

HELEN CALDER



ANOINTED
CHARACTER

**12 keys to finishing well for
emerging prophetic leaders**

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prophetic leaders

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Foreword

David McCracken

These 15 years of knowing Helen (and her husband Malcolm) have been the joy and privilege of witnessing true discipleship and the heart of one totally separated to her Master's call.

I have observed first-hand that wonderful blend of focused, determined commitment with a teachable heart, fully surrendered to her Father's love and commission.

Helen continues to impact thousands with the Biblical truth God imparts to her and is a significant prophetic voice to this generation. She is also one who lives her message with sincerity and authenticity. This book will powerfully impact its readers because it is written by one who truly lives out its pages.

Without reservation, I recommend both the narrative and the author!

David McCracken

David McCracken Ministries

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to David McCracken, who has been a spiritual father and leader to my husband Malcolm, and me since 2011.

David consistently imparted these principles to us out of the overflow of his walk with God, and as a prophet. This was true for the six years I was on his team, and to this day, as he continues to help oversee our ministry.

I'm especially grateful for his mentoring to do with my character—often, not what I asked for, but always exactly what I needed!

It was worth more than gold.

These studies include many terms and insights that I have gleaned from David.

My prayer is that this work contributes to more generations of prophetic leaders being raised up, who aspire to be men and women of true godly character.

Preface: The Vineyard

February 2024

I stirred awake, shaken by a vivid flashback that took me back to a moment nearly a year earlier. In that instant, I was standing outside the rear entrance of a historic church building. I had momentarily stepped out the back of a wedding banquet hall to get some air.

The sight of grapevines submerged in water at dusk sharply contrasted with the celebration in the building behind me. Inside, the newlyweds and their guests were enjoying the party.

The hall was a beautifully renovated old church, now used for weddings. Where pews and a pulpit once stood, were now banquet tables, a bar, and a large chandelier.

What a glorious day it had been, so full of sunshine and joy! Everything about this family reunion was a miracle. But during those moments outside, the flooded vineyard reminded me why we almost never made it.

Preface: The Vineyard

Cyclone Gabrielle.

So, why was I here, in this spot—now, a year later? It was unusual to have the same flashback two nights in a row. As I reflected on this vivid memory, I sensed that the Holy Spirit was speaking through it.

A few days later, I realized what it was. It was a prophetic picture, a metaphor. Beyond that, it was an invitation to encounter the heart of God, and to see through His eyes.

Inside, the gathered people were celebrating, feasting and enjoying the local wines. Whereas outside, just out of view, the vineyard was in a crisis.

“They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard, I have not kept”.

(Song of Solomon 1:6b, NKJV).

The Vineyard

I believe God is pulling on our attention. Jesus is in pursuit of us, after our hearts, *the center of our life with Him*. Not only individually, but also as communities. And especially as prophetic leaders.

It’s possible to be enjoying the move of the Holy Spirit—His power, gifts and anointing—but ignoring the very real signs that our vineyard is under threat.

The Spirit is alerting us, *“Tend the vineyard! Pay attention to the vines.”* Now is the time to nurture leadership and strengthen foundations. And most of all, to hear the whisper of Jesus’ heart:

“Beloved, abide in Me.”

Preface: The Vineyard

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

(John 15:5, NKJV)

This is the message at the heart of this book.

Where this Book Began

My own journey in character development has been life-long, sharpened through leadership and especially, through serving on teams.

Then in 2015, I was invited to lecture on the topic of character for a Bible College. I was amazed as I prepared for this, how passionate I was about the topic—and how easily it flowed.

That day, I realized this teaching is vital for emerging leaders. The vision for raising up prophetic leaders who are men and women of godly character now burns in me!

I believe we can demystify character *and* that it can be one of the most interesting topics that we teach. Later, I brought it into the classes in my online Prophetic School.¹

I had just begun creating a small booklet of these studies when the encounter with God in the vineyard shifted my plans entirely. What I thought would take a few weeks turned into a full year of deeper study and writing on this urgent, timely subject.

Who This Book Is For

If you are someone who desires to hear God’s voice clearly and lead others, this book is for you. I’ve written for those

who long to serve with purity, wisdom, and integrity in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whether you lead in a church, ministry, or marketplace context, you carry a heart to see people encounter God and grow in His purposes. You are passionate to extend God's Kingdom.

Some who read this book will be called specifically to prophetic ministry. I have written this with you in mind.

My prayer is that these pages will strengthen you, inspire you, and help you walk confidently in your prophetic calling with the character to finish well.

What Makes This Project Unique

I believe that teaching on biblical character is essential for present and emerging leaders. But character is not only foundational for our ministry; it is the setting for Jesus' presence to shine through us, a light to the world!

- We are temples of the Holy Spirit—God who is powerful and holy

This makes character—the nature of the vessel—even more important!

What makes this project unique is its prophetic heart and the call to radiance. A key feature of these studies is that they place character within the context of our spiritual lives, as well as our ministry and leadership.

Throughout this book, I have endeavored to offer a simple, biblical framework that reflects the tension between grace and growth.

Preface: The Vineyard

I pray that these studies will, in some small way, contribute to the ongoing conversation—and to the training of prophetic leaders worldwide.

May we be challenged and encouraged to cultivate both spiritual power and enduring character.

The Father's House: Beginning with Grace

“If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.”

(Luke 11: 34-36, NLT)

The Red Door

One evening, my husband and I were walking through our neighborhood when something unusual caught my attention.

It was a striking, red-painted entranceway on a corner house. The sun was low in the sky and its rays caught the red door, making it glow.

As I walked past, a part of me wanted to stop and relish that moment. But I rushed on ahead—and found, to my surprise, that the moment followed me home.

Crossing the Threshold

The significance of a red doorway struck me because it was nearing Christmas, and I had just read the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

It stands at the entrance to the New Testament, proclaiming, *"This is the lineage of Jesus Christ. This is the story surrounding his birth!"*

As the Gospels open, many people are going about their ordinary lives. Suddenly, they find themselves pulled over a threshold—and through a doorway they never expected.

- The arrival of the Savior changes everything.

The Calling of Elizabeth

In Luke chapter one, we meet the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. There's a question that has cast a shadow over Elizabeth for many years—for the elderly couple is childless:

*"What's wrong with you?"*¹

- Yet they have a unique timeline, ordained by God!

Now, they discover with wonder that God has chosen them for an unexpected role: *To birth a prophet.*

This is an encouragement for us today: God chooses the overlooked for His purposes! Zechariah and Elizabeth's son John the Baptist would later introduce Jesus with a profound declaration:

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Anointed Character

(John 1:29b, NKJV)

The Blood of the Lamb

John the Baptist's words pointed back to a defining moment in Israel's history—the first Passover. On the night before their deliverance from Egypt, God instructed His people to take the blood of a lamb and paint it on the doorposts of their homes. He said,

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you...”

(Exodus 12:13, NKJV)

Behind those red-stained doors families were safe from God's judgment. They gathered, feasting while God worked His plan of deliverance. That red doorway was a sign of redemption.

The Door of Redemption

Centuries later, Jesus stood and declared:

“I am the door.” (John 10:7,9, NKJV)

Jesus is our eternal Passover Lamb! Through His blood, shed on the cross, we are forgiven, cleansed, and made holy.

- Having died with Him, we are raised to new life with Him. (Ephesians 2, Colossians 2)

We are no longer outsiders—we are at home in the Father's house.

I've introduced this prophetic picture of the red door for a purpose: To set the stage for our study on character. And this is why:

- Before we begin the journey of examining our inner world, we must first remember where we stand.

We are not striving toward righteousness—we are starting from it. Here, we are greeted with the symbol of an open doorway of salvation, through which we have *already stepped*.

Redemption's doorway!

A Righteous Beginning

We are at home in the Kingdom of God. *This is our address*. Reflect on what this means for a moment: You are not on the outside of that doorway, but on the inside.

How did you get here, in the Father's house, as a family member?

- By grace, through faith

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

(Ephesians 2:8-9, NKJV)

So, when it comes to our inner world, we're not starting from a position of shame or sinfulness, trying to work our way towards a God-honoring life.

Anointed Character

- No! Our *starting point* is righteousness.

We start with God's view of us as faithful and possessing good character. A consecrated character. And from that place of security, we go on a journey of discovery and transformation.

Contemplating Our Inner World

Many of us become aware of shadows in our hearts as we contemplate our inner world. If the thought of doing a study on character and the inner life is challenging to you, you're not alone!

Perhaps, you can identify with the question that may have been directed at Elizabeth: "*What's wrong with you?*" Ask, "*Father, how do You see me?*" and look to Him for the answer.

Be assured that God meets you with grace and mercy, in the hidden places of your soul.

Home with the Father

Do you remember the story Jesus told of the Prodigal Son who returned home, broken and repentant? (Luke 15) He realized that, contrary to his expectation, his father was waiting for him all along.

- And that the doorway to his father's house was not shut to him, as he supposed

Instead, his father ran to meet him. He embraced the wayward son and brought him back into the house. Then, he held a great feast to celebrate his return.

