who doesn't have loving motives bring it on.

Jesus was not surprised when Judas Iscariot betrayed him. There will always be naysayers and there will always be betrayers. Christians don't trust because people are specifically trustworthy. Christians don't trust people because of who they are. Christians trust others because Christ Jesus trusted and loved us even we were yet sinners. He loved us before we loved him.

Once you identify leaders and other individuals who share your ideal, you can then begin to form a small Christian community within the environment you wish to transform into the image of Christ. Such a small Christian community is what I affectionately call "your posse".

ASSEMBLE YOUR POSSE

I love westerns. Novels or movies, anything about the old west fascinates me. There's one aspect of the West that I think is quite applicable to our work as Christians today. When bad deeds needed to be ferreted out, when the black hats needed to be exchanged for white, the sheriff forms a posse of committed civilians and together they ride. The law of the West says the law never rides alone.

When Jesus sent out the disciples, He sent them in pairs. Jesus promises His disciples, "Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am also." The Holy Spirit is powerfully present in the unity of relationship. I think relationships are the difference between life and death.

Don Williams tells a story of the building of the Burma railroad into Thailand. The surviving Australians in those Burma death camps were distinguished by one thing; they had mates. The prisoners who had friends survived. Prisoners who tried to go it alone, didn't.¹⁹ The law of love never rides alone.

Why do I need a posse?

Most of my life, I viewed leadership as essentially individualistic. I considered myself competent, confident, and capable of tackling the tough issues on my own. I didn't need help, even if I could trust others to help me in the way I wanted to be helped.

Yet, Solomon expresses his philosophy of leadership as clearly, a cooperative endeavor.

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

I need a team because if I try it alone, I'll get rejected and ejected faster than dusty air gets aspirated from an itchy throat. I need a team because I can't usher in a kingdom by myself. There are no fishing poles in the Bible. There are only nets. Think about it, you can't catch fish in a net if you're the only one holding it. Even our Lord had a posse. I guess if a team of people was good enough for God's son, maybe I need to learn something about working together in groups. You will need two types of posses.

What is a Posse?

The origin of the word posse is from the Latin and literally means power to be able. A strong posse is the key to Christian affiliation rather than isolation. The first type of

¹⁹ Don Williams Healing in Action Conference San Diego, CA April 27, 2003

posse is characterized by close, deep relationships with likeminded, supportive friends. These friends will share your belief in the word, faith in Jesus Christ. It can be a bible study, an accountability meeting, or fellowship group.

This type of posse is characterized and unified by an abiding commitment to the peace and presence of Jesus Christ. Typically the membership of such a group does not cross denominational lines, but it may.

The second kind of posse is specific to a particular environment or setting, such as the workplace. An environment specific posse is the carpool lane of Christianity in a specific context. An environment specific posse is the building of relationships with like-minded individuals who share a common vision to transform a particular place. This type of posse almost always transcends denominational differences.

Surprisingly, on one occasion, I didn't form a posse with only people who I knew to be like-minded. In fact, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I took a risk and included one individual who may not have definitively shared my ideal for transforming the environment to Christ. At the time, I really wrestled "should I include this person. What will he think of my clearly stated intention to serve Christ in my work?"

As it turned out, he never really voiced his commitment as a Christian although there were hints as we went along. Now, he's a small group leader and chief technology officer for a local mega-church. When I stood up, it seems, those around me were forced to take a stand. You may not always have a posse or group who support your leadership efforts. Sometimes, the witness of one person who is willing to stand completely alone can lead people into clarifying their own values and beliefs.

How do I form a posse?

As a child, have you ever played red rover? It's a game where two lines of children face one another with some distance between them. One group of children locks arms as tightly as they can and then they chant in sing song voices, "red rover, red rover, send Johnny right over." Johnny then runs across the gap as fast as he can and slams into the line of lock-armed children and tries to break through their line. If Johnny can't break through, he joins the new group. If Johnny can break through, he takes the weakest link back to the original group with him. Once the lines are clearly drawn, either one group gains a player or loses a person. There's no stalemate. The opposing side always goes after the weakest children first.

Your job in the environment is to make sure that the lines are clearly drawn so that every body knows exactly what team you are on. Amazingly, when one person stands up and professes, it seems to catalyze the whole setting and you can see people take sides. Ultimately, when you stand for Christ makes it impossible for other people not to evaluate what team they are on.

You may be thinking that with lines clearly drawn and people choosing up sides that a posse is just another word for a clique. The idea of a Christian clique is not only counterintuitive it's both damaging and disparaging to our faith walk. We are commanded to "love others as I have loved you". Everyone has a place in the picture.

The unique thing about your posse is it's designed and intended to involve everyone. The whole point of the posse is to eventually include all the people in a particular place. Your goal, with successive approximation, is to get closer and closer to the ideal of a loving Christian environment. "so that they may be one, as you, Father, are one in me and I in you" (John 17:20-21). The law of love rides to bring in the desperados.

Wherever you are, raise a standard for Christ. Clearly articulate in your actions and words and emotions that you are living with light and love. Find people who share your love of Christ. Lock arms with them. Walk with them. Pray with them and learn to play with them. With fellowship and fun, the work of the evil one is almost undone.

What about Diversity?

As you form your posse with like-minded individuals who share your passion and purpose to infuse the environment with the love Jesus Christ, you may be wondering about the role of diversity. The world seems to advocate unity through diversity, and suggests that as we embrace others who are different we will be more unified. Often the dimension of diversity we are most encouraged to embrace is diversity of thought and a range of values and beliefs diverse from our own.

I would suggest that we achieve a sincere appreciation for diversity as we are grounded in the unity of a single goal and purpose that is greater than any one of us. That ideal is the source of unity. It is a single-minded vision for the transformation of a particular environment.

As your environment specific posse emerges, members will likely be diverse across almost every other dimension: age, gender, ethnicity, ability, style, experience, and Christian faith communities. Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Born Again Pentecostals, and all those who love and worship our Lord Jesus Christ -- God made flesh, died, and rose again a ransom for our sins -- will unite.

Rick Joyner details this denominational diversity of Christ's devotees in his book *Mobilizing the Army of God*.²⁰ In August of 1993, Rick had a vision of the church represented on an island in the middle of the sea. Numerous buildings were on the island. Each building represented a denomination. The buildings were at war with one another.

But, inside each building were lights. While the buildings warred against each other out of jealousy, these individual lights worked faithfully to heal the wounded and to pray to

²⁰ Joyner, R. (1994). Mobilizing the Army of God. Charlotte, NC: Morningstar Publications.

stop the storms that raged against the island. When the vestiges of these organizations were finally swept away by the storming seas, when Christ came again, the lights were people. These people were the pillars of Christ's kingdom.

I think Rick is right. I see many individuals who love Jesus Christ bridging the divide of denominational doctrines and uniting to bring people to a place of love and peace. To generate this kind of love and compassion, you need a plan.

FORMULATE YOUR PLAN

A man once had three children. While each woman had been raised in the same faith tradition, they lived quite differently.

One child held her head high and loudly pronounced her love for Jesus Christ. She quoted scripture and read spiritual books. But at home, she was an angry and caustic person. She berated her loved ones. Those who knew her well called her selfish.

The other child hung her head in shame. She was a rebel. She was fun and had many friends, yet she never felt good enough for anyone or anything. She thought herself unworthy of God's love and constantly ran from Him.

The third child looked straight ahead and in her focus on the work, she never spoke of Christ. She didn't preach scripture. She never asked anything for herself and worked and worked to show kindness and concern for everyone she met.

The first daughter seems to remind us of a Pharisee and typifies many religious people. They have God's Truth, yet no one trusts them because many tasks they do are self-righteous. They may know God deeply and personally but their questionable walk and their lack of work dilutes their witness.

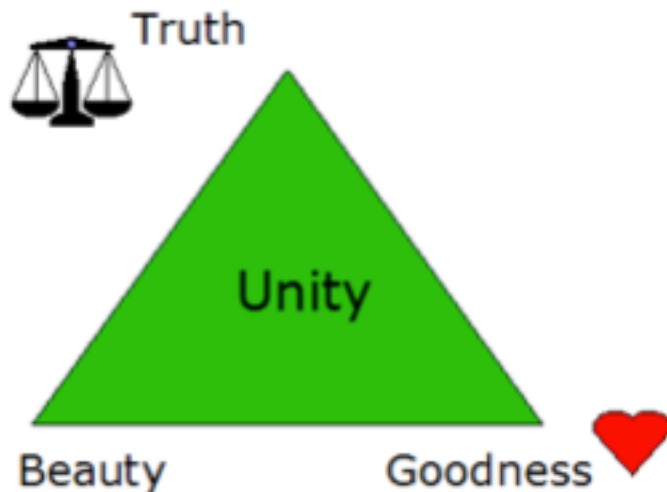
The second daughter seems to remind us of the prodigal son. She has so many friends who trust her and love her. Yet, she rarely deepens her friendships by sharing the truth of God's love.

The third daughter loves patiently. Her walk speaks volumes. Yet, she too dilutes the power of her purpose because her friends, limited in number due to her concentration on committed service, may find her a drudge. And when she does take time out from her tasks to see people who are in pain she rarely illuminates their suffering with the Light of God's word. Yet, her self-sacrificial love speaks volumes.

It would be wonderful to unite these three daughters of the faith. The ideal is the Truth of God's word, locking arms with her sister who builds so many fun-filled friendships, leaning on the one works and serves tirelessly. It would be ideal to unite the law of the prophets and the knowledge of the Holy with the beauty of grace and forgiveness and intertwine them with the power of righteous acts and fruitful works. What a mighty body we would be with all the watchmen speaking with one voice -- the whole body of Christ

-- the harmony of peace, the power of purpose and prayer, praising God and transforming every place.

Figure 17: Unity in the Body of Christ



If every task existed to deepen relationships for the purpose of sharing truth, we would indeed experience TNT.

What do you want to communicate?

It's difficult to communicate beauty by beating the unsaved over the head with truth. It's challenging to shine light on goodness when we have no patience or gentleness. It's impossible to develop unity through bickering. We can't preach peace and not live in peace. "How can we say we love God who we have not seen when we do not love our brother who we can see"? The end and the means for communicating Christ are inseparable; if we want people to know God's love we must show God's love.

Christ is not a religious approach. It is not a political process of engaging the majority to vote for love. It's not about threatening and frightening, it's about yielding and inviting. It's not about stamping out all other choices. It's about presenting Christ clearly.

I think we live in a world that is sick of snake oil salesman. Satan flooded the market with cheap imitations and nobody is buying anymore. Oh, I know, the sinner's prayer is prayed often enough. Any consumer worth their salt can see that's a good decision. "Let's see, if I pray for five minutes, I never have to do anything else and I get out of jail for all eternity. Super! Sign me up".

“Now what’s that you say, there’s another model you’re selling an upgrade. All I have to do is forsake everything, all my possessions, my family, I’ll suffer persecution, have no place to rest my head, and I’ll get to be called a follower of Jesus. No thanks, I’m happy with my stripped-down model; it’s far less costly. I don’t care if you will throw in a couple of crowns and a hearty well done. Oh, you forgot to mention a fruit basket filled with peace and joy and longsuffering – shoot, I can get plenty of that on my own.”

I think the world is looking at Christians and saying, “Why should I? Show me the proof.” I think that is exactly what God is preparing to do when he reveals the futility of a peace created by the hands of men. He intends to show that only self-sacrificing love conquers all and only his servants, when faced with persecution and intense trials, will not bend.

Yet, these suffering servants will not stand alone. They will stand strengthened by one another and united. A single star in the night sky can easily mislead the untrained the eye and reality be a satellite, but there’s no doubting a constellation of stars in formation. They shine true. It’s the way they cluster that provides the clue that their light is right.

No more excuses. You may say that you can’t present the Gospel because you work in a secular setting. My daughter asked me recently if I worked in a Christian University. I said that it used to be. She replied, “As long as you’re there, Mom, it will always be a Christian place.”

If others are going to listen to us, they’ve got to see that we are different. If we only do the things that we want to do or feel like doing, then it’s unlikely we’ll stand out from a crowd of other people who are simply fulfilling their own desires and appetites. Yielding means that we do what God and others ask us to do without clinging to what our self wants us to do, even when that self thinks it’s working for God.

Here’s an example. What if you work for a bad boss, or even an abusive, unfair, or criminal supervisor? My friend works for such a boss who scares every employee into constant fear of retribution or isolation.