The father took away his son's stained, dirty rags and clothed him with the finest robe, placing a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Then, having removed these remnants of shame, he restored his son's status in front of everyone. After this, they partied and celebrated.

Here You are Safe

See by faith, you have passed through that red door—redemption's doorway. And Jesus, the door Himself, welcomes you with open arms.

Hear the Father say, "*Welcome home, child!*" Here, you can participate in this feast of favor, and step into a radiant life. You are safe and secure—for in the Father's house, there is no shame. And here, you encounter the joy of your salvation.

This is where we begin our journey.ⁱⁱ

Before we explore character formation, we must first understand the foundation: *grace*.

- Our starting point is not striving, but sonship!

(And don't forget, you can return to this truth any time you need the reminder.)



Questions for Reflection:

Picture yourself in the Father's house:

- What do you see yourself doing?

Anointed Character

- What is your demeanor?
- What are the gifts that you bring to the table?



Welcome to the Journey

What follows is a study on character for emerging Christian leaders. You may feel called to lead in some area, or simply have a desire to learn more about prophetic ministry, sensing that God has called you.

Whoever you are and wherever you are in your journey: Welcome.

Helen Calder

A Vision for Character

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.

Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock.”

(Matt 7:24-25, NLT)

Imagine two buildings standing side by side. They look equally strong, until an earthquake strikes. As the ground shakes violently, one building crumbles, while the other is left standing. Why?

- Because the one that remains has been built to withstand pressure.

Not only the top-down pressure of the weight of the structure itself, but also the side-to-side pressure that is peculiar to the rolling waves caused by an earthquake.

Anointed Character

The hidden structure of a building determines whether it will stand for the long term.

And ultimately, whether it will fulfill its purpose.

Just as a strong foundation supports a building, character is the unseen bedrock of our lives. The extent to which you grow in character determines your capacity to fulfill God's calling—and to finish well.

This is the power of character.

Our lives must be built of something stronger than circumstances, opinions, and emotions.

“Build on My words,” Jesus invites, “and you will build on the rock. Make it your dwelling place for a lifetime. Come to Me and follow My example and teaching.”

This is Jesus' invitation to live an unshakable life. It is also a key of wisdom that will enable you to build longevity into your ministry.

Before we go on, what do we mean when we refer to character?

And why is it important?

The Quality of Your Heart and Soul

It could be said that character is what *characterizes* you—it may be hidden, but it permeates the atmosphere around your life.

Character flows out through everyday choices, to our work, ministry, and what we give our life to.

If you search online for the modern definition of character, you'll come across statements like:

- “The mental and moral qualities distinct to an individual.”
- “Moral or ethical quality.”
- “Qualities of honesty, courage or the like, integrity.”

Character is a general term for the whole package of our inner life. But it has reference to *certain* qualities, especially integrity.

We’re all uniquely gifted, even when it comes to something as foundational as character.

The World is Seeking Character

Wise leaders check the *character* of the person they are considering for a position or promotion.

This is why employers seek references—an applicant needs not only to perform the job but also to handle the pressures of the role and the relationships that come with it.

There may be security issues, sensitive information to keep and ethical issues at stake. And this requires a new team member to operate with integrity.



Reflection: A Personal Assistant

Imagine if you had to hire a personal assistant tomorrow. This is a person who is going to represent you and serve you.

What are you going to look for, in addition to skill?

Anointed Character

- Integrity, honesty
- The ability to hold sensitive information private
- An attitude of honor

The purpose of a bio is to showcase skills, education, and experience—and show the applicant in a good light! But remember that a bio or profile can be a constructed façade.

This is why a probation period can be useful, to observe how a person responds in real situations, including challenges and setbacks.

You don't want someone who's here today and gone tomorrow. You're investing both time and money into that person.

So, you are looking for the character qualities of consistency and reliability.

What other traits do you value in an assistant?



Worship at the Core

In addition to those qualities the world sees as “good character”, there are also things the Bible tells us that God looks for:

- Love for God
- A heart of worship, that honors God and relies wholly on Him
- Traits emphasized in the Bible, such as integrity, courage, moral strength, and faithfulness

And keeping one's word.

Have a Personal Vision for Character

When it comes to building your life and ministry, it is wise to think ahead. Have a vision of the key traits and character foundations that need to be built into your life as you continue your life's journey from here.

- To represent Jesus, and live a radiant life

God has a "Vision Book"

A vision is a picture of the future—the answer to the question, "*What does it look like?*" And the clearer that vision, the more we can move towards it and make the right choices along the way.

Our lives will become aligned with that vision.

Think about vision boards some people have. What images may be posted on them? Possessions, positions, places, relationships, and other things they dream about.

When people think of vision, they often imagine goals, successes, or destinations! But before God calls us to achieve anything, He calls us to *become* someone.

God has a "vision book" for your life!

Psalm 139 says,

"You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."

(Psalm 139:16, NLT)

Anointed Character

“You saw me.” God’s vision is firstly about who we are *before* what we accomplish.

May it be your desire to grow into God’s image of you. Who you *are*, not only what you accomplish, own, or attain.

Why Should We Have a Vision for Character?

We can study character and learn what the Bible says about it. But for it to truly change our lives, it must go beyond just learning; it needs to lead to encounter:

- A life-changing experience with the Holy Spirit and God’s Word

My prayer is that this engages with you at a fundamental level. And it provides fuel for the flame of your resolve.

“Lord, brand our hearts with a holy desire to live a life that honors you!”

Now that we've reviewed what character is *generally*, let's explore why it is important in Christian leadership:

1. God’s primary goal is to grow us to be like Jesus

“The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God...”

(Hebrews 1:3a, NLT)

When we look to godly character, we look first to Jesus. What do we see?

In Jesus, we see what integrity looks like. He is also wise, kind, and merciful—yet bold and authoritative.

We see a holy life.

We also see the goodness, mercy, and love of the Father. And you can trust in the unchanging character of God to be a foundation you can build on.

Our role as leaders is to help *others* grow into Christlikeness. Paul describes our mandate this way:

“...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”
(Ephesians 4:12-13, NKJV)

Let’s pause and consider the obvious: we can’t help others grow if we are not growing ourselves!

Where Jesus Began

Here’s the way Luke described Jesus’ growing up years, before He entered ministry:

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”
(Luke 2:52)

It’s so succinct!

That, right there, is the beginning of a personal vision for character. Pray, *“Lord, may I grow as Jesus did, increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people.”*

Anointed Character

And consider: what does this look like in five years—in 20 years time?

2. The Relationship Between Character and Authority

Another way of looking at this is the old-fashioned set of scales, with weights balanced on two sides.

You can't carry a "heavyweight" ministry with a "lightweight" character—it won't hold up! But the stronger your character is, the more weight of responsibility you can have added to it without tipping over.

Many times, our primary concern is to do with our mantle and ministry, but it's *character* that shoulders the mantle.

- Character determines the level of spiritual authority, and the Holy Spirit's anointing that God can entrust to you in the days ahead.
- It also determines your ability to serve in the profession or ministry God has called you to.

3. Our character directly impacts the way we operate in our gifts and ministries

When we have wisdom, humility, and integrity, we can be trustworthy. This is so important in prophetic ministry, and all types of leadership.

A gift or charisma may open doors—but it is character that holds them open.ⁱ

4. It is your character that chiefly determines whether
you finish well in your assignment

Esther's story is a powerful example of how character determines destiny. She could have settled into the comfort of being queen. But instead, she embraced courage, conviction, and honor—becoming the leader God called her to be.

Queen Esther faced a critical situation when her cousin Mordecai urged her to appeal to her husband, the king, on behalf of the Jewish community. An ungodly leader named Haman had issued a decree in the king's name to destroy the Jews.

She sent a message back to Mordecai, saying (my paraphrase):

If I appear before the king without being summoned, I will die, unless he extends his golden scepter to me.

And it's a while since he wanted to see me!

Perhaps between the lines was,

- *“Remember what happened to the last queen who dared to defy the king?” (See Esther 1:12—19)*

And Mordecai replied saying,

“Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die.

Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?”

Anointed Character

(Esther 4:13-14, NLT)

Once Mordecai presented her with God's vision for her life, Esther determined to complete the assignment God had for her.

Esther emerged victorious because she had godly character, favor, and courage.

“Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

(Colossians 4:17, NKJV)

Her story reminds us that God not only gives us assignments, but He also calls us to complete them.

5. Because the Next Generation Depends on it

One of the great tragedies of the Old Testament is in leaders and kings who were too busy to pay attention to the character of their children.

- And they lost a generation.

Samuel, for example, appointed kings, led revival, and was a spiritual leader of Israel. He was entrusted with the Holy Spirit's insight concerning the young David.

Yet later it is written of him:

“As Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel.

Joel and Abijah, his oldest sons, held court in Beersheba.

But they were not like their father, for they were greedy for money.

They accepted bribes and perverted justice.

Finally all the elders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter

with Samuel. “Look,” they told him, “you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have.”

(1 Samuel 8:1-4, NLT)

It's an important lesson: Pay attention not only to your own character but also to the character development of those you lead—including your family.

- Foster a culture where godly character and values are a priority.

As a leader, you can exemplify and teach godly character to the next generation. I pray these lessons resonate with you, not just because of your own call from God but also because of your burden for future generations.