She has a right to be angry and to feel hurt because she is treated so badly. She has a right to feel tired and worn-down. My friend has vowed that she will never surrender to such people. Yet, exercising your rights is never right.

God’s word suggests we Christians should take an alternative approach. “All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered”. (1 Timothy 6:1)

A mother of three, still nursing the baby and trying to lose weight, and working as a professor and trying to start a ministry has a right to feel tired and weary. She has a right to a little self-pity, or does she?

When Christ hung on the cross, He had a right to feel a little worn, perhaps angry at the people who had, well, crucified Him. Jesus chose to voluntarily yield all His rights – the right to be treated with care, not to be bludgeoned, bloodied, bruised and ultimately He yielded His entire body in self-sacrificial love.

True, many people have given up their bodies to be burned, such as Tibetan monks fighting for justice, lit themselves on fire. But, even if I give my body to be burned and I have not love, I'm just a clanging symbol, tinkling brass.

Now, my little feelings of weariness are nothing compared to what my savior suffered. If I won't surrender lovingly to bad bosses in the workplace, why do I surrender so easily to self-pity? If I won't yield even to unrighteous men, why do I yield to self-righteousness?

I am trying to offer up my tiredness to the Lord. His strength is made perfect in weakness. I can "gladly boast in my infirmities that His power may more fully rest upon me". Press in and press on. Take every thought captive to Christ including feeling down and out. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, so I must fight the good fight of faith and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Love looks so different than the desires of the flesh. On the road to Emmaus, the stranger looked as if He would continue on His way. But when they asked Him, he stayed. Jesus doesn't storm the beaches. He is gentle in spirit. He is meek. Jesus didn't bruise the tender reed or shout in the streets. He worked in community and in relationship.

Certainly our Lord preached openly and healed. Yet, He focused primarily on a small number of committed followers. He invested His energy strategically. I think that the real work of my life is to clearly communicate the law of love right where I am. I am to pour myself into the people around me.

The message of my life is not some "mamby pampy" love that says I only love you when you do what I want. Some people have a picture of a petty patriarch who punishes pejoratively. The love of our Lord is persevering love that stays steadfast.

"Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law". (Romans 13:10) Without the law, I can't trust the love. Without truth there is no trust. My daughter wants so much to have parental approval, she hides her actions to prevent retribution. She's so desperate to stay in connection, she will flat-out lie. I can't trust that kind of love. Love is tripartite – task, trust, and truth.

I think that one powerful way to communicate the law of love is through helping others to see who they are in Christ. That's how Jesus started His message on the mountain to the disciples; the beatitudes are blueprint of who we are born to be. That's how this book started. I asked you to examine your purpose and to look at who you were created to be. I believe many people are looking for clarity about who they are. They

long to hear from someone they can trust, who can show them their destiny. They long to see the truth of a life lived in gentle service.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, I know who I am. I know who I was created to serve. Psalm 139 tells me that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. All my days are written in God's book and God's Spirit is always with me.

This is what people need to hear. They are loved. They are secure. They are uniquely, marvelously, and skillfully made. What if your purpose in life became to help other people find their purpose in life in Christ?

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us". (1 John 4:11-12) Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Three times Peter replied, "You know Lord that I love you." Jesus stated, "If you love me, feed my sheep." The sheep are thirsty for good clean water and the truth about who they are and how loved they are. How will you feed His sheep?

How do you want to communicate the love of Christ?

I know a young man who worships the power of the rational mind. "My body is just a meat stick", he said flatly. I am only limited by the power of my thoughts.

I tried to persuade him using my most cogent arguments that the power of rational thought is limited. I tried to show him how much we had in common – that the world is in disarray, that we shared a heartfelt desire to make it a better place; that there has to be something more to this life than just what we can see. I reasoned with him that if my beliefs are inaccurate and his are correct, I lose nothing. But, if my beliefs are correct and his are misguided then he loses everything. If the Bible is true and Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him, isn't Jesus worth investigating. I countered his belief that nothing is inherently bad with the statement that man is inherently fallen and requires a savior, then no amount of rational thought will replace a sinful nature. With every effort I made to come to one mind, my logical, rational approach was thwarted with his own thoughts and his experiences and his beliefs that ran counter to the Jesus Christ I was describing. I flunked logic 101 – you can't use logic to show that logic is powerless compared to love.

I realized that I was not going to change this man. Frankly, I wasn't sure I wanted to. While logic, like all truth, leads to God, the letter of the law kills. The spirit of the law is light and love and peace. I only knew that I had an obligation to present to him the truth about who he is and let him choose who would define his life. I wasn't going to define his life; Jesus is the defining factor.

I figured that the best plan for me, in conjunction with rational thought where appropriate, was to simply love this person, right where he was, for who he was.

For me, it meant affirming his desire to make a difference in the world. If I could teach him about love, I needed to reach him in love. Surprisingly, when I invited this young man to join myself and others in prayer, he did. I learned to hold a hand while holding the line. Content is what you want to say. Process is how you say it. It's really difficult to separate what you say from how you say it. To effectively communicate the love of Christ we need to seize every opportunity to esteem others as we esteem ourselves.

If seen brilliant students who study and study and consume all the knowledge they can. I've listened to scholars who've created elegant thoughts, deep, and powerful, moving poems. I've stood side by side with some of the hardest working people I know. Yet to be effective, knowledge consumption creation, and distribution must be balanced. One person can be a powerful force when they consume the word of God, commune with God, and then share what they've learned in connection with others.

If you buy a book and never read it, the message will have no power. Your life, no matter how beautifully led, to be effective, must be read. You can have the best product in the world, but if you can't put it in people's hands, there's no chance they can use it. You are God's distributor of love and your plan for evangelizing the environment is your distribution plan.

Your distribution plan needs to be three-pronged and reach the heart, the head and the hands. It must incorporate your character and compassion, your connections, and your competence. Your plan will show people, what to do, how to do and why it needs doing. Your plan will be based on the perfect blueprint, the consummate cornerstone, the way, the Truth, and the life.

Perhaps some examples of my own plans for environmental evangelization might be helpful. Committed to each one, I figured that I could follow these precisely with every person I met and they might experience freedom in Christ.

PLAN A: Write the captive a prescription. Tell them, "You are a captive, you're sick and I've got the medicine". Tell them to read the Bible twice a day, fast once a week, pray often, and call you in the morning. They may reply, "I don't feel sick" and they throw your prescription out the window.

PLAN B: Anytime you see someone who needs something, give it to them if you have it no matter how much it costs you. After all, love your neighbor as yourself.

PLAN C: Tell them they are in prison. They will say, "I had no idea that this is a prison. Thanks for telling me" and they jump into freedom.

PLAN D: Go to you local bookstore. Buy all the tracts you can and hand them out to everyone you meet and say "God loves you".

PLAN E: Brag about how pious you are and tell them they can be like you if they only knew Jesus.

PLAN F: Tell them that you can't help them. Only God can help them. Then say, "I'll pray for you" and walk away.

I've done all of these and worse. I've been prideful, boastful, zealous without any discernment, exuberant, effective, and ineffective. I've done lots of great evangelization for a lot of wrong reasons. Sometimes I saw effective results and sometimes not.

Here is my systematic plan of evangelization. I am not original in my approach so, just as Mary said when referring to Jesus in her last recorded words in the Bible, "Do whatever He tells you to do."

You may reply that you listen to God, but He's not talking, or at least, you can't hear His voice. My recommendation to you is to refer to Plan A above. God promises that He will make your paths straight, He promises to lead you into righteousness. Let His word dwell richly in you and He will guide you to engage the hearts, minds, and hands of those around you.

Hearts: Win a heart to open a mind

A student wandered into my office recently, trying to choose between a degree in leadership or a degree in Criminal Justice. I used a sheet of paper divided in two to generate pros and cons between the two degrees. We discussed the benefits of expertise compared to versatility, we analyzed and the two options were ultimately deadlocked in his mind. My plan to reach him through logic and reason seemed to offer little clarity regarding his purpose in life.

I then approached the decision from the heart of the matter. I asked him, "Why do you want to be in law enforcement?" "What are you doing now?" He told me that he currently supervises over two hundred people – military men and security guards who he really cares for and tries to nurture. I was shocked. I said, "You mean to tell me that you are influencing, encouraging, and uplifting over two hundred men and women on a regular basis? Most people never have such a significant sphere of influence. You have a servant's heart. You have a call to leadership." The degree program he needed to choose was obvious to both of us. He left my office, saying "No one ever took notice of what I did like that; no one has ever told me what I did was so important." When that young man left my office, we both knew that we would learn a lot from each other.

Because of my faith in Christ, I could hold on loosely to the outcome. I really wanted this student to join me, but I knew whether he chose to or not, the decision belonged to he and God. When I relax and don't rush for results, I release others to find the Truth in their own time. I don't have to be driven by fear to get people to accept Christ – what a ridiculous thought to frenetically and fearfully invite people to fall in love.

There is no room for fear when we take up permanent residence in a life of love²¹. The way we know we have transferred from death to life is that we love. We think the brain is so smart, yet a human heart gives off 60 times more energy than the brain. With current technology, your heartbeat can be measured as far as 1200 feet away from your body.²²

In order to start a plan for environmental transformation, lead with the heart. Tim Woodruff²³ suggests that we make a list of names that includes each person in the environment. Next to each name, write down one need or concern they have that's not related to the environment. Examples at work might be a co-worker with a rebellious teenager or a secretary with a sick child at home. If you can't remember the names of any of your co-workers or can't identify any of their individual needs, that's the first place to start.

Once you have names and needs, you have opportunities to intercede. Pray on their behalf. Pray for as many people as possible in the environment whether they're part of your posse or not. Then, let the Holy Spirit lead you into a way to reach their hearts and minds in love.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 14:4-8)

Heads: Ideas and individuals of influence

When I started this book, I was all about getting ahead for Christ. I worked and I sweated and evangelized. I saw relationships as a way to influence people and mobilize and engage them for the kingdom. I finally realized that I must connect before I can direct.

Imagine you're headed to the grocery store and you happen to notice someone with a dead car battery. You pull over and bring your car alongside theirs. You let the other driver know that you live in the neighborhood and you express your willingness to help. Because you've built a quick rapport, they other motorist agrees. You get your battery cables and connect them from your car to theirs. You rev your engine a bit and the power is transferred until their car is charged. You remove the cables and you both drive off.

²¹ Judith McNutt Healing in Action San Diego, CA April 27, 2003

²² Barbara Ryan Healing in Action San Diego, CA April 27, 2003

²³ Tim Woodruff Walk This Way

In this scenario, the grocery run is the task. If the task didn't exist, you might never have come into proximity with the malfunctioning car. If you weren't alert or were driving erratically, while you pursued the task, the other motorist might not have trusted you.

The ability to establish trust is essential. If the other motor doesn't trust you, you'll never get the opportunity to take the cables out of your trunk. The cables symbolize the trusting relationship that will serve as a conduit for pure power to be poured through you into another.

That power is in the engine of your car. It's not your power. The most powerful force in the universe placed that power in your car. The power reserves will never be depleted because you and He meet every day so He can replenish you. That power is pure Truth and it's packaged in the word of God. When you speak His word, when you praise Him, when you love purely and completely, you are charging up the environment with pure grade TNT.

Now, you may think that there's no such thing as truth. Or that truth is constantly shifting. That's simply not the case.

Here's an analogy. I walked the dog outside my home on a clear night. Stars shimmered in the cloudless sky. The constellation Orion stood boldly above my rooftop. As I walked less a few hundred feet away, to a nearby overlook, the entire city lay beneath my feet and Orion now stood guard over the ocean. The stars had not drastically shifted in my minute stroll, rather my position changed in relation to the constellation.

Unlike stars that shift through the night sky, Truth never changes. It's always constant and truth is constantly relating even though my position and views are constantly moving.

Here's an example of how I intellectually try to transfer a little Truth. We found ourselves at a long table, for a long charity dinner, with a long program. I was not looking forward to the meal.

An elderly woman and her husband motioned us to the last empty seats. He was German. He immigrated to this country to work in nuclear technology at Livermore Laboratories. His wife clearly had great faith. He had a clear, great mind.

As dinner conversation ranged from travel to stock tips, we came to the topic of religion. He said, "One faith is as good as another. All religions are pretty much the same any way. Why all the fighting, can't we just have peace." He'd been scarred by the war and brutality of his generation, but I didn't have the courage to go with him to the heart of the matter, so I went to the head.

My soliloquy covered a variety of options of where a person could look for their life purpose. I think it was a mini-course on world religions, but since I have no training in the matter, I'm really not sure. I took a breath and dived in.

"God has given us a sound mind and we can think rationally and intentionally. Rational thought leads us to the logical conclusion that we can look in a variety of locations for our purpose. We can deny that we have any purpose in life which leads to futility and meaningless and emptiness. We can then choose to look to other people for our purpose which suggests that one purpose is as good as another, which is relativism and it also leads to futility. For goodness sake, if someone tells me I have pink hair, am I supposed to believe it? A third option is to look to myself and to embrace metaphysics and believe that matter doesn't matter and to think and think and if I just think long enough and hard enough and learn enough, then I will know my purpose which is to become my own god, which is a really big job and if I were a god, don't you think I would know? Another option is to look to creation and discover that my purpose is to love the earth and to embrace her as my mother and preserve her and protect her. What if my existence pollutes her rather than purifies her? Why would the earth care about me if I am detracting from her beauty and harming her health? So, if I choose earth worship as my life purpose, then my very existence threatens the existence of my God. Another option is to realize that God exists and to know that he created me for a unique purpose, but he's no longer here so who cares and that's deism and I'm left lonely and wandering and wondering why God doesn't care about me anymore. Or, I can look to a god who is punishing and petty, who prefers to make me pay for not doing things his way. If I disobey, he will squash me and squelch me. My purpose then is to appease him. Finally, I can realize that God created me in His image. He is both just and loving. He sent His only son to die for me as a way to prove the extent of His love. The end result of that choice is that I am uniquely created and my purpose is to love God and love His people. Rational thought is a gift from God. He wants us to know where to look for Him. Don't you think?"

The German scientist blinked. His wife smiled slowly.

Now, the challenge to my heady approach was well articulated by Albert Einstein who suggested that problems cannot be solved at the same level of thought that they were created. I was using rational thought to logically demonstrate that logical thought is insufficient to supply us with a life purpose, but it is a good way to tell us where to look.

So, the heady part of any plan to evangelize an environment has limitations because faith seems more easily caught than taught. Nevertheless, all parts of the body are important and the more I learn about learning, the better prepared I can be to lead people to the heart of Christ. A great resource for leading people to Christ through logic is Greg Koukl's Tactics in Defending the Faith²⁴. Greg calls Christians to be "confident, courageous, yet winsome and attractive".

²⁴ Greg Koukl Tactics in Defending the Faith (2000) (1800-2 reason) www.str.org.

Yet, there are more subtle ways than logic to foster an environment conducive to the spirit of the Gospel. I use a film clip that you may know from “The Last of the Mohicans.” In these scenes, the enemy threatens the central love interest with imminent slaughter. Her lover tells her, “Stay alive. You are strong. You are strong enough to submit. I will come for you. No matter how far. I will find you”. He then dives down a sheer cliff face into a raging waterfall. Near drowned, he crawls ashore and tracks her over rocks and up mountains. He relentlessly pursues his bride. The suspense peaks when he finds her as she faces burning at the stake. He disarms himself and walks into the enemy camp. He is spit upon and kicked. He comes before the judge and pleads for the life of his beloved and ultimately offers himself in her place that she may live.

This is a moving portrayal of the Gospel. It speaks to the spirit of every viewer who longs to find love and honor and glory and surrender and salvation. It speaks to the inalterable truth that love is always in relentless pursuit. It speaks to the truth that we have a defender before our enemy and before the judge who says, “Take me instead. Take me.” Love will find you, no matter how far...It's a dramatic way to draw people into a discussion of Christ.

There are at least three levels of learning.²⁵ The first level is rigorous logic. The second level is drama -- fanciful engagement through the arts, music, literature, and entertainment. Conversation: “Kitchen table” experiential lessons. What leaders do is utilize all three levels at the prompting of the Holy Spirit to argue, illustrate, or apply truth.

How do I decide what stories and materials to use?

If you are going to get a drink of water, would you rather drink from a muddy, polluted urban reservoir or a cool, sparkling mountain-top spring? Obviously the purest source is the best source to drink.

The purest form of truth is our handbook, the Bible. The more you can openly, spontaneously and naturally share God's word, the more impact you will have in your surroundings because God's word contains the unique promise that it shall not return void. In addition to the inspired word of God, I believe that all truth originates from God therefore I use materials and ideas that are true and contain Truth.

How to Transform Lives Through Truth Telling: Examples

If we are to be water carriers, then we need to be carriers of the purest source of truth. We should not settle for falsehoods, half-truths, or even just stories that are true. Whenever possible we need to give people The Truth. The purest form of truth is always Biblical.

²⁵ Zacharias, Robbie. (2003). Why I'm not an atheist. Truths that Transform

For example, when I teach college students about principles of giving, I use excerpts from Proverbs to demonstrate the financial practices of Solomon. When I teach students about leadership, I use a case study and actual verses from Nehemiah. Instead of using anecdotes that aren't even true, or case studies from corporations now defunct, or even classic fables, I am committed to sharing the word of God. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart". (Hebrews 4:12)

Another reason to wield the word of God is the multiplier effect. We need leaders not just more people who take on tasks. We need people who will bring other people to bring other people. The plan for bringing in new harvest has got to be contained in the seeds of God's word.

When Ezekiel was commanded to speak life into the valley of dry bones, he prophesied the word of God over the bones. Barbara Wentroble suggests that the Hebrew word for prophesy is Naba. Naba means to "to bubble or flow forth, to gush, to boil up or over".

Another reason to speak God's word is for my own protection. I realize, that however well intentioned I may be, I am in danger of speaking my own heart and not the heart of my Lord. I have a problem with pride.

I am to let the word dwell richly in me. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord. God says admonished me "I am in heaven, You are on earth, therefore let thy words be few." Therefore, I have to create a plan for disseminating, not my notions and perspectives, but God's plan for mobilizing people into action.

Hands: People mobilize with mutual trust

I am the fragrance of Christ. The plan is how my posse and I diffuse that fragrance, not as peddlers. We shed the love of Christ abroad in our hearts.

One of my neighbors is an elderly gentleman. I've known him now for two years. He came from a Mormon family. His father was a cruel man. His dear wife died of Alzheimer's. He's an atheist.

I've invited him to church. I've given him tracts and books. I am an apologist who's sorry that nothing has worked to bring this man to Christ. Now, I pretty much just bring him food and jokes.

Yesterday, he told me a story about a stray cat. The cat was wild and independent. My neighbor worked to tame that cat. First, he set food out for her. Then, he progressively moved the food closer and closer to the door of his house. Then, he brought the food inside the house. Pretty soon, that cat was sitting on my neighbor's television to get warm and ultimately she curled up in his lap.

I don't know if my neighbor tried to tell me that he knew what I was doing. Regardless, I want to see my neighbor curled up, content in my heavenly father's lap. If I need to carry him cookies till Christ comes, that's what I'm going to do.

There are a couple of challenges with my evangelization effort. First, he always seems to want to visit in the middle of my yard chores, when I'm late for work, or lugging in groceries. I have to keep reminding myself that the groceries are not my task. My task is build enough trust with God's children so that they can see the Truth of Christ living in me. Second, I need to make sure I feed my neighbor not just physical food, but also spiritual food. That's hard because I don't want to scare this independent, strong-minded man away. It's a delicate balance between building trust and sharing truth. Third, I need to know that the battle for this man's soul does not belong to me. Stand still and see the glory of the Lord. He is the author and finisher of my faith and my neighbor's. His timing is perfect. Today is the day of salvation. Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

Anything worth communicating is worth communicating thoroughly. When God wanted to influence Pharaoh, the Lord Almighty did not just tell Ramses one time or speak in one way. The Lord sent Moses with the same message, ten different times and sent in ten different ways. This is the concept of 10 X10 communication. If it's good enough for God, it's good enough for me.

While you may not have the hail of heaven at your disposal, you can get creative. Leave magazines in the break room. Start sharing books with your colleagues. You can identify the biggest problems and barriers and work to improve the systems. When you improve the environment through your competence, you are making the place more conducive to peace.

What is TNT Leadership?

TNT Leadership is the explosive power that comes from realizing that your task is to build trusting relationships with people so you can share with them the truth about Christ. Every job – mothering, accounting, cashiering – is an opportunity to demonstrate competence, character, and to build connections. When you do every task as unto the Lord, people will trust you more and more. The more trust you establish with others, the greater window you have to share scriptural, propositional, and deeply personal truth about who they are in Christ and how Jesus died for the forgiveness of their sins.

My Task is to Build Trust and Bring People to the Truth

When I do TNT leadership, I join with other like-minded individuals to build trust and bring people to the truth. I am learning that my job is not my job. I'm a professor, but that's not my job. I'm a wife and that's not my job – well, maybe that one is. I'm a mommy of three children under 7 years old, and even that's not my job. I'm a CCD

Sunday school teacher, a bible study member, an author, and a grocery shopper. None of these tasks are my job.

I read Ephesians 4:25 which says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another". So I told myself, the gospel is my job. So, I threw myself into reading the word and speaking the word and bombarding, I mean -- blessing, others with the word. I was zealous without discernment.

When our third child was born, I was bleary eyed and sleepless; the little guy needed to eat every three hours. One night I paused to ask why an almighty creator couldn't take the time to put a bigger fuel tank on this newly issued human being. The answer may seem simple to many parents, but to me it was startling.

God hardwired frequent feedings in an infant so that he would receive necessary nourishment, and more importantly, to build a relationship through our frequent contact. God designed regular feedings to build connection and closeness. The task exists to build trust.

For a more hard-hitting example, let's explore the purpose of commerce. Why didn't God, in His divine wisdom, allow human families to be totally self-sufficient? When Solomon's treasuries are examined we see that somewhere between 94-98% of the gross national product of his kingdom was recycled. The wealth that flowed into Jerusalem flowed back through and out to the people. Solomon used commerce to build connections. The ends and means to his success were inextricably interwoven.

Such a view of commerce as a conduit for Christ-like love runs contrary to self-centeredness. Post-modernism proclaims the self as first. Christianity counters that "He must become greater. I must become less." Becoming less consumed with tasks, less focused on self, leaves room for love that is both our source and summit.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long, and is kind; love envies not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:1-6)

Even if I give up my body to be burned and do not have love, I am as a clanging cymbal. If I want to keep doing God's projects, I have to realize that the purpose of the project is only to bring me into proximity with particular people so that God can bless them through me. That's TNT. That's the power of a purpose that's bigger than

projects, even if those projects are kingdom focused. Every person on this planet is my project so that none should perish.

God gave me these tasks as present priorities that are passing away. He gave me these tasks that I might glorify Him by performing every task to the best of my ability, consequently, building trusting relationships with various people I come in contact with as I go about my business. When I build these relationships, every job becomes an opportunity to be about my Father's business. Every job becomes an opportunity to bring the peace of Christ to people Jesus dearly loves -- all people He doesn't want to perish.

For example, I have a dear friend. Her mother and father were devout Lutherans. Her father just died. Her work as an attorney is stressful. She experiences chronic back pain. Any typing she does causes pain in the nerves in her hands. She is often sick with colds and the flu. She's wondering if she should continue.

I shared with her today the truth. I didn't quote scripture. I shared with her the truth of who she is in Christ. I told her about her unique gifts as a bright legal mind. I reminded her that she's the most relationship-oriented person I know. I pointed out the unique marriage in her personality of both compassion and critical reasoning. I commented on the rarity of such a combination among members of the legal profession. I reminded her of her dream to one day be a judge. I predicted the importance of her uniqueness in the world. I encouraged her to ask God to show her in exactly what context she could best use her gift. I put on the mind of Christ and spoke what is not as if it were. I spoke in love and hope and reminded her who she is in Christ.

Originally we had a task, a job that we did together. We did that job as if unto the Lord. Almost twenty years later, we have built a trust. Today, we share the truth. That's the TNT model on an individual basis. The TNT model on an environmental basis is simply more people, doing more of the same, in the same place, until both the people and the place see the face of Jesus.

I believe that the TNT model is personified biblically in the lives of two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and John. Peter was task oriented. John was the one our Lord loved best. We see John at the last supper reclining on Jesus' breast while Peter doesn't even have the courage to ask Jesus the identity of the betrayer. Peter is the clearly identified leader, but when Peter inquires why John will be allowed to tarry until the end, Jesus says "What is that to thee, follow thou me." Peter is about results. John is about relationships. Jesus is real. The trinity of task, trusting relationships, and truth is pure dynamite.