I believe the Lord wants to emphasize this right now, for there is much at stake—not only your life and calling but also the lives of others.

For this is bigger than you.

6. Because Character Development is Important to God

Finally, God is interested in who you are; your inner person, not just what you accomplish.

He loves you. He's passionate about you being and becoming all that you're created to be—and fulfilling all you're called to do.

And your character, along with your relationship with God, is primary to these things.ⁱⁱ

Anointed Character

But it doesn't all happen overnight. *Character grows and is established over time.* Peter spoke into character development when he exhorted all Christians,

“In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.” (2 Peter 1:5-7, NLT)

According to Peter, it is dangerous to neglect our character—it's a slippery slope! (no doubt, he was speaking from earlier experience).

He went on to add a warning:

“But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.”
(2 Peter 1:9, NLT)

But what great news—the Holy Spirit provides what we need as we stay connected to and rely upon Him:

“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!”
(Galatians 5:22-23, NLT)

The Paradox of Character

Anyone who has journeyed with me will be familiar with my favorite quote:

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“Truth has two wings”

A.W. Tozer

Often, Scripture presents what seems (at first) to be two conflicting viewpoints. It’s a paradox! Because they are both true. When these are held together in balance, we live a life that honors God.

The writer of Hebrews declares,

“For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.”

(Hebrews 10:14, NLT)

Read that again, slowly. At first glance the verse seems to contradict itself: *Jesus forever made perfect those who are being made holy.*

Which is true—that we are already perfected, or that we are a work in progress?

Both are true, and this is glorious! We are already perfected, yet still being formed.

On one hand (or wing, using the above analogy), we can rest in the truth that our character is redeemed in Christ.

- As is made clear in the Bible, our starting point is righteousness in Christ.

But the other “wing”—also true—is that we are *“being made holy”*. We are like clay on the potter’s wheel. And we must continually respond to the hands of our loving Father.

It is an ongoing process, in which our nature will be shaped and transformed over time.

Anointed Character

“Now and Not Yet”

Peter expresses this perfectly, when he says,

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all this by coming to know him...”
(2 Peter 1:3a, NLT)

What good news! Then, he talks about the power of God’s promises and goes on to say:

“In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence...”
(2 Peter 1:5, NLT)

Again, there is the contrast. “*God has given us everything*” and yet we “*make every effort*”.

- The gift and personal responsibility to administer that gift go together

It’s the principle of the “*now and not yet*” nature of the Kingdom of God.

- The Kingdom is here, and the Kingdom is coming in future fullness.

And it’s glorious.

More than Motivation

Motivational experts in the world call us to be a people of vision and goals. But character—not gifts or techniques,

will determine whether you finish well and endure through trials.

So, make it a priority to build godly character in your life. Like the building that has been structurally prepared in case of an earthquake, consider these things at the outset.

This is true, no matter the age you are.

Malcolm and I have a saying for this stage of our lives.

“We are never going to be as young as we are right now! Let’s give our young lives to serve Jesus.”

We are in our sixties.

When you build your life and ministry on a solid foundation, you won’t be like a house built on sand. Jesus said that house collapsed *“with a great crash”* when the rains came (Matt 7:24-27).

Instead, you’ll remain steadfast through tough times, temptations, and trials. You will stay on track through times of success and growth.

And here’s something that will help this process:

God Calls You by Your Character

Before Jesus gave Peter his call, to follow Him and be a fisher of people, He gave Peter the picture of how He saw him, and who he was destined to become in his character:

“Then Andrew brought Simon to meet with Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, “Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas” (which means Peter).”
(John 1:42, NLT)

Anointed Character

Simon means “to hear” and Peter means “a rock or stone.”

After that, Simon was known as “Simon Peter” or “Peter.” This man, who was initially volatile and unstable in his character, became one of the pillars of the early church.

God wants to give you a vision, not only for your destiny, but of the person He has called you to be.

For example, if you struggle with being afraid of what people think, remember Jesus looks at you and He calls you, “*fearless*”.

Consider for a moment:

- *What character attribute does God call you by?*

The Pursuit of Paul

I pray that determination rises within you, to be a leader who honors God with a life of integrity and godly character.

- To run the race with passion and complete it with valor.

This was the pursuit of Apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthian church,

“We can say with confidence and a clear conscience that we have lived with a God-given holiness and sincerity in all our dealings. We have depended on God’s grace, not on our own human wisdom. That is how we have conducted ourselves before the world, and especially toward you.”

(2 Corinthians 1:12, NLT)

Oh, that we would be able to make such a declaration!
May that be your dream and vision for your life.

Note that he says, “*God-given holiness*” and “*depended on God’s grace*”.

- We stand by His strength, not our own

Build Upon a Solid Base

As this series continues, we are going to look at character traits that are vital to prophetic ministry and leadership.

Along the way, keep these lessons in mind:

1. A vision for character is more than a *concept*—it is a *commitment* to becoming the person God wants us to be
2. As you step into leadership, this foundation will shape how you lead, serve and finish well



Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

As we set out on this journey, take some time to write down your vision for your life and prophetic ministry in the following areas:

- Character and integrity
- Your relationship to God’s Word
- A close relationship with God
- Your relationship with others, including your own leaders and your local church
- How you see God using you in the years ahead

Anointed Character

- Who will be helped and drawn closer to God through your ministry
- How you will finish well—what that looks like
- Your dream to be a godly example for the next generation

What plans do you have in place in your life right now to ensure that each of these things happen?

Along the way, seek out people with whom you can be honest and who will offer you guidance.

As you reflect, are there any areas that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to pay particular attention to?



Coming Up:

With these foundations in place, in the next chapter, we will uncover the hidden power of godly character. And why it's the key to lasting impact in life and leadership.

The Power of Godly Character

“But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water.

Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.”
(Jeremiah 17:7-8, NLT)

The powerful image of deep roots reminds us of what is possible in our life with God. Character is like the roots of a tree, spreading out in an unseen reality. Beneath the ground, roots anchor, sustain, and protect the tree, enabling it to bear fruit.

Like those trees, our unseen roots—our character—draw from God’s presence and sustain us in every season.

This is the hidden power of godly character.

Anointed Character

Roots and Canopy

One day, we stood outside on our front lawn, considering whether a large, thriving eucalyptus tree was affecting our home's foundations. We were concerned that our house was sinking at the front, in the vicinity of the tree.

Our advisor said to us, *“See the canopy of the tree? You can predict that the root system has spread out one and a half times the breadth of the canopy.”*

We looked up and saw the branches reaching close to our front rooms. It seemed the tree was thriving at our expense!

Four Keys to Understanding Character

There's no doubt that the root systems of a tree contribute to its strength and vitality. The message of the roots is this:

- When it comes to character, it's what's *underneath* that counts to God.
- And inner strength leads to lasting fruitfulness.

1. Character Relates to the Internal, Not the External

Before the prophet Samuel anointed David, he looked over the older brothers first.

Being the youngest in the family, his father hadn't considered David! And when Samuel looked at David's eldest brother, he thought, *“Surely this is the one!”*

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way

you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

(1 Samuel 16:7, NLT)

2. Character Relates to Who You Are When No One Is Looking

The critical question is, *“Who are you when no one is looking?”*

One day, I saw an episode of a reality-style TV show called *“Resort Rescue.”*ⁱ When they first surveyed the state of the resort, they installed hidden cameras to see how the employees were doing.

- The receptionist was speaking negatively to customers.
- The lawn mower operator was stationary, sitting on the mower drinking alcohol.
- The chef was using a microwave to cook burger patties and serving up subpar food.

And it was shocking!

So, they gathered up the employees and announced, *“This is the current situation, and this is how it will be—hard work. Who is with us?”* And the chef walked out.

By staying, the others were indicating, *“We are prepared to go through the trial and the pressure, to do whatever it takes to improve both the resort and ourselves.”*

Worship in Secret

When no one was looking, what was young David doing?

Anointed Character

Here was a young man with a destiny from God—to be a writer of Scripture, prophetic psalmist, and a future king of the nation of Israel.

He was tending his father’s flock of sheep, being faithful in his work.

- And he was worshiping—spending hours playing the lyre (a small harp) and composing psalms to God.

Are you a worshiper when no one is looking? It’s easy to worship in church or in a gathering...but are you a private worshiper?

“But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.”

(John 4:23, NLT)

God says, *“I am seeking worshipers.”*

3. Your Values Shape Your Character

Your values are the building blocks of your character. They are your core principles and what matters most to you.

I often say that some values are born in you, some are bred in you, and others are burned in you!

1. **Values that are born in you.**

These are an inherent part of your DNA and nature. God has designed you to carry them! They are unique to you.

2. **Values that are bred in you.**

They are instilled through your parents, mentors, churches, and groups you belong to, and other influencers along the way. These can be both taught and caught.

For example, I recognize the value of integrity in the prophetic has been shaped through being in David McCracken Ministries.

Earlier in my life, my dad shaped my value of hard work, and my mum, perseverance, faith, and creativity.

Values that are “bred” speak of the power of discipleship—programs have value, but we’ve lost the power of simply “walking alongside” someone.

Let’s not skimp on discipleship, for ourselves or others.

- Jesus prioritized it, and so should we.

3. **Values that are “branded,” or burned in you.**

These are values that become indelibly etched on our hearts. This can happen through significant events, such as failure, trials, or trauma. It can take place as we experience a move of God or encounter a person who impacts us along the way.

Branded with Honor

The value of honor was branded in me during the late 1990s (although I am still learning more). During the years prior to this, I was mentored in a style of prophetic ministry that was independent of leadership.

Anointed Character

I came to realize it was an Old Testament paradigm!

For a long time, I was prideful and independent—but now, honor and accountability are my fundamental core values.

The story of my transformation became the foundation of my ministry today.

- That moment marked a shift—not just in values, but in the direction of my life and ministry.

When a value is branded in us, it becomes part of our spiritual DNA.

Today, the value of honor is a source of great joy.

This is one reason I love being planted in our church here in Melbourne, Australia, as well as being connected to David McCracken.

In our community's culture of honor, we thrive, our roots grow deeper, and our branches of influence widen.

4. Values are Tested

Inevitably, your values will be tested along the way.

For example, you may have a high value of loyalty and honesty. Suppose one day in the future, your honesty is tested when a leader asks you to *ignore* something that could be unethical. What happens when they appeal to your loyalty as a reason to comply?

Which of your values is more important in this moment?

The correct answer would be, “*both.*”

Perhaps you are tempted to think, well this is not a significant thing.

Add to this the pressures of wanting to keep their good opinion—and your role—and you have a potential problem.

- When we allow our values to be compromised, a crack appears in the foundation of our character.

Thinking through these kinds of scenarios ahead of time, and determining our boundaries in advance, is important. Because leaders are facing these challenges every day.



Reflection:

Think about the values that are deeply ingrained in you in three key areas:

1. Values that are inherent to your nature (born in you).
2. Values that have been instilled in you by your upbringing, including from parents, guardians, influencers, and community.
3. Values that have been reinforced, or branded, through challenging times and significant lessons you've learned.

To identify these values, ask yourself:

- *What are the values I have that come to mind first?*
- *What values am I known for by others?*
- *What are the principles I feel strongly about and won't compromise on?*

Anointed Character

- *Which attitudes or behaviors do I find intolerable or deeply unsettling in others? (These indicate your values)*



Character Evolves Through Our Choices

Here is one more reason why it is important to have a clear vision for character. The strength of your vision will directly influence your *choices*, which affect your habits, and in turn impact your character.

- We make character-building choices every day

Leadership expert Michael Hyatt names three forces that shape our character:ⁱⁱ

1. The input we consume
2. The relationships we pursue
3. The habits we acquire

Each of those three are worth meditating on and journaling about.

What do they look like for you currently? Are they the building blocks of your future that you believe God has for you?

The Apostle Paul quoted:

“Don’t be fooled...for ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”
(1 Corinthians 15:33, NLT)

This is a reminder that the people we surround ourselves with can influence our character, for better or worse.

Why? Because their values, behavior, and worldview influence us.

Community and friends are important.

So, be discerning about who you associate with, and who you receive from.

More than anointing, education, or expertise, consider:

- Are they faithful, do they demonstrate honor, are they accountable, have they endured during tough times?

Be Selective About Mentors

David McCracken once advised that when choosing a mentor, we should ask, “*Would I want my son or daughter to be mentored by this person?*”

Whether we have children or not, it’s a great question that forces us to consider the character of a mentor.

King Solomon was wise and discerning—except for his choice of companions. These became his downfall, leading him astray from God. Sadly, he lacked the strength of character that his father David had.

(Of course, another chance to develop character is how we respond in a godly manner to those we *haven't* chosen but can't avoid!)

Two More Reasons why Character Is Important in Prophetic Leadership

Here are a couple more reasons why character strength is vital to prophetic ministry and leadership:

1. Character affects what you convey (intentionally or unconsciously) to those you lead and minister to, and through your prophetic words. You are passing on more than you realize, both through *example* and *impartation*.

Think about an email that appears legitimate but contains a virus in its attachment. Thankfully, many of us have learned to be cautious about opening attachments and clicking on links!

Let us be ones who impart the pure ministry of the Holy Spirit and be releasers of life.

2. Character impacts your reputation and that of the ministry, church, or team you represent.

And most importantly, God's reputation as people view Him through us.

As Proverbs says,

“A good name is more desirable than great riches...” (Proverbs 22:1a, NIV)

Winds Will Come to Reveal Character

One evening, during my prayer time, the Holy Spirit confronted me about a conflict I was dealing with. Suddenly, I had a vision of a tree with shallow roots, planted among rocks. God spoke to me, and I felt His discipline and urgency.

“You need to attend to that!”

The next morning, my husband Malcolm was out in the front yard, when he called out to me.

As I joined him, I saw to my shock that one of our hedge trees, which had been planted five or so years earlier, had blown over in a storm during the night, roots and all!

And it wasn't hard to see why.

They were planted shallowly in gravel, making it easy to topple in strong winds. Evidently, our landscaper had cut corners and not properly prepared the ground. And because we didn't see him do it, we were unaware—until now.

As I saw it, the fear (reverence and awe) of God hit me!

I did not realize it then, but I was about to go through another character-forging season—one that if I had not responded well in, I would not be doing what I am now.

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

(Proverbs 4:23, AMP)

How Character is Revealed

1. Character is Revealed Under Pressure

This reminds us that like the root system of a tree, character may not be visible immediately.

But here's the thing about character: it reveals whether it is weak or strong under pressure—or to put it another way, in strong winds!

- Even if you've done a fabulous job of creating a kind of spotless external persona, eventually your internal character is revealed

Anointed Character

- It can occur in situations of high stress—in a trial, conflict, or crisis.
- This includes winds of change and transition. These threaten our stability, and test our inner strength

Think of King Saul—early in his reign God arranged a character test, and he failed it. The prophet Samuel told him to wait for him at Gilgal to make an offering to the Lord following a battle.

Then, Samuel was late in coming, and Saul began to doubt the prophet's word. With the pressure from the people building, and his troops scattering in fear, Saul became desperate. And cracking under the pressure, Saul offered the sacrifice himself.

Samuel addressed this, saying,

“But now your kingdom must end, for the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart. The Lord has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.”

(1 Samuel 13:14, NLT)

Losing the Ability to Wear a Mask

Anyone can adjust their attitude and behavior to fit a culture, or what is expected of them for a short period—or so long as things are going well.

But as soon as intense pressure comes on, bang! Like a volcanic eruption, what is there will find its way out.

For example, when a team faces transition and rapid change, it creates pressure that reveals character. (Many of us have experienced this!)

- **Character is what is revealed when you have lost the ability to wear a mask.**

2. Character is Revealed in How You Honor Others

Character is also seen in our response to other people.

Look at the way Jesus responded to those who sought Him out. He expressed the heart of the Father and always had time for the ones who came hungry for His words or seeking Him for ministry.

It didn't make a difference if they were rich or poor, young or old, influential or unknown. (see James 2:1-9)

He loved them all.

- Character is not about the gifts we bring to the table—but in our *attitude* toward those at the table.

2.1 Making Room for Others

Do we make space for others—do we uplift, empower, or assist them? The Fivefold Ministry, for instance, is Jesus' gift to the church to equip the body. We cannot fulfill this role when we are mainly focused on advancing (or protecting) our own gifts and ministries.

2.2 Those Who are Different

How do we respond to those who are different from us in perspectives or beliefs?

- Do we honor those God has given to us as leaders and pastors? When we honor, we are grateful, and we receive more from their ministry.

Anointed Character

Notice that all the people God calls on us to honor are imperfect—and often we see our leaders’ flaws up close! Especially when on a team together.

- How we honor from the heart, is how others will be inspired to honor us.

2.3 Honoring the Weak

One day when we were staying at the beach, I saw a huge flock of black swans, flying above the water.

It was a wonderful spectacle.

But then, I noticed one swan that seemed to be weaker than the rest, struggling to keep up. It fell further and further behind.

What happened next amazed me. The leader turned the pack around full circle so that the one that was last became first. And then, the weaker swan was caught up in the pack and they finally landed together.

The Apostle Paul said,

“In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.

And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care.

So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care.

So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity.”

(1 Corinthians 12:22-24, NLT)

Our true character is revealed when we are tested with situations requiring patience and tolerance. This is especially true in our interactions with others who are out of step with us!

Character Is Revealed in Success and in Obscurity

Solomon is an example of someone who had great success and international acclaim.

He was humble before he was famous, but after gaining fame and fortune, he backslid.

Character is not only revealed in how we handle success, but also when our profile is reducing.

- How do we respond when we step out of the limelight?

It's seen in how we respond when it's someone else's turn to shine—or even replace us.

Or, as another ministry rises and becomes more popular.

- Will we be comfortable simply knowing we are doing our best?
- Can we be secure in our own gifts and calling, and in the situation where God has planted us?

Replaceable and Irreplaceable

Remember that tree that blew over in the storm. Today, the hedge is full and thick. We never did replace that tree; the ones on either side grew out and compensated for it. You wouldn't know one was missing.