My husband and I create a similar combination. He loves people. He collects people. He's a master conversationalist, an excellent leader, and a natural relationship builder. He believes that we witness through our walk. He supports. He needs to turn up the volume on imparting truth. I collect ideas. I drive to the goal. I love to accomplish and achieve and strive. I memorize the Bible and I am all about the Truth and the talk. I

challenge. I need to turn up the volume on building trust. Together, with Christ at the center, we are unstoppable.

TNT is about explosive, unparalleled power. Such dynamic power occurs when Christians work together in every task to build trust and lead others to the Truth. Every task is an opportunity to build trust. The point of building trust is to teach truth.

I believe that teaching and transmitting truth is most effectively achieved in an atmosphere of trust combined with humility and freedom of thought. We can know truth. We don't have to fear losing the love of Christ while lovingly transmitting it. We can approach ideas inquisitively, explore the logical consequences of those ideas, and know that the truth will come out. Like Elijah in the battle with the priests of Baal, we "know who we have believed and are persuaded that He is able". Let others call upon their intellectual gods, and I'll call on the Almighty. Let the best ideas win.

When I am competent, people trust me. When I display the character of Christ, people trust me. When I build connections and deep meaningful relationships with other committed, compassionate Christians, we created a cord that cannot be broken. Truth telling is so very powerful because it's virtually impossible to insult someone who is truly honest. "There is nothing there to insult."²⁶ Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.(John 14:17). Spiritual poverty and rigorous honesty render liberty.

My Task is to Trust the Truth

If I want power, influence and impact, I must be still and know that He is God. I must trust Him with everything, in every moment, every day, in every way. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will direct your path." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

As Truth is Deepened in Me, I am Entrusted with Greater Tasks

The third step in TNT leadership is the desire to accomplish greater and more influential tasks for advancing the Truth of the Lord's kingdom. It is the realization that God doesn't want to work through me unless He's working in me.

My children watched Yul Brenner and Charlton Heston in The Ten Commandments. I commented to my husband how Moses must have felt the weight of responsibility when leading the mixed multitude out of Egypt. My spouse, in his gentle wisdom said, "Moses didn't have anything to worry about. He had a direct line to God."

I realized that the power Moses displayed is still available to me today. It is still, if I will simply be still, and know that He is God. His word is alive and real, sharper than any

²⁶ Manning, B. (2000). The Ragamuffin Gospel. Multnomah Publishers: Oregon .p.85

two edged sword. As His word dwells richly in me, He teaches me His ways that I may walk in His paths. I don't have to struggle in my own strength. I don't have to be afraid or ensnared by pride because I am leaning on Him. It's His work, not mine. He's big enough for any task.

Every task is an opportunity for me to rest in Him. Every task is an opportunity to influence others. Every task is an occasion for God's grace to be revealed in me. Every task is a little piece of eternity only because of the people it brings into place. The point of this life is not to produce; the point is the people. People are the only thing of eternal value.

You can't teach what you don't have. Truth is a personal relationship with the living God. Truth is Jesus Christ. Truth is the presence of Jesus Christ unmistakably present in loving relationships. Truth is unshakable, unstoppable, undeniable, non-negotiable.

Yet, I had this inclination to hit people over the head with Truth. I didn't love mercy or walk humbly before my God. "Grace is getting what we don't deserve (favor), and mercy is not getting what we do deserve (justice). ..."Self-righteous people find it almost impossible to be gracious; they claim always to be after "the truth", no matter the cost."²⁷ Yet, the Truth is that God is merciful and compassionate.

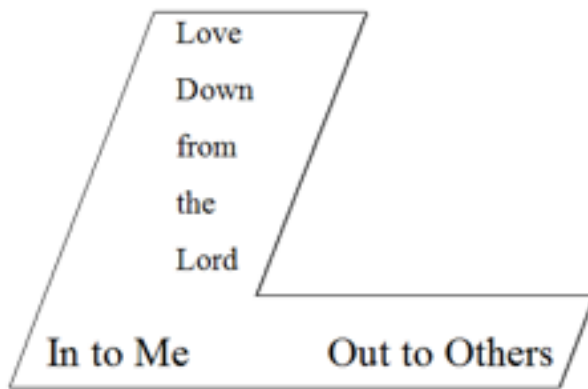
In Psalms 19, the first six verses make it clear that God is perfectly capable of being His own "pitch-man"; every part of His creation reveals His nature and power so we are, as it says in the book of Romans, without excuse. My job is to trust God to take care of everything, at the same time, I'm, in the words of Wesley, called to "do all the good I can, as often as I can, to all the people I can".

I think that people change when the law, statutes, precepts, commands, fear and ordinances of the Lord are lived-out by His servants who know that the law is more than Ten Commandments that are perfect guidelines for healthy relationships. The law is fulfilled in loving God with all your heart and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself.

TNT leadership is tripartite. God loved me and called me to look to Him. I answer His call and I look up to God, in confidence that he loves me so that I can reach out to love others. When I look up, when I love, I am loved, He is loved.

Figure 18: The Pathway of TNT

²⁷ R.T. Kendall in *Known by our Love: Celebrating the Spirit Filled Life* (2003). Family Christian Book Stores.



I am excited to be about God's business. "Oh, how great is your goodness, Which you have laid up for those who fear you, which you have prepared for those who trust in you in the presence of the sons of men" (Psalm 31:19).

My task is to trust the Truth. Next, I can make every one of life's tasks, however mundane, an opportunity to build trust with others and lead others into the Truth. Then, Truth is entrusted in me for greater tasks.

If you are a TNT leader the people are your project. The people are your purpose. To connect people to the purpose, you must connect with the people. One of the best ways to connect is by listening.

Ears: What is the role of listening in the transformation process?

Listening is the single most important skill in TNT leadership. Listening first to the Lord for His guidance and then listening to others for their pain and their need. TNT leaders are committed listeners.

Table 7: Five Types of Listeners²⁸

²⁸ Charles Stanley of In Touch Ministries

Combative Listener	Full of Self & Prejudice
Cautious Listener	Full of Fear
Cloudy Listener	Fuzzy, Floating, & Failing
Cluttered Listener	Full & Easily Distracted
Committed Listener	Focused & Engaged

Imagine your teenager returns from a retreat. How will you invite her to share her experience so you can engage and influence her walk in Christ. Will you ask closed questions, such as “Did you like the food?” “Who was there?” Will you fire eight questions quickly? Will you wash the dishes while you prompt her to share?

Or, you can ask her to share what surprised her about the weekend. Inquire about what she re-learned that she already knew. Focus on her with no distractions. Pause and give her time for reflection. Encourage with powerful non-verbals, such as nods of the head and “um hm”.

You may wonder if leaders ever listen to themselves. I think leaders listening to themselves happens all the time and is a scriptural practice. When Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of over-run Jerusalem and the people had been unfairly taxed and sold into slavery, Nehemiah “consulted with himself”. Nehemiah didn’t need a group of elders to see that the over taxation was wrong.

Like Paul, we must be “All things to all people that I might win one to Christ”. I think Paul meant that we must connect with people and that means that our motives are unwavering. Our methods are ever changing. The most loving thing to do will be to live the Truth. How we live the Truth will look different in every situation and setting.

While we share the truth in all our efforts to evangelize, the mark of our savior is Joy. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Jesus said, “I came that you might have life

abundantly that your joy may be full.” There is no more effective witness than a joyful countenance in the face of difficulty.

PREPARE FOR PERSECUTION

The most important work I can do is to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. To believe Jesus is to trust Jesus with everything I have, all that I am, all that I will ever become. Persecution and hardships represent the richest opportunities to deepen my faith, build my trust, and to stand-out for the truth.

How do you know when you're under attack?

They only tackle people carrying the ball. If you're advancing, principalities are probably plotting.

Surprisingly, it took me a long time to realize that I was experiencing attack. I had construed the everyday pressures of life, lack of energy, lost pieces of paperwork, or a shun from a co-worker, as just part of an average day.

What I came to realize is that these seemingly immaterial incidents were intended to distract my focus off of God's glory, draw my attention away from His work, and generally serve to demoralize and eventually, defeat me.

Don't be surprised, resentful or resigned. Jesus said “If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also”. (John 15: 18 - 20)

The book of Nehemiah does a thorough job of outlining varied methods of opposition and the attacks of naysayers. In this great biblical account, our hero, Nehemiah is called-out, cajoled, ridiculed, and threatened.

One approach of the enemy is the direct attack. This is an attempt to scare you and defeat you. Early on in my faith walk this is what I seemed to experience frequently. My first attempt to deal with a direct attack was to fight. I was acting in my own strength rather than the strength of the Lord.

Then, I learned not to fight, but to immediately flee to Jesus to help me. Now that I am no longer experiencing such direct adversity, I realize that this is still where I need to be, begging for Jesus to help me. “My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”. (Psalm 74:26)

Then I experienced doubt and second-guessed if my priorities were God's plans or my own. I finally surrendered and said, "God, if this is not your will, then shut it down. Open doors no man can open and shut doors no man can shut".

Next, I became demoralized and thought that my efforts made little difference. Then, I got distracted. I love to multi-task and I'm easily interested in day-to-day things or even good things that aren't the right things. I am a doer so I can easily be dissuaded from my primary goal. Now, I imagine I am one of those stoic guards, standing rock still in front of Buckingham Palace. I set my face like a flint and don't look to the right or the left when the enemy calls and tries to tear down walls the Lord builds around my time and energy.

Finally, the most sophisticated attempt to thwart my plans from God came from within. I was just plain self-centered. I found myself embroiled in petty jealousies and even doctrinal differences. I realized, what all of these attacks had in common; the greatest threat when experiencing persecution is taking my eyes off God.

I went to a movie with my husband and our nine-month old son. The movie was action-packed with loud crashes and blaring sound effects. My son squirmed in my lap and turned to see the blur of images race across the screen. He arched his back and tried to push away from me to see. I just held him close and gently rocked him. He was safe. He was serene. He had no reason to be scared regardless of what was going on around him.

I think that's how God feels about me. This world around me can get pretty scary. Crashing and banging and blow-ups can threaten my peace and my purpose. Yet, God longs to just hold me and rock me. He's got me. If I cling to the Lord and His word, I think it's quite impossible to ever be out of His will.

How do you know when you're experiencing opposition versus being out of God's will?

I planned the Bible study for months. Yet, at 4 a.m. the day of the first study, God had me up and reading a new passage and transcribing all new questions. I was tired and struggling to get through the day. I was cranky and convinced that perhaps I'd been wrong to put the group together, and probably no one would attend any way and what if this was my idea instead of God's and don't I deserve to suffer for thinking that I could do this and...I finally caught a cat nap and just asked God to please bless the thing.

When the going gets tough, I seem to revisit this question constantly. I read the Secrets of the Vine²⁹ and I want to know if am I being chastised for past mistakes or pruned for properly pursuing greater fruits. I fear that I am disobedient and getting out of step with God.

²⁹ Secrets of the Vine Wilkinson

I seemed to facilitate like an electrode bouncing between two opposite polarities. I looked inward and became trapped in the guilt and condemnation of my own conscience and effectively immobilized in fear. Then, I looked outward and compared myself to others. I became puffed with pride and gloated. Either way, I became eliminated as an effective ambassador for Christ.

Figure 19: Self Condemnation and Self-Commendation are Overcome by Adoration



It is only when I look up to the goodness of God, that I am free from guilt. Likewise, when I look to the glory of God I am humbled. Keeping my eyes on the Lord is how I stay balanced.

Grace is about staying in the center of God's word and will. I took a dance class recently and they introduced ballet. In the most basic practice of ballet, which is a notoriously graceful form of dance, the dancer's posture is tall and erect as if leaning on an imaginary wall. Her balance is anchored in strength. The dancer's eyes are always extended beyond her own movements, looking past her hands, into the great beyond. She doesn't look down or around.

Grace looks beyond circumstances. Grace looks beyond self. Grace leans on the solid foundation of the Lord. Grace looks up. Grace is strong. Grace is peaceful. Grace is balanced. Grace knows that "all things work together for good for those that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). That means all things – stupid things, misdirected comments, wrong terms, wrong turns, short cuts, and sideways schemes. Ultimately, everything that happens is for my good and for the Glory of God. Grace knows that "Therefore, there is **now** no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". (Romans 8:1) Grace knows that there is not one rogue molecule in the universe.