Anointed Character

When Mordecai called Esther to step into her destiny, he said this:

“If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?”

(Esther 4:14, NLT)

He was saying, this is your destiny! But if you don't step up, Esther, God will insert someone else.

And it's a reminder—when it comes to a role or ministry, you are *replaceable*.

Equally sobering is the fact that you will *never* be replaceable. No one else has your unique DNA and calling from God.

You are valued, loved, and chosen by Him for such a time as this.



Reflection:

God has uniquely called and positioned you.

- Where might He be prompting you to “step up” in this season?
- How does knowing you are both irreplaceable in your identity—and yet part of a bigger picture—shape your response?



Prepare the Ground

Reflect on these words from the prophet Hosea:

*“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.”*

(Hosea 10:12, NKJV)

There are times to plow, to dig deep, and to prepare the ground—labor that comes before planting and harvesting.

When it comes to character, however, this process is ongoing. It’s not a one-time effort, but a continual journey of preparation and growth.

This may also relate to where you are right now. For example, there may be an area of influence or anointing that God is preparing you to step into—and He is inviting you to grow in a particular aspect of character to receive it.

This is a pivotal moment in your journey.

Prayer:

Father, we place our lives before you now in an attitude of surrender.

We give you permission to reveal and remove the stones and rocks that are in the way. Make us willing to be adjustable, in Jesus’ Name.

Coming Up:

Enduring in leadership is only possible when we are rooted

Anointed Character

in something deeper—our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God.

Let's now turn to the source of our security: knowing God as Father.

Security: Knowing God as Your Father

“The one thing I ask of the Lord—the thing I seek most—is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord’s perfections and meditating in his Temple. For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. Then I will hold my head high above my enemies who surround me.”
(Psalm 27:4-5, NLT)

Here, David provides the ultimate picture of security—God as our fortress, stronghold, and shelter.

It speaks of a *position in Christ* where we are out of reach of the enemy. As we shelter in Him, what opposes us cannot overpower us!

What is Security?

Security is stability and the state of being free from threat, fear, and anxiety.

Anointed Character

When you are secure, you possess confidence. You have a strong foundation, and so you are unwavering.

You can withstand uncertainty, knowing that no one can take away what God has given you—it is yours alone! Yet security is not just about protection; it's a position. It's not based on circumstances, but on the unshakable truth of who God is and who we are in Him.

David was often surrounded by enemies, but God always delivered him. This was not just theory to David; it was his reality! He experienced this especially during his wilderness years when Saul and his army were trying to kill him.

Security is a theme of Psalm 27. Listen to David declare,

*“Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will not be afraid.
Even if I am attacked, I will remain confident.”*

(Psalm 27:3, NLT)

When God is our fortress and refuge, the threats may be all around us, but they cannot touch us.



Reflection:

Think about what security means:

Being stable, free from threat, fear, and anxiety.

- How could having greater security, impact your life?

Take some time to jot down your reflections and dream about what this looks like.



The Source of Security

Our ultimate source of security is salvation in Christ. In Him we have eternal security. Jesus puts this vividly in John 10:

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

(John 10:28-30, NLT)

This is the picture of *eternal* security—you are in the grip of God, now and forever! You are in the palm of His hand.

We also have relational security, through knowing God as our Father. This includes:

1. Having assurance in God’s favor toward us
2. Being secure in our identity and relationship with Him
3. Knowing that we are loved by Him

Jesus’ Example of Relating to the Father

Jesus’ relationship with the Father spilled over into the life He lived in front of others. He constantly communed with the Father.

Anointed Character

- At times, Jesus prayed publicly (John 6:11, John 11:41-42)
- He often prayed in the disciples' presence (John 17, Luke 9:18). His disciples saw Jesus' relationship with God and asked Him to teach them how to pray.
- He taught them to begin by addressing God as Father (Luke 11:1-2).
- He withdrew and prayed alone (Mark 1:35)

Jesus' followers saw Him doing life and walking with the Father.

God designed you to walk and talk and fellowship with Him, just as Adam and Eve did at the beginning (Genesis 3:8-9). It is in your spiritual DNA.

And like Jesus did, as you develop your relationship with God, others will be inspired by your example.

7 Elements of Security

David McCracken describes seven elements of security in the revelation of God's Fatherhood.¹ **These are the security of being:**

1. Indescribably loved
2. Unconditionally accepted
3. A recipient of Father's provision

And the security of knowing:

4. The authority of the Father now fully rests on me as His heir
5. My Father is guiding the steps of my life.

6. He is always and only motivated for my good.

7. My Father is greater than all of life's opposition

If you take this list, and study what the Bible says about it, and meditate on it, and let the truth saturate you daily—it will be an anchor for your life.

5 Reasons Why Security is Vital in Prophetic Ministry:

Security is important, so let's look at its vital role in prophetic ministry and leadership.

1. It gives us confidence to be in God's presence and hear His voice

When we are secure in our relationship with Him, we know our Heavenly Father wants to communicate to us—and eagerly awaits our conversation.

Jesus emphasized this when He said,

"...the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing."

(John 5:20a, NLT)

When we know that He desires to share with us and there will always be plenty, we're not limited by a scarcity mindset.

2. It helps us to be authentic, not contrived

Security enables us to be authentic, so we won't need to "dress up" who we are, wear a mask, or use fancy filters!

When we are secure:

- We don't need validation from others—knowing we are fully accepted by God

- We can be ourselves, comfortable in our own style, without copying anyone else

This allows us to lead authentically—and to be a true example to those we lead.

3. It enables us to grow as a prophetic leader:

3.1 Stepping Beyond Comfort

When we are secure, we can venture outside our comfort zones. We can step out further than we've been before, both in listening to God and sharing with others.

3.2 Embracing Feedback

We can admit we are on a journey and yes—that we can do better in the future than we can now.

There is room to improve, and grace to grow!

And when we're secure, we will be open to feedback from other people, without feeling threatened. Rather, we will invite it, answering questions and welcoming leadership input.

This is a key to growing beyond our current limitations.

3.3 Growing Through Imperfections

Being secure, we will embrace the ups and downs that come with growing in a role or ministry. There is no need to hide that you are in a learning process.

And we're not being held back by fear of getting it wrong.

As John writes,

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

(1 John 4:18, NKJV)

4. We can deliver a message from God with freedom

When our affirmation comes from God, we're free from the pressure to impress others. We can be content with the prophetic insight God has given us, even if it's brief or simple.

And we'll resist the urge to overreach, or to put on a performance so we can appear better than we are.

This authenticity allows us to be transparent, and by being so, we will encourage others to be themselves. As leaders, that is especially powerful.

When you are secure, you can enter any room God calls you into.

An Insecure Prophet or Leader

On the other hand, an insecure prophet or leader may:

- Hesitate to deliver a message by faith
- Share part of the word but withhold the uncomfortable parts
- Be reluctant to step out in faith—being overly risk averse
- Add to God's message what they perceive the recipient wants to hear

Even when mature in their gift, they may present their message with insecurity, appearing hesitant, tentative, or even apologetic.

Anointed Character

Let's be clear: insecurity is *not* the same as humility. You can be humble and bold.

You can be humble and deliver God's word with authority and authenticity.

- Humility will give you wings—whereas insecurity will weigh you down.

5. It enables us to contribute within the context of teams

When we are secure, we have the confidence to share our gifts—and will welcome others' input.

We understand it's okay to excel in some areas, be average in others, and weak in yet others. Secure leaders are comfortable leading teams with different strengths.

Being secure, we can celebrate both others' strengths and our own without feeling the sting of comparison.

As a result, we can:

- Collaborate without competition or striving
- Work alongside others who have different strengths, even if they are strong where we are weak (and vice versa)

We can let others shine, without feeling threatened! Paul writes,

'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.'

(1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NIV)

6. Security enables us to set boundaries

As secure leaders, we can be open about our limitations. We can also establish boundaries to protect ourselves and our families and take regular breaks for rest.

One of the key reasons that leaders fail morally (or burn out) is that their inner resources run dry. They continue running on empty because they are reluctant to step back.

The following characteristics can stem from insecurity:

- Establishing a precedent of always being available
- Mistakenly believing we're indispensable. Deep down, we do not trust God to take care of our work or ministries while we take care of ourselves and our families
- Being unwilling to relinquish control and let someone else to step in and be a caretaker

From the very beginning, God has mandated rest for His children. What makes us think we're the exception?

The answer may well be insecurity.

7. Security is the source of significance

An example of someone who lived from security is King David, whose name means "*Beloved*".

When David arrived at the scene of the Philistine war, he was a youth delivering supplies. But he confidently faced and defeated the giant Goliath.

What a picture of security, in the face of inequity!

- David had confidence he was anointed and called, and that with God he could take down that enemy
- He trusted the Lord to fulfill His promises, because he knew God and had a personal relationship with Him
- David worshiped God long before Samuel anointed him to be king, and he maintained a personal relationship with God throughout his life, despite his mistakes
- David remained secure in his calling through times of great trial

Learn from David.

Security doesn't just protect you—it empowers you.

When you are a son or daughter, there is never a moment God is not your Father.