To live in a state of grace, I try to incorporate a rigorous mental discipline that the Bible calls taking "every thought captive to Christ. When I start thinking thoughts of pride, I say out loud "To God be the Glory". If I can't say it aloud, I think of the Glory of His name and I praise Him in my head. When I began to feel fear and think that I can't do it,

or I'm overwhelmed, or there just isn't enough energy, I look up. When I look up, there's no reason to feel fear and pride is overwhelmed by awe.

I've also wrestled with God about His permissive will versus His perfect will. I have propositioned Him with my puny plans and asked Him to bless the work of my hands. I got more tired wondering if I was doing right than I had from wandering and doing wrong. Finally, I purposed in my heart to "wait upon the Lord and then grow stronger". I tried to be still and know that He is God. I asked Him for perfect rest. I took solace in the scriptures:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)

Roll your work upon the Lord and He will make your thoughts agreeable to His will. (Proverbs 16:3)

In pruning, God is pointing me. In chastisement, God is perfecting me. Either way, God is paving the way and knows the plans He has for me. My sin and shortcomings are directional indicators where God wants to reveal weakness and then make His strength perfect in that weakness. Areas of sin are opportunities for Him to connect with me, then transform me, and use me. Sin is by no means desirable, but sin is a signal that He has work for me to do.

God is sovereign even in my sin. As we discussed in the section on purpose, mistakes, resistance, rebellion, these are all directional indicators of where the sovereign hand of the potter is molding and shaping me

If you are making mistakes, God will call you back. If you wander away, don't worry. Wandering is what sheep do and shepherds specialize in bringing back the one who was lost. God is sovereign. His mercy brought you to him in the first place. He's got you. Simply ask God to make your stumbling block a steppingstone.

Should you study the enemy?

I've experienced one particular stumbling block that continues to be problematic. I seem to have this knack for seeing the bad in a situation. It's almost like the enemy's plans unfold before my eyes and I can tell where trouble is brewing and what the darkness is doing. Some people call it discernment. I call it distraction.

Perhaps you recall the story in 2 Kings 6:16 of Elisha and his servant surrounded by the enemy and under siege. The servant saw the desperation of the situation. Elisha, on the other hand, peaceful and calm, had a different revelation. Elisha prayed that the servant's eyes would be opened and God revealed the spiritual reality of horses and fire and angelic chariots all protecting Elisha; "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them".

I can't tell you how many times I wrestled with the basic principle that we are to focus on what is beautiful, lovely, noble and praise worthy and to have no part with darkness. I know my enemy is always studying me, so I thought it made sense to study him. What a mistake!

I read the work of authors whose ideas were contrary to Christianity. I contemplated their theories and approaches. I surmised that the world had valuable notions about how to create change and how to influence people for the good and for Christ. Solomon clearly opposes such a practice and states bluntly "Of reading books there is much weariness" (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

"Can a man take fire to his bosom and not be burned?" (Proverbs 6:27) If you've read Tolken's Lord of the Rings or seen the movie, you know that everyone who touched the ring became contaminated by its power. As children of the light, we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

The Lord sets before me today life and death. I am commanded to choose life. When my eyes are focused on the light, my whole body is filled with light. As soon as Peter looked at the raging sea, he sank. But, when Peter kept his eyes on the Lord, Peter walked on water.

Now, you may say a recommendation to have no part with the intellectual fruits of darkness is ridiculous, especially coming from an academician who is required not only to read all manner of worldly theories, but, in turn, teach them to my students.

What I try to do is be wise as a serpent gentle as a dove. I trust that God will bring whatever knowledge I need. I no longer actively seek the wisdom of the world and I don't seem to be buffeted by every new doctrine that comes along. I am a householder, taking both old and new things out of my cupboard; rather than futile seeking I rest secure in knowing that the Lord brings what I need.

When I'm tempted to go researching for new perspectives, I try to remember how all the world's trouble started. There were two trees in the garden. One was the tree of life. The other tree was the knowledge of good and evil. "Lord, let me set no unclean thing before my eyes especially when problems present themselves, let me keep my eyes on you."

Now, the Lord's admonition to set no unclean thing before my eyes presented a real problem. My husband and I had an opportunity to bid on a government grant to teach many of the subjects that I knew were not Truth. I wrestled and wrestled wondering if I should apply for the grant or just shut it down. "How can you ask me to do this Lord? I fled from this corruption and darkness, how can you send me back into it?"

I then turned to the passage in Acts where Paul, a devout Jew became blind at the revelation of the Lord. After Paul regained his sight, God commissioned Paul to go

preach to the Gentiles. To a Jew, the Gentiles were as unclean as pigs. God called Paul out of darkness to go and preach in the mud.

So, I remembered that setting no unclean thing before my eyes does not preclude God from wanting to place unclean people on my heart. I surrendered the situation to God and promised that I would trust Him for the outcome. I applied for the grant and knew that if God is for us, who can be against us, and if He's not for it, I don't want it anyway.

After placing my trust in God for the outcome of the grant, I remembered this verse..."Faith is accounted as righteousness." I realized righteousness is more than doing the right thing or the wrong thing. It's about trusting that God is doing everything on our behalf. Righteousness is about believing, trusting, relying on God to supply all our needs. So when I am attacked by confusion, doubt, shame, and blame, I can just rest and know that when I wait upon the Lord, I grow stronger.

How should you feel about being attacked?

My friend was fired. She was unjustly treated and ridiculed and released from her role. Immediately after her loss, she found God ministering to her spirit. Moses, tucked into the edge of a rock, could only behold God's glory after God had passed through.

God revealed Himself to Moses in tight, cramped spaces, God is moving in our life. While we experience darkness and smallness, God covers us with His hand. It's only after God passes through our life that we glimpse His glory.

Our Lord promises blessings to those who are persecuted. Those He loves He chastises. Furthermore, many times the struggle and anguish you feel isn't just about you.

For example, my husband and I decided to take our business on the road. We planned to go city to city to connect directly with our customers. Once the decision was made, it seemed like "all Hell broke loose" around the project.

I am fairly computer savvy, but the glitches amazed me. We couldn't publish brochures, we couldn't send e-mails, an operating system crashed, the web page was locked out, databases disintegrated. At one point, I yelled at God through my tears, "can't you upload one lousy web page!"

Finally, I decided that He promises to keep me in perfect peace if I will keep my mind on Him. Like Job, I purposed in my heart that even though He slays me yet will I trust Him. I realized that persecution purifies me. Persecution positions me to positively impact people.

So, I called my internet service provider to get desperately needed help. Surprisingly, I gave some help as well. I spoke with a technician, a young man with two jobs, living a self-described pointless and problem-filled life. I took the opportunity to share with this

young man a small kernel of truth about who He is: He is fearfully and wonderfully made. He is uniquely created. He may not know his purpose in life, but that purpose knows him and that he should continue, knocking, seeking, looking and he will find it.

My seemingly insignificant task to share e-mails became the task of building trust and sharing truth with one of God's children. My task of trying to get God to help me became the task of trusting that God is helping me even when everything looks like it's against me. Persecution is not pointless. Persecution means Jesus is present. Blessed are the persecuted; so when you're experiencing opposition, don't get stressed; prepare to be blessed.

What should you do when you're being attacked?

Prepare

"Faith means trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse" says Phillip Yancey. I think one powerful way to prepare for difficulty is to hide the word of God in your heart so that when the tough times come you can plead the promises of God.

I learned the lesson of standing in the word of God on a sunny Saturday morning at a free pancake breakfast. This woman I never met before, chatted briefly with me. Her parting words were, "If something happens to one of your children, just stand in the word of God and your child will be fine."

I took little note of her comment, thinking to myself "I always stand in the word". I had no idea that in only a few short hours I would be pleading for the very life of my youngest son.

A beautiful and happy child, at nine months old, his smiles captivated friends and neighbors. His giggles resonated through our hearts and home. As he learned to roll and sit-up and slowly started to crawl, we marveled at his progress.

Until one afternoon when, placing him gently in his seat, I offered him a bagel to soothe his gums while new teeth came in. I headed downstairs, but something inside of me told me not to leave. Then, I heard the hoarse rasping sound of someone trying desperately to breathe. My infant son gasped for air and fought for his life.

As he choked on the bagel, I yanked him out of the seat and ran for the nearest phone. The cordless handset wasn't in the cradle and I called out in desperation, "Jesus! Help me!"

I flipped my son onto my forearm, with his stomach and head down and I slammed four firm blows onto his back, attempting to dislodge the dough. He was turning color.

I raced down the stairs to the kitchen phone. I clawed at the empty cordless for a lifeline. I couldn't find a phone. Through blurry, hot tears, I stumbled into our home

office and punched out 911. With my whole world being turned upside down, I turned the baby upside down again and pounded his little back. Nothing.

The emergency operator came on the line. I screamed, "He's dying. My son is dying. Help me."

I never heard her response. I took my finger and jammed it down his little throat. I was never so happy to hear a baby cry. "I've got an airway!" I shouted, "He's crying. He's breathing." I didn't think and just hung up the phone.

I gathered him into my arms and held him and rocked and cried and cried and thanked God that He spared my son's life. All I could say is "Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus."

When I finally calmed down enough to talk, I dialed my sister's phone number. Desperate to talk to her and to share my fear, I told her how close we had come to death, again.

My sister and I had done CPR together on my father while my father died in his home. My father had a heart attack, and my sister and I held his head and gave him the nitroglycerin and pounded on his chest and tried to push our own oxygen into his lungs, and prayed and cried for over 20 minutes until the paramedics had come and taken our father away, forever.

And while I sat there, talking to my sister, I tried to calm myself. Crying and rocking, it felt good just to hear her voice. Until, her voice was interrupted by the raking, rasping sound. My baby began fighting for air once more. Then, my son stopped breathing again. My son stopped breathing, and I knew there was no bagel I could remove. There was no way I could push my own oxygen into his lungs. My son would die.

I scooped him up into my arms and dialed 911 for the last time. I begged the emergency operator to send the paramedics. Over and over, I pleaded hysterically for the help she had already dispatched.

I just stood in front of our house with my baby in my arms. In the front of my house, I stood with the front door wide-open. I paced, praising and pleading, "Lord, thank you that you promised you will never leave me or forsake me. Thank you that your word says that my children will have the peace of the Lord and be taught by the Lord. Thank you that you promise to be a real and present help in time of trouble. Almighty God, please save this child. You gave your son to die, that I might have life. Please let my son live."

Then something miraculous occurred. My baby breathed. My son breathed. He could have died. He should have died, but he didn't. He breathed new life.

The paramedics drove us to the emergency room, and the baby smiled and laughed all the way. Except for my tears, you would have never known how close we had been to death. What was lost was found again.

I just sat in that ambulance thanking God. He is a real and present help in times of trouble. When I cry out for help, He says here I am. He knows the plans He has for me a future and a hope, to prosper me and not to harm me. He loves me with an everlasting love.

Since that fateful day, some friends have asked, “How could you be so foolish, don’t you feel guilty for giving a baby a bagel? Don’t you feel responsible for almost killing your own child? What would you have done if he had died, could you have ever forgiven yourself?”

I can only tell them that when my son was on the doorstep of death, I was in such horrible pain; I thought it would crush my heart. Yet, I can see how, even in my son’s near-death experience, all things work together for good. Today, I have such a grateful heart, and I cherish each day. I praise God that He not only spared my son, but that God spared me. For, I was lost and as good as dead. Instead, He breathed new life into me and lifted up my head.

But, what if God hadn’t spared my child. My friend was not so lucky. Both his wife and son were killed in a car crash -- ripped from his life, the joys of his life. He’s now heartbroken – homeless and heartbroken.

I don’t know why it happened. I can’t explain it to him and he can’t explain it to me. But we both agree; there isn’t one tear that falls that God doesn’t see.

And maybe, maybe the problem with pain is with me. Maybe sin is holding onto hurts that God wants to heal. Maybe sin is not forgiving myself when God already has. Salvation is when God’s grace outshines all our guilt.

My friend Mary also lost her son, when he was 24. He was hit and instantly killed by a train. I asked Mary how she makes meaning of the pain. She said, “we are formed with a purpose and our spirit forever keeps growing, forever connected with God. Either I trust God or I don’t”. She said “God is bigger than me, and He has a plan that I may not always see. This timeline happened to be unconventional. Trying to stop His perfect plan is like trying to stop a birth; the only way out is through; He walks us through Grace. I can only draw near to Him and trust in Him”.

Losing a child is wrenching. So is the pain people carry from all the wrongs done in life, all those harmed, all the little slights and broken promises and harsh words spoken. The guilt of causing another person pain is great, but God is greater.

Other people ask me if almost losing my child has made me more afraid. The answer is yes and no. Fear leads to control. If I am to be the love of Christ to other people, I can’t

do that by trying to control them. God loves me enough to let me go and to make mistakes. As I sometimes wonder why there is any pain at all and wish that I could prevent it, I realize that pain and suffering may be one by product of a world filled with choice. God chooses to restrain evil only to the extent that He does not refrain our free will. If I try to prevent people from experiencing pain, I am also preventing them from practicing and living. Even though some people may choose to go astray, when they return it is to God's glory.

What about good people whose lives are cut short or who die suffering deaths? I don't know the answer. Perhaps, no one seems to consider in their hearts that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. The righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. They enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death. All the people ever hurt, God has held. All those who've been harmed, God himself will heal. All our hopes are in his hands, and He is so gentle and keeps every tear we've ever cried in a bottle, and someday, He will wipe every last tear away.

In short, the best preparation for persecution is to trust the Lord. When I know what will happen and why it's happening, that's not trust, that's omniscience. Only God knows what the future holds and that's why He offers me a peace that will surpass understanding.

The word prepare means pre-cut. My character should be pre-cut and carved out in the image of Christ before the persecution comes. He tells me to ready my mind for action. He tells me to discipline my tongue: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight Oh Lord my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). Jesus promises me the tough times are coming. Great basketball players don't wait till the final seconds of a championship game to create a new play. They run their plays over and over again in practice. Good soldiers spend hours drilling. That's one reason why we're called disciples because we are disciplined.

Pause.

Ironically, stillness is the best preparation for action. Obedience and stillness are mighty weapons. We are commanded by our Lord to "Be still and know that I am God." When God came to Elijah, God was not in the whirlwind, God was in the gentle breeze. If you want to be calmed, perfected settled, and established, you must pause and be still.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:.. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. 14-16

Pray for Peace

Once you pause, ask for a peace that surpasses all understanding. Your greatest witness may be your calm in the face of the storm. "My peace I give you, not as the world gives." It is well with my soul is not a statement about the serenity of our circumstances; it is a peace that lasts despite hurricane blasts.

Realize that the Lord is your provider. He prepares a table in the presence of my enemies." When I am weak, He is strong. His strength is made perfect in my weakness.

Get Perspective

If you've been looking down, it's time to look up. As a man thinks so he becomes. Are you seated in the heavenlies in Christ or not? Quit looking at the waves, Peter! Start walking to your Lord on the water.

To live is Christ to die is gain. So, "if I perish I perish" (Joshua 9:1 and 9:12), "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14b)

Ask for Power.

"He has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and power and a sound mind." He is not the author of confusion. If you are feeling distraught, "put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Remember, our Lord "is a shield to all who trust Him". (Psalm 18:30)

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him". (1 John 5:14 -15)

Press in and Press On

If you are feeling defeated, like things are rough and your feeling tough. So what. When David went to purchase the threshing floor to build the Lord's temple, the owner offered the land to David for nothing. David refused to accept the land without making payment. "Shall I give unto the Lord that which costs me nothing?" No. Christ surrendered all that was dear on Calvary, should I be surprised if He asks less of me?

Maybe you feel doubt that you're even pressing on at all. Just because you don't feel like things are changing, doesn't mean they're not. God is always at work. In the winter, many trees look dead, but that's when they're putting down roots. In the first trimester of a pregnancy, not much happens visibly, but a little person is taking miraculous shape in the darkness.

In the middle of a fiery trial is the time when Jesus is most likely to be seen. In Daniel Chapter Three, three teenagers purposed in their hearts to obey God. When faced with

imminent death, they knew that their God is able to deliver and save and if not, they still refused to worship idols. So, if you find that false gods are foisted upon you, take a firm stand and do not fear when you are forced into the fire. IT is then, that the world will come face to face with the fourth man in the form of the Son of God.

If your life is shaking, praise God because the things that are unshakable, immutable and incorruptible shall remain. I like to say that the plane shakes most before it breaks the sound barrier. Shaking is simply a by-product of flying fast and far. Don't worry about being pushed to your limits. His strength is made perfect in weakness. And all he asks of us is having done all else, stand. "Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait I say on the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14) Your very best preparation for persecution is waiting prayerfully and more specifically, prayers of psalms and praise.

PRAYER

God calls us to pray for our enemies. "Bless those who frightfully use you". God does not ask us to pray against our enemies. He commands us to be a blessing. He says yo pray without ceasing.

For example, I lost my husband's business checkbook. Technically, I hid the checkbook before a large party for my son's baptism and then forgot that I had hidden the checks. By the time I found the checkbook, several months after the baptism, we had already opened a new account.

So, I was confused. My husband felt ambivalent about where to house the money. I asked God to show me what I was to do about the checking account and where we were to keep our money. I remained prayerful and confused even as I drove to the bank.

When I walked into the bank I had a vague awareness of a carload of people parked at the entrance. I strolled into the bank and leisurely endorsed my checks at a counter by the front door. Still praying for God to give me direction about our banking needs, I looked up when the teller shouted, "We've been robbed! Secure the doors, we've been robbed!" I laughed out loud and then caught myself and started to pray for the safety of everyone in the bank.

While we waited for the FBI to arrive, my favorite teller offered to make the deposit for me. I clutched my checks in shaky hands and politely replied, " No thank you."

When I could leave, I told the bank manager how sorry I felt for his ordeal and he stated matter of factly, "Don't worry, it happens all the time". God showed me explicitly and completely that my money could not be safe in this institution. I began to search for another bank.

Even the search for a new bank became a matter of prayer. I felt drawn to two local credit unions, but couldn't decide which one might be right. I prayed for God to show me. I went in the first credit union and then proceeded to the second credit union right next door. The teller at the second credit union had a calendar that read "Trust in the Lord with all your might and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path." I deposited my money. The first credit union closed down two weeks later. That's why we pray.

Why should we pray?

Leaders lead us in prayer. Prayer is weapon. Prayer is not passive. Prayer is power.

I've spent most of my life trying to get power and keep it. I've manipulated, controlled, angered, and achieved trying to hold on to power that I thought belonged to me.

Full of pride, I've even been a power peddler on God's payroll. I just didn't get it. Power is not in what I can do. Power comes from God when I realize what I can't do. In all the broken places of my life, in all the pain, in all my flaws, in my every shortcoming, His mighty Spirit fills and flows in me. Instead of alternating from my own sense of power or powerlessness, I now unite consciousness of my weaknesses with confidence in his perfect power. I don't wallow in my weakness or walk away from it. I try to walk with God.

Figure 20: Meekness is not Weakness



Only two men in the Bible are referred to as meek – Moses and Jesus. Meekness is not sissy stuff but it is child's play. Meekness is trusting obedience from a child who knows they are nothing, can offer nothing, say nothing, do nothing with out direction from the Father. Meekness is illustrated in a modern day analogy to the burning bush – the light bulb.

The lesson of the light bulb illustrates the basic principle of connection to the Lord through prayer. The light sits on the table. The light is fully functional. The light is not plugged in. If I attempt to turn on the light, it does not function.

Only when the light is plugged in will it operate properly. The bulb does not contain any power. Connection to the power source allows it to shine. Prayer is the conduit that connects us to God. Through prayer flows His power.

One example of where I experience the need for God's power is in overcoming my pride. I have a real problem with pride and a tendency to think highly of myself as the source of my own power. Prayer is a way of taking every thought captive to Christ. Now, instead of mentally ruminating on how much better disciplined my children are compared to my friends' kids, or how much more quickly I can generate a memo than my co-worker, I try to acknowledge my pride and then offer it to God. I hope He can use it because I sure can't.

I also found that I have a sense of insecurity about my husband; when he's gone, I wonder who he's with or if he's safe. I really worried and tormented myself with my thoughts. I could ponder, why those thoughts are coming to mind. Am I insecure? Was it my upbringing? Perhaps he's sinning? Rebuke the devil?

What a waste of mental energy. Instead I try to take every thought captive to Christ. Now, when those thoughts come into my mind, I consider it God's way of letting me know that my husband needs extra covering. While it's not always easy to refuse to worry, I become my husband's rear guard as he goes out into the world. I cast my cares upon the Lord and pray for my love until the worry passes.

Evil gets no foothold. My husband gets extra prayer support. I am calm instead of frazzled. God gets the glory. At least, that's how prayer's supposed to work. The truth is, I struggle daily and when I do, I try to simply surrender my shortcomings to my savior who promises to keep everything I've entrusted to Him.

How should we pray the promises of God?

There's an old axiom in Christian circles that goes like this: "He said. I believe it. That settles it." I think a more accurate reflection of reality is that He said it and that settles it. So why not just say what he says.

There are many excellent books that explain how to pray. I learned how to start praying the promises of God with confidence.

My prayer life grew stronger and deepened when I realized that nothing seems as powerful as praying God's word back to him. The words themselves contain both power and promises. Billy Graham recommended a reading of the Psalms daily. Charles Stanley from In Touch Ministries read the first Psalm every day morning and night for 21

days. Then he recommends reading the next psalm and everyday, morning and night, for 21 days and so on.

Jesus commands us, “Let the word dwell richly in you.” He delights to give us the desires of our heart. There’s nothing we can be denied if we ask what’s in His will, so why not pray His words. Pray His will. Pray God’s own promises back to Him for the power that saves souls.

For Whom Should We Pray?

I’d like to suggest a potential difference in praying about someone and praying for someone. I’m accustomed to praying about specific individuals and their issues. I tend to hold the people as thoughts in my head. I think about them.

Now, I try to come to Christ with those people in my hands and in my heart. I try to hold them and plead for healing. I try to let myself feel what they might feel, rather than just thinking about them.

I don’t know if there’s any real difference as far as God’s concerned because He loves to honor all our prayers. I think the key difference is how it impacts me. I find myself less oriented to listing the names of people and much more lingering on who they are and what they really need. It seems to be fine-tuning my heart muscles to hear beyond what is often said to hear their hearts and how they need to experience the love of God.

Love is stronger than the grave. That’s why Jesus, in His parting words to the disciples repeated again and again that love would be the one distinguishing factor to mark the disciples of Jesus Christ. Blessing those who hurt you is a key component of sacrificial love.

Where I grew up in the High Deserts of California, we had a lovely minister and his wife was a caring and gentle woman. They had several children, all beautiful girls, except the oldest child who was a wild and rebellious boy.

When her son took to drinking and could be found carousing late nights at a local bar, the minister’s wife began to pray for the enemies of her son. “Dear Lord”, she said in a sweet voice “Please let that bar burn down”. Now I was just sitting in the pews, but it seemed like that kind of prayer didn’t do much to prevent her son from drinking, and her thoughts didn’t do much to win over the owner of the bar.

I realize that as I share this story, that as I judge so I shall be judged. I think God is preparing all of us for persecution and He’s expecting us to respond in love. Personally, I know I’m incapable of such capacities of love and I am already begging God to fill me with that kind of goodness and mercy and truth that is unstoppable, irrepressible – the ability, no matter how much we are hurt, to love people and praise God.

PRAISE

What is the Power of Praise?

Praise is disciplined attention to the mercy and might of God. Praise is looking up and rejoicing because I've won. Praise is protection. Praise is the song of election. Praise is triumphant, jubilant, abandonment to the Almighty, Everlasting, Living Lord.

Praise is the promise of God's goodness even before it's realized in our circumstances. Praise is seeing salvation in every situation. Praise is the privilege of adoption. Praise is the perfection of election. Praise is the chorus of a cloud of witnesses. Praise is practice for eternity. Praise is the purpose of existence.

What Does Praise Do For God?

A.W. Tozer asserts that God is perfect and complete³⁰. He does not need me. But He chooses to be in relationship with me. I minister to Him. I glorify Him.

He doesn't need me, but He sure wants me. He's not desperate, but He sure is devoted. He's patient. He's pleased. He rejoices over me. He delights in me. He dotes on me. I am the apple of His eye. He loves my joy.

So, shouldn't I share my joy with Him and thank Him for His goodness. He is worthy of adulation. We know that God inhabits the praise of His people, and I think that God's heart relishes praise.

What Does Praise Do For Me?

Praise transforms me. I am just vapor, a passing mist. In myself, I stumble in the dark. In praise, I am bathed in the light. For a spirit of heaviness, Jesus gives me a garment of praise. Praise transports me into the throne room. In praise, I am in the midst of my maker.