- There is never a moment His love towards you fails, or His grace and favor stop reaching you.

You are chosen and anointed—His Beloved, always!

The contrast to security is *insecurity*.

Healing the Orphan Mindset

Another term people sometimes use for insecurity is an orphan mindset or “*orphan spirit*”.

As Christians, this can happen when we acknowledge that God is our loving Father, but deep down, we have a conflicting belief.

This may arise from being hurt by a parent or an authority figure. Our experiences make us feel like perpetual outsiders—or in danger of being ousted at any moment.

And that deep-held misbelief will keep popping up, until it is brought into the light and healed. This is a process that takes time. As we receive the light of truth to these parts, we experience greater freedom.ⁱⁱ

Jesus said to His disciples,

“I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.”

(John 14:18, NKJV)

The love of the Father casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

Two Signs of Insecurity

1. Fear of People’s Opinions

King Saul—David’s predecessor—is an example of someone whose calling was destroyed by insecurity.

When Samuel introduced him publicly and announced his kingship, he was found hiding in the baggage! From day one, Saul demonstrated self-doubt and lack of confidence.

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Then, when the Prophet Samuel appeared to be delayed in coming to make a sacrifice (1 Sam 13), Saul took the matter into his own hands and made the sacrifice himself.

- Why didn't Saul trust God to do what He said He would do?

Because he didn't know God or have a personal relationship with Him. As a result, Saul didn't trust God's word (1 Sam 13:8). And this, coupled with his fear of public opinion, led to his disobedience.

From that time on, God's anointing departed from him.

Saul's story serves as a cautionary tale about how insecurity can jeopardize our calling.

- When this fear is not addressed, it can weaken and ultimately compromise our character

Returning to Security

Remember, security isn't how you feel—it's where you stand. And you can always return to that place of security.

Be aware that when it comes to this, you will always be a work in progress.

- When others witness you overcoming insecurity, they are empowered to confront and overcome their own!

2. Envy or Jealousy

When King Saul hired the young David to be on his team,

David was successful in everything he did, so Saul promoted him.ⁱⁱⁱ

David gained popularity among all the people when he killed Goliath. As the Israelite army returned home, women came out to greet him, singing and dancing for joy.

David's confidence wasn't in himself, but in God who had always been with him. But their praise stung Saul.

This was their song:

*“Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands!”
This made Saul very angry. “What’s this?” he said. “They credit
David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they’ll
be making him their king!” So from that time on Saul kept a jealous
eye on David.*

*The very next day a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul,
and he began to rave in his house like a madman...*

(1 Samuel 18:8-10a, NLT)

Note the distinctions:

- *Jealousy* means guarding something you have and hoarding it for yourself.
- *Envy* desires what another person has—the Bible refers to this as *coveting*.

God's Grace for Envy

Sometimes, envy comes from a natural desire we have, for what already belongs to us—for example, favor, giftedness, anointing, a positive self-image, and so on.

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- But due to our insecurity, we fail to perceive it as ours in Christ

Instead, it becomes a longing for what another person has. So, the experience of envy can be a sign of what God in His mercy is redeeming.

Putting it that way, being aware of envy can be a positive sign! The Holy Spirit is inviting us to see ourselves as our Father sees us.^{iv}



Reflection:

Consider what some signs of hidden envy may be:

1. Having difficulty sincerely celebrating someone else's success
2. Feeling unjustly done by, when someone else achieves or receives a dream you want
3. Resenting someone's success or ____ (fill in the gap)
4. See another person's growth in a ministry or success as a threat to, or as competition to, your own (this is jealousy)

If something is coming to mind right now, pray about it. Turn it around! And let the Holy Spirit help you identify your own wonderful inheritance your Father has for you.



Free from Condemnation

As you step into His grace, be set free from condemnation and shame.

“Now we’re no longer living like slaves under the law, but we enjoy being God’s very own sons and daughters! And because we’re his, we can access everything our Father has—for we are heirs of God through Jesus, the Messiah!”
(Galatians 4:7, TPT^v)

You are not on the outside of the Father’s house, looking in at others!

And you are not an orphan (John 14:18). You are a son, a daughter, on the inside of the Father’s house, partaking in His abundance—and celebrating His grace (see Luke 15:25-27).

Security with the Father

6 Ways to Strengthen Your Security in God's Fatherhood

We're all on a journey to grow in knowing and experiencing security in God's Fatherhood.

If you've identified areas where you need healing from insecurity, here are ideas to help:

1. Reflect on Jesus and what His sacrifice means for you personally. Recognize the value God places on you, demonstrated by the sacrifice of His Son (John 3:16).

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2. Receive a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit, who as the Spirit of Adoption, reveals God as your Heavenly Father (Romans 8:15).
3. Address God as Father (as this can help develop your awareness of Him.) Start intentionally using terms like Father, Abba, or a personalized term in your prayers.
4. Engage with God's Word for a secure foundation. Trust and believe in the truth of who God says you are. Look up the Scriptures mentioned in this study.

Remember the words of Jesus:

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock”.

(Matthew 7:24-25, NIV)

This illustrates the ultimate security.

The Decree of Esther

“Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote another letter putting the queen’s full authority behind Mordecai’s letter to establish the Festival of Purim.”

(Esther 9:29, NLT)

In the grand finale of the book of Esther, Queen Esther and Mordecai established an annual celebration and holiday for the Jews, called Purim.

This decree became known as, *“the decree of Esther”*.

It's a single moment representing the huge leap that God's favor gave a young woman.

Knowing Your Father Changes Everything

In this climactic moment, Esther is described as the *daughter of Abihail*.

It is only the second time her birth father's name is mentioned in the book of Esther—the first being the pivotal moment she was first taken to the king. (Esther 2:15)

As the book of Esther opened, she was in the guardianship of her cousin Mordecai. Her birth father was not present in the story—so why was he mentioned?

- Because her parentage described her identity

The knowledge of her Jewish heritage was reserved for a critical moment when everything hinged on it. Her identity was God's hidden strategy—a “secret weapon” reserved for the right moment.

In that moment, the tables were turned, the enemy was revealed, and the Jews given the upper hand.

Your Father of Might

The name “*Abihail*”, means “*My Father is might*” or, “*Father of strength*”

In Romans 8, Paul writes,

“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves.

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Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

(Romans 8:15, NLT)

This is the source of our identity and eternal security. In the fatherhood of God, we can be secure and unwavering.

We are no longer slaves living in fear. And no longer sinners living in the dark. We are sons and daughters, secure in our relationship with God.

And we know who our Father is.^{vi}

You are in the Royal Bloodline

Like Esther, your identity as a beloved child of God will make a difference in history—because you are known, chosen, and sent by the Father of Might.

"The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17, NKJV)

You can stand and step into situations, knowing that your Father is mighty. You are in the royal bloodline—you are significant!

And the Lord wants you to know, your voice matters, and your presence is powerful.

Coming Up:

What if your unfinished parts are the very places God wants to shine through?

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This next chapter invites you to embrace humility and grow stronger as you walk with Him.

Humility: Embracing the Work in Progress

“The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, “Go down to the potter’s shop, and I will speak to you there.” So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over.

Then the Lord gave me this message: “O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand.”

(Jeremiah 18:1-6, NLT)

Character is Dynamic—it’s Always Evolving

Here’s an essential truth about character. We have never “arrived” but are always being shaped and molded in the hands of the Master Potter.

And our values, which are foundational to our character, also evolve. This happens as they are influenced by various factors in our lives. We are always a work in progress!

Paul wrote to the Galatian church,

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19, NKJV)

The Greek word translated formed, *“morpho”* means to *fashion, to form.*

The church in Galatia was influenced by legalistic *“Judaizers”* (as Paul called them). They wanted to jump off the potter’s wheel of life in Christ!

- They preferred to be set in the predictable mold of the old religious ways.

Paul admonished them, and we hear his heart’s cry in the book of Galatians.

Humility is a Pathway for God’s Power

It takes humility to remain on the potter’s wheel! Humility means being able to admit that you have room to grow.

“And he gives grace generously.

As the Scriptures say,

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”

(James 4:6-7, NLT)

In James 4:6, the word translated as “humble” means *“not rising far from the ground”*. So, essentially, to be humble is to be *grounded.*



Reflection:

Take a moment to reflect on how God is shaping you right now.

- What part of your life feels like it's "under construction"?
- How might God's hand be at work in the process?



The Benefits of Accepting You're a "Work in Progress"

It's a matter of integrity, and extremely *powerful* to embrace being a work in progress as a leader.

This means being comfortable with acknowledging your limitations. You recognize that you excel at some things and are weak or passably good at others! You have room for growth in leadership and you benefit from the help of others.

Here are some benefits of embracing this as a key to humility:

1. Others Benefit from Your Example

There is power in being relatable.

People relate to you because you're a work in progress. They can see how far you have come, and your openness to continue the journey. And it gives them hope for their own transformation!

We are all ordinary people who connect with others like us. The only perfect example to learn from is Jesus.

I love it when our leaders are honest and can laugh about their “foibles”. These are weaknesses and tendencies that are not a moral issue, just reveal our humanity.