One day, our four-year old son climbed up the stairs to give me a communication from his Dad who was waiting downstairs. I patted my little boy's head and he beamed as I began to compliment him for the swift delivery of the words. I said, proudly, "You are such a fine messenger". He frowned, "I'm not a messenger". He asserted firmly, "I'm a son." Praise is the sacrifice that God desires, not because we are laborers, but because we are inheritors. We don't earn His love. We enjoy it. Praise says I'm a son seated at the right hand of God.

Praise pushes out pride. David was the epitome of praise without pride. David was a man after God's own heart. David danced half-naked before God. I am puffed up with the ruminations of my mind; I often think I have insights that no one else has, that I can

³⁰ Tozer, A.W. (1961). The Knowledge of the Holy. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

see what no one else sees. I get prideful even in my prayer. Praise keeps the focus on God and off of me.

Praise protects me. Satan's practice is to push me to any extreme. It doesn't matter if it's guilt or gloating. The road is narrow and the word of God is a lamp unto my feet. I know I'm safe in the word. I am safe in the Glory of God.

Praise propels me. Praise is the mark of the Maker's might. Praise is for pulling down strongholds. Praise decimated the walls of Jericho. Praise is pure power.

What does praise do for the environment?

When Paul and Silas were in prison, they sang and they praised the Lord. Despite their bleeding wounds and bruised and battered bodies, they blessed the Lord. The power of their praise was evident in that environment when the entire prison shook and the doors were flung open wide. The jailer and his entire household were saved.

Praise is filled with earthshaking power and is appropriate at every moment. During the fires in San Diego, flames surrounded us on every side. From the North, South and East smoke pressed in on us to the Ocean while people evacuated their homes. I had prayed from Ezekiel 36 that God would till us under so He could re-plant us. I wanted to pray for rain but I was afraid it wasn't His will. I didn't know what to do. I didn't feel sad or anything, just empty. God gave me the grace to just lift my hands and sing praises to Him. I guess this is the epitome of trust. When all is dark and foggy, and we can't see or even breathe, we can still praise.

Praise brings Christ into the place. Jesus came to set the captives free, to proclaim liberty. Isaiah 60:18 says that our walls are salvation and our gates are praise. I think that means that salvation provides safety and security while gates of praise let others into the family of God. I think that praise ushers in the kingdom of heaven.

And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. (2 Chronicles 20:20-22)

Praise is power for total victory.

When to Praise?

I prepared for a family retreat with our church. As part of our vacation ritual, we bought snacks for the car ride. We secured the standard array of health foods: chocolate chip cookies, crackers, licorice, and juice. My daughter desperately wanted a wad of fluorescent pink gum shaped in the form of an ice cream cone. Since this single item blew not only our budget but singly decimated the sugar quota for the day, I wouldn't let her buy it.

Her first negotiating tactic was to say, "I love you Mommy". Then she wheedled and whined for the gum. When that brought no results, she said very humbly and apologetically, "I am so sorry for asking for the gum. I'm sure you'll let me have it next time; could I have it just this once?" Finally, she asked in her best daughter voice, "Is there anything I can do to help you?"

I think sometimes that's how I approach God. With guilt, gripes, and my own meager gifts, I attempt to manipulate the Messiah. Instead of gratefulness for His grace and giving, I am trying in my own efforts to negotiate His favor.

I know praise is powerful when God lets me have the wad, but I think the best time to praise is when all my bubble gum dreams have popped, and I'm not getting what I want.

I think we've reversed the role of praise. Praise belongs at the start, middle and end of our race. Praise begins even before we see the results of the Lord's goodness. "Faith is the substance of things not seen, hoped for"

God speaks things that are not as if they were. Proactive praise is not a "name it and claim" it philosophy for wealth and prosperity, but a confidence that Jesus is the anchor of our hope. "It is finished". We are victorious in Christ.

Praise is powerful all day. "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand". (Psalm 149:5-6) And in the evening and continually before the Lord (1 Chronicles 23:30-31).

Praise is powerful in the middle of trials. When I am running our golden retriever, the hardest part of the journey seems to be when we're half way between success and where we started. I can't turn around, but I can't yet see my destination. I am often overly tired and wonder if I'm wandering. At this time, I try to praise God for my exhaustion. My body and my mind seem unable to wrestle, I praise the Lord that I am at the end of myself. His strength is made perfect in weakness. I don't have to worry about the efficacy of all my energy and plans because Jesus both authors (initiates, creates, begins) and finishes for me.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Praise is powerful in public. “I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people”. (Psalms 35:18) The bottom line is that praise is powerful and prescribed for all the time and anytime. Praise is the eternal pastime.

Praise is powerful when initiating environmental transformation. Surprisingly, praise is the very thing that allowed me to begin to change my surroundings. I remembered everything God did for others. He brought the Israelites out of Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey. He restored Job. He fed Elijah by the brook. I praise God for all He has done and all He is – a friend, a comforter, the author and finisher of my faith.

Praise is powerful when victory is nigh. When Noah came through 40 days of rain, he could see the promise, the rainbow, but dry land was still a long way off. Noah patiently waited on the Lord to deliver. Noah fully expected the fulfillment of God’s goodness. When Noah finally set his feet on dry land, the first thing he did was build an altar. Noah knew and rejoiced in restoration. All things are made new; old things have passed away.

Noah knew, like Jonah, that a dark and shaky place is often protection from the stormy seas of sin. Noah knew that sometimes things look a lot worse before they get better. Noah knew that during crazy times, when we cling to God, our calm becomes a witness. So when your boat starts a rockin’, praise God that the Holy Spirit’s come a knockin’. When you see things shaking, start praising Christ for peace that surpasses all understanding.

PEACE

I couldn’t wait to get my piece of the pie. It was a chocolate peanut butter ice cream pie with a chocolate crumble crust and pieces of Reese’s peanut butter cups on top. It was my birthday. I’d been dieting diligently. It was time to get my due.

Slowly, carefully, precisely, I shaved small slivers of the delectable desert for my eager co-workers. A huge hunk of decadence remained for me to delve into. I gorged myself and gloated over the goodies, gleefully guiltless.

Yet, later that day, I wondered what I had done. I had hoarded my piece of the pie and perhaps decimated my witness for the day. Instead of pursuing peace, I got my piece.

I think this is another reason why many people don’t want to evangelize; we want our piece of the pie. We’re afraid that if we try to live for Jesus we won’t get our fair share. We forget that if we are about our father’s business, He’ll take care of our business.

Jeremiah 29:7 tells us, “ And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.” And verse eleven states that the Lord knows the thoughts He has toward us “thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope”. ‘The Lord shall fight for you,

and ye shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:14). My job is to hold my peace while God takes care of His piece, and it’s all His piece.

A soldier would never walk onto the battlefield tearing off his own armor. Yet, Christians who fight in their own flesh essentially rip off the robes of righteousness provided by Christ and expect to be received in rags. Keep your peace. Hold your peace. “God is in heaven you are on earth, therefore let your words be few.” Walk in love.

“Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. (Ephesians 4: 1-3)

Peace with God

I never really thought about the Holy Spirit much. Frankly, I’d been scared by so many references to spirit that were anything but holy, so I just stayed away from the whole business. I never really thought about the person of the Holy Spirit.

After the flood, when Noah turned the birds loose to find dry land, the dove returned with an olive branch. The olive branch is a symbol of Jesus Christ, of the fruit to be pressed out, and the anointing.

The Bible couldn’t be anymore clear on this point. When John baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus in the bodily form of a dove. Most everyone knows that a dove symbolizes peace, although I have no idea why doves are considered synonymous with peace.

I also wondered what it means “do not quench the Holy Spirit.” I didn’t know what I could do to make the way for the Holy Spirit to flow in my life and even less idea about what quenched it. Perhaps it’s because the Holy Spirit is present in peace. Striving and struggling stifle the presence of our comforter. If that’s true than I must not strive.

So then I am challenged to learn how to be actively peaceful and perfectly peaceful even when I’m active. I can only do that when operating in God’s will and not my own. I MUST NOT STRIVE. I must press in and press on in perfect peace.

Peace with Yourself

A man who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city without walls. Ok, I love to be working. I think I’d been addicted to it actually. It’s also such a liability, source of pride, angst, and aggravation. I am forcefully learning how to step back from driving to the goal and ask for God to bring things to completion in His perfect timing.

For example, the day the war with Iraq started in 2003, I worked a ten-hour day and then needed to teach a graduate class that night. The mid-terms were due back to the

students and I hadn't had time to grade them. I had a ninety-minute window before class, so I sat down and started grading. As I started the first paper, I said a silent prayer. "Lord, please don't let me put any project before your people. Calm, perfect, settle, and establish me. Allow me to trust you enough to know that this work will get done. If someone needs me, then bring them to me, if not then protect this time and let this work be done swiftly, with ease and effectiveness."

Well, you can guess what happened. One of my students happened to drop in – I call that a Godcidence. He's a drill instructor for the U.S. Marine Corps and he had just qualified as expert on the rifle range for the tenth year in a row. This powerful, strong leader, who had seen action in Saudia Arabia and Afghanistan, proceeded to share his fears about the war and very personal feelings about his past.

He told me that growing up on the farm, his father had been approached by Jehovah's witnesses. The witnesses spoke of Christ and tried to convert his father. His father stopped the witnesses and said, "Wait a minute. I'm digging this hole to plant a tree. What do you know about me or care about me? You want to talk to me and change me, you plant the tree while I listen." The witnesses wouldn't pick up the shovel.

This marine, whose faith I still do not know, was willing to share with me his central objection to people of faith – that they don't put their muscle where their mouth is. If I hadn't kept peace rather than setting the pace, I would have missed this wonderful conversation.

I've learned that BUSY is an acronym for being under Satan's yoke. I need to hold my peace and sometimes that means diligently avoiding the rush.

I had a very close friend who tried to commit suicide in my home. There was no way for me to get to my friend to stop the bleeding, so while I was waiting for the paramedics to come, I started cleaning. I cleaned and cleaned. I was completely shut down.

What I realized is that over-activity and total paralysis displayed in inactivity aren't opposites. When I'm on overwhelm auto-pilot, I am as effectively shut down as someone who is catatonic. I'm not checking with the Holy Spirit. I'm not asking for God's peace or holding my own. I'm cut-off from other people and myself. I'm simply performing perfunctory motions that give the illusion of progress.

Look at creation and you'll know the truth. Our Lord is very interested in balance and centeredness. The delicate balance of our existence testifies to His affection for harmony and connection; if the earth was rotated even one degree differently, the entire planet would spin out into oblivion.

So, as long as my self is at the center, I will constantly be off balance. When Christ is the center, my life is lived with laser-like focus in peace with God, self, and others.

Peace with Others

Don't let the sun go down on your anger because "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace". (James 3:18)

The former preacher came to me with sadness and lost dreams. He had entered the ministry at a tender and early age. He had tasted success so sweetly as he witnessed to hundreds then left many pulpits always stifled as the disgruntled second in command. And now, he was in a job that didn't seem to connect with God's promises for his life. All he longed for was his own pulpit. He longed for his own people.

He said, "I'm from a different generation. I don't fit in. I'm wandering in the desert". Like this young man, you may be wondering why God has placed you in a certain job, at this point in time. You may feel like a race horse, who can smell the dirt and sweat of the open track, but is struggling against the reins of a God who holds you back. God whispers in your ear, "Be still and know that I am god. Apart from me you can do nothing."

What if you stopped to consider that your current situation is your ideal location. You have been strategically placed by the commander in chief of the Army of the Living God. You have been specifically charged to occupy until He comes. Your job is to identify every captive in your vicinity, that means anyone within three feet of you, and liberate those captives with the love and joy and peace and beauty and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have a new job description to overlay on all your existing jobs.

"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another". (Mark 9:50) You are salt and salt is sprinkled not clumped.

And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:69-79)

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Ephesians 6:14-15

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Colossians 3:14

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:10

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.” (Romans 10:15) Peace with others does not mean that things are easy or that we have no conflicts or that things work out the way we plan. Peace with others begins with surrender to the circumstances.

For example, I was working with a group of people and trying very hard to evangelize an environment comprised not just of non-believers, but people openly hostile to the gospel. Throughout our time together, it seemed like I was simply in maintenance mode trying to keep my head above water and the verse of “Do not cast your pearls before swine” was at the forefront of my mind. Nevertheless, I tried very hard not to judge and to summon the best of Christ’s love and my energy to share with the group. It was our last scheduled meeting and I was excited to go and see what else might come of our time together. Oddly, two hours before the meeting, my left foot swelled so badly I couldn’t walk. I was in excruciating pain. I called the members of the group and cancelled the meeting. I sat with my foot propped up and iced.