2. Humility and Authority Go Hand-in-Hand

In the Kingdom of God, humility and authority go together. This stands in contrast to the world’s culture of today, where many pride themselves on being “self-made”.

A leader who was known for his humility is Moses. The Bible tells us,

“Now Moses was very humble—more humble than any other person on earth.”

(Numbers 12:3, NLT)

God entrusted him with great exploits and works of power.

3. You Won’t Take God’s Glory for Yourself

In Isaiah 42:8, God says,

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols.”

(Isaiah 42:8, NLT)

When you realize you are a "work in progress", you stay humble and grounded during success. When God's power is displayed through you, you will honor Jesus.

You understand that it is God’s grace enabling you, not the strength of your performance. This way, you focus on responding to the Holy Spirit and working with God.

- A humble person has no difficulty giving credit to God and others.

4. You Will Get the Most out of Leadership

We never outgrow the need for leaders or the benefits they bring. As a “work in progress”, we stay open to input and recognize that our leaders are instruments of God’s shaping.

This isn’t always comfortable, desirable, or (let’s face it) in line with our opinions!

Yet, having leadership in place will be the most empowering choice you can make.

5. You Have a Strong Prayer Life

In Acts chapter 6, the apostles delegate leadership to new deacons appointed by the people, explaining,

“Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word”

(Acts 6:4, NLT).

It stands out to me that they were still disciples at heart.

They were following Jesus’ example of spending time with the Father, seeing what He is doing, and ministering out of that relationship (see John 5:19-20).

The apostles considered it crucial to their ministry and an example to their people. And it’s a reminder to us:

Prayer is not just about making requests or petitions—it is also the main way God instructs and guides us, including in our leadership roles.

Watch for These Signs of Pride

Humility delights to serve faithfully in low places, whereas pride craves the high places.

Think of Jesus, washing His disciples' feet, demonstrating true leadership. He exemplified humility.

Pride is dangerous because it can lead to downfall (Proverbs 16:18). It's a process that may start subtly as we shift from depending upon God to relying on ourselves. Or we feel pressured to maintain appearances.

Some hallmarks of pride include:

- Projecting an image or keeping up the appearance of success
- Resisting the input and counsel of others
- Parading one's achievements before others.
- Raising up oneself and one's own ministry (rather than elevating the team)
- Ambition and self-promotion (see Isaiah 14:12-15)
- Seeking to maintain high standards of performance at the cost of others, family, and one's own relationship with God

King Hezekiah, who was known for his humility, made a mistake later in his reign. In 2 Kings 20, he received a Babylonian envoy and showed them all the kingdom's treasures. The prophet Isaiah foretold of a future time in which the Babylonians would take it all away.

King Nebuchadnezzar is an example of someone whom God rebuked for pride. He experienced a dramatic fall, losing his sanity for a period decreed by God through

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Daniel. But later, God healed and restored him. You can read this story in Daniel chapter 4.

“Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”
(Proverbs 11:2, NLT)

Keys to Humility: Foster These Character Traits

1. Authenticity

When I was young, we had a family friend who was a potter. His home was set in New Zealand native bushlands, while indoors, the decor was just as distinctive. It was filled with the potter’s creations. The studio, with its distinctive aroma, was an integral part of the house.

Every piece of pottery was one-of-a-kind, even when part of a set with a shared theme. It seemed to carry the “signature” of the potter, reflecting his style.

Similarly, we bear the signature of our creator God, the Master Potter! When we allow Him to shape us, and honor our design and the part we play, we honor *Him*.

There’s no likeness or standard that we conform to, to be acceptable—except the grace-journey of becoming like Jesus.

Paul provides the following key to humility in Romans 12:

“Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special

function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other."

(Romans 12:3-5, NLT)

Through Paul, God tells us not to think of ourselves as better or less than we truly are. This is the start of authenticity.

The Power of an Authentic Life

Authenticity is the ability to live an "unfinished life", with integrity and wisdom in front of others.

God does not call us to live a *polished* life, but one in which people can see the light of Christ—His radiance—shining through us. Remember, "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels*", or as another translation puts it:

"We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves."

(2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT)

We can then extend the same grace and mercy that God does to us, to others—without compromising our values.

2. Embracing Our Humanity

Humility also means acknowledging and embracing our humanity. Think about the moments Jesus' humanity showed in the Gospel stories.

He was tired, He was thirsty.

Jesus wept.

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The writer of Hebrews tells us:

“So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”

(Hebrews 4:14-16, NLT)

As well as physical frailty, we experience trials in our mind, soul and emotions. These, too, we can take to the Throne of God.

There will always be passing shadows. But what’s important, is that the darkness doesn’t find a lodging place within us. It’s not what we pass through, but the One we return to that counts.

New Every Morning

When confronted with our weaknesses, it can be tempting to think, *“I’m not deserving. I’m not holy or strong enough.”* But our Father wants us to run to Him with our weakness and to lean on his help.

A weakness is not a reason to put up a wall to hide behind when it comes to the person of the Holy Spirit. He’s already in the room, so it’s a matter of being aware of him, of receiving his assistance.

And remembering where we are—in Christ.

In humility is our greatest strength. We can wake up in the hardest of times and know God’s mercies are new every

morning (Lam 3:22-23). We can walk in His mercy for ourselves and others. Not being perfect.

The psalmist says,

“The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.”

(Psalm 103:13-14, NLT)

You have already journeyed through so much in your life. God is rejoicing over you! In Him you can declare, *“I am strong and getting stronger!”*

3. Teachability

Teachability is a powerful aspect of humility. Let’s face it—it’s difficult to be both proud and teachable! When we recognize that learning never stops, no matter our age or experience, we become teachable.

When you have the attitude of being a life-long learner, there will be no ceiling on your gift, ministry, and personal development. Teachability is the doorway that leads to growth and advancement in your gift.

Being Novices in the New

One day, we phoned up our brother-in-law, Stuart Allan, who is a pastor in Auckland. We said, *“Help! We don’t know what God is doing!”*

It was 2019, and the Holy Spirit was speaking to my husband and me in extraordinary ways—through vivid dreams, divine appointments, and striking coincidences.

It was unlike anything we had experienced before.

Stuart passed on a word that had ministered to him and Lynley:

“I want you to be novices in the new, not experts in the old”.

He went on to explain, *“The Kingdom’s always advancing...and our Father wants us to live in dependency upon Him, so that what we minister is of Him.”*

It struck me like a thunderbolt because I had been journeying in the prophetic for many years, and Enliven Blog was nearly ten years old.

- *“I want you to be novices in the new, not experts in the old.”*

My sense of having a grip on the ways God communicates through the prophetic gift was being challenged, and I was humbled.

Receiving God’s Kingdom Requires a Child-Like Attitude

The glorious truth is that God always has more for us to learn, and to encounter of Him. “More” means that what God has for us, is beyond the confines of our past and current experience.¹

One day, Jesus called a child and placed him in the middle of the group of his disciples. Then He said,

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven...”

(Matt 18:1-5, NKJV)

In our culture, we are taught that we must raise the bar, personally, in leadership and business to go to the next level. Yet this word “*humbles*” – in the original Greek, means to make low, to bring low (Strong’s ref G5013).

It stands in contrast to our culture today, where achievement and advancement come through stepping up.

- Sometimes we think God is *raising* the bar when He’s lowering it
- He’s calling us to take a humble approach

Being teachable requires humility! And to be a “*novice in the new*” means admitting we don’t know everything. And we don’t have it all together.

Here are some vital aspects of teachability:

a. Be Open to Learn from Everybody.

Don’t limit the people you learn and receive from. God may want to use someone unlikely to help you develop in your gift.

Some people God may use to teach you include

- Those younger than you or newer to faith
- Those less mature in their gifts
- People who ask you questions
- Those who criticize you
- People to whom you minister, who have unique needs

b. Learn from the Holy Spirit

Nurture your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Learn how

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He speaks uniquely to you and develop sensitivity to His guidance.

Let's recognize that the Holy Spirit is our teacher, guide, and instructor (John 14:26). And remember that prayer is the primary way we express dependency upon God.

c. Don't have an 'expert' mentality

The wonderful thing about God's Kingdom and Scripture is this:

- There is a vast storehouse of insight and learning that we will never exhaust in our lifetime!

In addition to this, our society, culture, technology, and along with it the needs of people are constantly changing. To stay relevant, we must always be open to learn new ways and methods of speaking prophetically into people's lives

The moment we believe we know it all in relation to our gift or area of ministry is the moment we begin to decline.

d. Be Adjustable

Jesus chose a bunch of imperfect disciples who had some significant character issues.

- Peter cared too much for people's opinions to the point of deceit.
- Thomas seemed to live out of a negative frame of mind.
- All the disciples displayed selfishness, arguing

about which of them would be the greatest. And so on.

- Judas was cheating and stealing in the background, a betrayer

But what was important, was that (for 11 out of 12 of them, anyway!) they were adjustable.

Jesus modeled Godly character to his disciples, and taught them on it, and called them out on it when they did or said something out of a weakness of character.

They learned. Peter learned through failure—denying Jesus—and being willing to be restored. Judas failed the character test and in acts chapter 1 we read how Matthias took his place as the twelfth Apostle.