I did not allow the pain to steal my peace. Instead, I enjoyed a quiet night with my family and read to the little ones. They were overjoyed to have me home. Ironically, about the time the meeting would have been over, the pain in my foot subsided almost completely and I was able to walk again. This morning I’m typing with my foot propped up, just in case, but I don’t think the swelling will return, do you?

In another example, my boss at work engaged in what I considered to be a rather underhanded policy change. This policy change was not without economic consequence and would likely affect the livelihood of many people. I was determined to confront her, organize and protest if necessary and generally mobilize others around the issue.

I took a moment to consult the Holy Spirit on the matter (that’s one discipline I am really trying to master—taking my problems to my master). I was watching Joyce Meyer and she suggested, “If I’m wrong, change my heart. If they’re wrong, change their hearts.” What a prayer of peace! I don’t have to fight or struggle. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and

peace shall be with you". (2 Corinthians 13:11) That's a promise that gives me peace of mind and allows me to persevere no matter how dark the world might be.

PITCHING PIETY: HOLINESS IN HOLLYWOOD

Most Christians in America equate Hollywood with darkness. If we don't fear Hollywood for ourselves, we fear Hollywood for our four year old. Hollywood epitomizes the wolf that threatens the lives of the sheep – it perpetuates evil. Yet, in this wasteland of lawlessness there are posses of people who ride in the law of love. They call themselves Act One. They are aromas of Christ in a city that sometimes slithers.

Emphasizing excellence, artistry, professionalism and the writer's personal relationship with Christ, Act One prepares writers to be apostles through their lives and work in the heart of the entertainment industry. In addition to producing entertainment alternatives that will be redemptive and deepening for the whole human family, Act One students are encouraged to see their role in the industry as being a uniquely Christian presence in writers rooms, on sets, and in studio and network offices.

ACT ONE started in Hollywood on January 25, 1999 as an educational outreach to writers of the Christian entertainment fellowship Inter-Mission. The initial funding for the program came from the Stratford Foundation, a private foundation with strong ties to the Christian community in Hollywood. ACT ONE was specifically founded to address the most serious problems reflected in the work of Christians who set out to write for mainstream entertainment: a sense of artistry, a commitment to professionalism, and a network with other industry professionals. In addition, Act One seeks to provide Christian writers with a spiritual formation to assist them in integrating their growth as industry professionals with growth in their life of faith.

"I'd like to see us just make movies about our own experience," says Barbara Nicolosi, the Program Director for Act One. "Not trying to sell a bill of goods to people in an unconvincing way. I'd like to see people who really have a relationship with God express that." What's important, says Nicolosi, is not to set out to deceive audiences. "If I as a believer can, in a beautiful way, show my experience of faith, that will be compelling for you to behold. You will be touched. Then your heart will be opened. And whether you will then embrace faith or not, is up to you." "I would say that we are evangelizing. But we're doing it the smart way," she adds.

"The Church should be astonishing our culture and creating a community that is so warm, inviting and nurturing of people's gifts, talents, creativity and imagination, that it magnetizes people to want to step in. This happens by building experiences that explain biblical truths in a way that people who don't know God, or have just come to know Him, will understand." says Erwin McManus, Lead pastor of Mosaic Church in Los Angeles, California.³¹

Once called "the patron of the arts," the Church has too often in recent years been the prey of the arts. This has had dire consequences for the whole popular culture. Up till

³¹ Outreach Magazine, May/June 2003

now, the Christian community has responded to Hollywood with mostly ineffectual boycotting and protesting. Act One represents an offensive strategy in the culture wars.

“We are missionaries to Hollywood, meaning that we are trying to train apostles of love and grace – who happen to be writers – to go into the heart of Hollywood and work from within. Hollywood is not a mission field that you can approach from the outside; you can’t send somebody who doesn’t know Hollywood to minister to Hollywood. They won’t listen to you. Our hope is to influence the people with whom we’re working on the Hollywood set – in the production offices, in the writers’ rooms, the actors, the producers, the directors, the DPs, all of these people who we work with on a daily basis – we’re hoping that we can infiltrate, we can influence them by just our lives, which I think is what Christ wanted us to do.”³²

According to Nicolosi, her influence is distinctly and uniquely Christian³³. First and foremost, every believer is the presence of Christ. We are a sacrament -- a visible sign of the invisible. We signify the truth that there is a loving mind, a creator, and an order in the universe.

Second, Christianity imbues every human person with sacredness. Not only are we the presence of Christ as believers, every single individual is a rare, valuable, precious and unique vessel of love. We each possess eternal and infinite potential.

Third, connectedness is of the greatest import because Christ’s gifts to us and all our creative talents are uniquely intended for corporate aid. Our calling is to surrender our own agendas and serve others. There is no greater summit than to die for someone else.

For the Christian there exists an ironic juxtaposition of joy and suffering. Without contradiction, Good Friday was both the worst and greatest day in the history of mankind. There is simply no pit so deep that God’s sacrificial love is not deeper still.

Next, Christians do not embrace good and evil as equal opposites. Evil is a perversion of good. Evil is a persona and an intelligence that perverts what is good, lovely, and true, yet good triumphs. God pitches all day long to win us over. We always have an option and freedom to choose the good.

Nicolosi challenges Christians to ask themselves, “what would be missing if you were gone from your environment, your job, your community? What are you supposed to say?” She encourages us that sacrifice means to be Holy. When we sacrifice of ourselves, the work will be Holy.

³² Zena Schroeder, Associate Director of Act One: Writing for Hollywood. Quoted in The Religion Report: A mission to Hollywood Wednesday April 23, 2003

³³ Plenary Speech. San Diego Writer’s Conference September 20, 2003

I think Barbara and others like her are living the life Jesus taught. They demonstrate the beatitudes beautifully. There is a progression in the Christian life that prepares us to participate in God's plan. This progression is simply inconceivable by human hearts and hands – it only happens by the Spirit of the Living God.

First, we look upward and acknowledge that we can't do anything; that we're poor in spirit. We're all pretty sad about that and we mourn all the hurts we've caused others and mourn our insufficiency. Next, we decide that since we don't know what's best, the best plan is God's plan and we determine to obey; that's called meekness. Finally, we long to know more of our God, we want to taste what is right.

After these first four markers, we look outward and act with mercy, give to others out of pure and unselfish motives, pursue peace, sometimes even our best understanding of Truth is the price because love covers all things, and then we endure persecution and we submit and we yield and we hope and we love and God's power just overflows in our weakest and darkest moments.

Many more knowledgeable authors than I have written on stages of evangelism and readiness in potential believers.³⁴ I think we can all call the names of others to Christ in love. Perhaps we can do that as we balance, tasks, trust, and truth in our daily lives. Not on podiums, or in pulpits, just everyday people filled with purpose, imbued with passion, powerfully pointing the way to Christ.

Every problem is a spiritual problem. Every battle is a spiritual battle. If you find yourself in a caustic, chaotic environment, if you feel cut-off from community and weighted with cares, it is no coincidence. There's a game being played. There's offense and defense, and just because you may be lounging on the sidelines, doesn't mean the game is not going on.

First, you can ignore that there is a spiritual battle. Just because we are unaware or uninformed of a law does not mean we are free from the constraints of that law. Pretending not to see does not change reality.

Or, you can acknowledge that there's a battle and choose not to get involved. You can choose to sit on the bench or shuffle your feet on the sidelines. Remember, however, the riches Christ promises. "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it and the one who loses his life will find it."

Next, you can acknowledge that there's a game going on and suit-up and play half-way. This is a dangerous proposition because you're a fair target and yet you're playing half-hearted. Some people do this when they ignore their Bible as irrelevant and others over-stress relationships to the detriment of Truth. The Truth is you cannot serve both God and yourself.

³⁴ Oz Guinness and Evangelism Explosion.

Perhaps you suited up a long time ago and you've been faithfully running the race. If you're demoralized, consider those who have come before us and struggled to live the message of love. They did not act in their own strength, but in the faith supplied to them by the Lord Jesus Christ. And, most of us have not yet resisted by paying the price of our own blood as we are persecuted. Be inspired by the cloud of witnesses that surrounds us and cast off every weight. Run the race. Press on toward the prize.

Or perhaps, as you run, you feel not the sting of persecution but the rebuke of our own Lord. Cherish chastisements and praise him that he loves us enough to correct us.

Finally, some of us know there's a game going on, the seriousness of the fight, we are committed to the fight and play with eternal victory in our breast. Pursue peace, without which no one will see God, and persevere on the path to righteousness.

Suit up. Get in the game. Play to win souls for Christ. The whole world is waiting for the glorious revealing of the sons and daughters of God.

Epilogue

The Twin Towers exploded into flames. The night I first started to write TNT Leadership, I watched the horrific images, over and over, on the television screen. In the year 2001, the challenges and changes in my country compelled me to seek and pose solutions. So, I wrote a book rooted in the confident hope that God can and will revive His people.

Almost 12 years later, when I stood on the Great Wall of China, I knew the time to publish TNT Leadership had come. I realized that the images of 9/11 terrorism, never cut as deeply into my psyche, or perhaps the hearts and minds of my generation, as the 1989 visions of protesting students in China. I identified with those students. I could easily join those students. I never forgot them -- massacred by tanks in Tianamen square.

How ironic that the word Tianamen literally means heaven's gate. I always felt that hopes of a political solution to China's problems died that day; martyred young people ushered in a magnificent revival when faith in Christ became the only answer to everything.

I'm guessing that such a day will inevitably come to America. We will give up the illusion of educational, economic, and political solutions for the deep issues of life. We will awaken, remember, and realize that apart from Jesus Christ there is no future.

Until then, I look back over a dozen years and I remain unsure about many of the ideas contained in this book. I am hoping that the concepts will endure testing and that the false will simply fall away while the lovely truth will crystallize and endure for an eternity.

Here's what I've found worth keeping thus far:

If I possess only one thing, it is the Bible. I learned to read an hour each day. I once considered this book important. Twelve years later, it is my life.

If I can be of service to God and man in only one way, it must be prayer. I can recount an endless stream of lives and situations and painful environments transformed by the presence of God in prayer. Prayer is like breathing; pray is unceasing. Prayer to the creator of the universe changes everything, especially self.

If I can ask only one question, it is simply, "Who do you say Jesus is?" I asked this question almost every day for 12 years -- in truck stops, at lavish fundraisers, on planes, and in bathrooms. I listened to Muslims who say Jesus is a great prophet. I debated Mormons who call Jesus savior but not Lord. I chased away Jehovah's witnesses who don't honor the son as the father; they say that they believe in Jesus, but not as God Almighty. I know Catholics who call Jesus Lord, which no one can do unless the Holy Spirit lives in them, yet call Priests Father, pray to Mary, or idols, and practice a mass that denies that Jesus' death on the cross represents the final and complete sacrifice for sins.

Yes, there is at least one question that God will ask of each of us when we die -- who is My Son Jesus/Messiah? While we live, there is one great measurement of our affections for the Lord; it is our treatment of the Jewish people and their land, Israel. If there is only one place that I can be, my home is Jerusalem.

In 2001, I possessed precious little theology pertaining to Israel. I never read Romans Chapter 11. I owned no commentaries on the eternal covenant God grants His beloved Jews. Back then, I did not understand that the sun and moon and stars will pass away before God will ever break faith with Himself and His love for Israel. How interesting that I wrote about the Jews before I knew the very heart of God.

I hope you will see the heart of God in TNT Leadership. If you don't, please read the Bible instead. If you think I missed the mark, please pray for me. If you have questions, start asking people who they say Jesus is and marvel at their responses. And, if you don't know where to go and you're looking for people to bless, go home, go bless Israel.

Enough said. The work will either stand or fall. If it is of God, nothing can stop it.

That the God of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of glory, may
give unto you the spirit of
wisdom and revelation in the
knowledge of him:

Ephesians 1:18

The eyes of your understanding
being enlightened; that you
may know what is the hope of
His calling, and what the riches
of the glory of his inheritance
in the saints,

Ephesians 1:19

And what *is* the exceeding
greatness of his power to us-
ward who believe, according to
the working of his mighty
power,

Ephesians 1:20

**About the
Author**

Formerly in
leadership
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Cecil is a
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