Mentoring

So, aspire to be adjustable—to be someone who can pivot.

Where does this apply?

- In our relationship with God
- Learning from God's Word
- Being part of teams
- Leading teams
- Being disciplined or mentored

Or perhaps the question should be, “*Where doesn't this apply?*”

I've learned that if I don't bring adjustability into mentoring sessions, I don't gain from the mentoring.

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I don't receive the gold my mentor carries or gain the value out of another's spiritual leadership. But to the extent I have a teachable attitude, I'll learn and grow.

Eli and Samuel

“And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see.”

(I Samuel 3:2 NKJV)

The aging priest was losing his eyesight; he was lying down at rest in his usual place. It was his comfort zone.

- In the meantime, young Samuel was in the intimate presence of God and hearing His voice.

I believe a Samuel generation is rising—and I'm not talking about age. A fresh encounter with the voice of God is available for each one of us.

This is something I am continually being challenged with.

4. Flexibility

The Power of Flexibility Through Times of Change

Transition is the pivot, the segue, the uncomfortable space between what was and what is coming.

Change is both uncomfortable and inevitable. During the process, we need flexibility—the capacity to bend without breaking.

To be malleable, like clay in the potter's hands! This requires faith and trust in God's sovereignty over our future.

Andrew, an Amazing Example of Transition

John tells us that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, a powerful prophet whose ministry preceded and for a time, coincided with Jesus' ministry.

Despite being part of this major move of the Holy Spirit, Andrew followed Jesus when John the Baptist pointed Him out.

Andrew stands out because he embraced both old and new things that God was doing, unlike many of John the Baptist's disciples who struggled with change.

For example, in Matthew 9:14-17, some of them questioned Jesus' approach to fasting. Jesus explained that new wine must be poured into new wineskins, meaning new methods require new mindsets.

- It's a reminder that change often comes in unexpected ways, that we may not like

Andrew's Continued Faithfulness

While many of John the Baptist's disciples struggled with this change, Andrew embraced both the old and new moves of God! He did not let outward differences become a stumbling block.

He understood that John the Baptist's ministry was a signpost pointing to Jesus. By embracing change, Andrew walked into his destiny.

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This is profound, and I pray it inspires and ministers to you.

Some change is inevitable. Sometimes, events will happen that you never saw coming. And other times change will quietly whisper its invitation.

It's time to take the hand of your Heavenly Father, the only trustworthy One, and step into your future. Hear Him say, "*We've got this*".



Reflection:

While Andrew moved on, many of John the Baptist's disciples couldn't see what God was doing.

Thirty years later, in Ephesus, Paul encountered a group of John's disciples who had missed the point and never transitioned to follow Jesus.

- Have you ever had friends or family who seemed to stay on the outside of something God was doing?
- Have you ever found yourself needing time to catch up with God's new direction for your life?

Take a moment to pray—release others in forgiveness and fully embrace His grace for you.



Coming Up:

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Ever felt like running from a challenge? You're not alone.
In the next chapter, we'll discover how facing life's storms
head-on can grow our character.

And lead us into God's best.

Bravery: Facing the Storm to Grow

“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.”

(Romans 5:3-4 NLT)

In his book *“Take the Stairs”*,* Rory Vaden tells of an interesting phenomenon he observed, growing up in Colorado.

He said that in Colorado, you can find herds of buffalo and cows.

When a storm comes from the west over the Rocky Mountains, the cows sense it and try to run away from it, heading east.

However, cows are not very fast, so the storm catches up

* Adapted material: Buffalo-and-cow anecdote adapted from Rory Vaden, *Take the Stairs: 7 Steps to Achieving True Success* (Perigee, 2012). Used with appreciation.

with them quickly! So, even though they keep trying to outrun it, they end up running with the storm, prolonging their experience of the storm.

On the other hand, buffalo have a unique approach. Instead of running away from the storm, they wait for it to reach the peak of the mountain.

As the storm rolls over the ridge, the buffalo turn and run west towards the storm, straight into it. By running into the storm, they pass through it more quickly, minimizing the pain, time, and frustration they experience.

That story struck me, and later while preparing a study on character, I went back to it.

And had a big “aha” moment.

This simple but vivid picture of how buffalo face storms—and cows avoid them—gives us a lasting metaphor for how we can approach the trials that shape our character.

As Vaden points out, we spend much of our lives trying to avoid challenges, but we can't *choose* whether we face storms. Our only choice is how and when we respond to them.

We all know that when we avoid them, we make things worse by procrastinating!

How Character is Forged

It is a vivid picture, describing how character is built or forged over time, through the storms of life.

Perhaps, you can recognize an opportunity for growth you are undergoing right now.

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Now, let's apply the "buffalo approach" to character building:

A challenge arises, such as conflict, an unexpected change, or an unforeseen opportunity. And you know it will stretch you if you pursue it.

- At a pivotal moment, you have a choice

You can take the pathway that will forge your character—which is usually the difficult path—or you can take the route that you perceive is the "safest" one.

Opportunities to Grow

Most of us agree, it is natural to want to minimize pain, but avoidance will never result in our growth!

At worst, avoiding challenges can solidify weaknesses in our character. Reflect on these specific examples:

- Courage is built through facing and going through situations that you are initially afraid of
- Honesty is built when you are faced with a situation you are pressured to evade the truth
- Perseverance is built when you choose to take the long road and not give up when the going gets tough.
- Discipline is built when you choose to apply yourself to get something done when you would be more comfortable procrastinating.

- Loyalty is built when situations come up that test your loyalty to your leader, and you choose to respond well.
- Integrity is built when you overcome the temptation to look good to others by behaving in a way that is not true to your values.
- Integrity is built when you have an opportunity to “cheat the system” (for example work less hours than you are contracted to, and so on. Others may be doing it, but you go the extra mile doing the right thing

And let’s not forget, we are able to do this by relying on God’s power at work within us (Eph 3:20).

So, determine to meet challenges head on, like the buffalo, rather than avoid them, and you will develop your character faster.

A great question to ask is, *“What am I avoiding right now, that I need to address?”*



Reflection:

Can you think back to a recent or past pivotal moment where you faced a clear choice for character growth?

It might have been a relationship crisis or a decision to speak up about something that seemed amiss. The easy way out, perhaps, was to avoid it.

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- If you chose the easy path, what do you think you missed?
- If you opted for character growth, how did you and others benefit? How did it complicate the situation?



Ask, "Where is the Character Growth?"

It's evident that saying "yes" to the path of character growth requires courage above all else! And with it inevitably comes an inner conflict: *between fear and desire*.

It's no wonder we have the strong urge to flee the storm, seeking the safety of the familiar.

But we already have a twofold basis for acting courageously:

1. We've already committed to follow Jesus (which in practice, includes being Spirit-led)
2. We highly value integrity and godly character

Clearly, the way to reach our highest potential is by making strong character choices.

A question I'm learning to ask, is: "*Where is the character growth*"?

To help us answer that question, let's explore some keys to fostering courage, so we are prepared when tough times come.

Keys to Fostering Courage

1. Make the Hard Decisions Ahead of Time

Timothy was a young man who served on Paul's team. It's evident through Paul's writing that the young man struggled with fear and intimidation.

Paul wrote to him:

“This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

(2 Timothy 1:6-7, NLT)

“Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”

(1 Timothy 4:12, NLT)

Paul includes this note to the church in Corinth, where Timothy was due to visit:

“When Timothy comes, don't intimidate him. He is doing the Lord's work, just as I am. Don't let anyone treat him with contempt...”

(1 Corinthians 16:10-11a, NLT)

Beyond the Comfort Zone

Paul's letters reveal Timothy's tendency towards fear and intimidation, so Paul's directives to him would not always have been easy or comfortable. (2 Tim 1:4-8)

And yet Timothy was willing—time and time again, to step

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out of his comfort zones in his service for God under Paul's direction. Why?

- Because he made a lifelong commitment to follow Jesus.

Timothy also understood that his God-given assignment was to serve Paul. When he was commissioned by the elders of his home church and left his home in Lystra, he considered that decision sealed.

Developing Godly Resolve

Timothy's story shows that each stage of ministry brings opportunities to grow in character.

Much of my own character growth has taken place through being in teams, on staff, or in leadership roles (that never stops). Each season brings its own set of unique opportunities and relationships.

When the value of honor became "branded" in me through failure, I decided:

- No matter what, I would seek to *finish well*.

This resolve has helped me navigate storms and reach the other side, despite the "messy middle". My desire is to have a heart free of offense, so I can walk unencumbered into the next chapter He has for me.

2. See Beyond the Storm

Timothy's example inspires us to not let fear hold us back, but to see beyond the storm. And rise to be all God has

called us to be—spurred on by the leaders He has given to us.

I once heard the advice, “*Throw your heart over!*” given to a young equestrian about to take her horse over a jump. And there’s a lesson in that.

If you are galloping towards an obstacle, throw your heart over it. In other words, see yourself on the other side and don’t hesitate!

By faith, you perceive what it is to be on the other side. And you feel the triumph of it before you even reach the obstacle.

Perhaps you are facing a challenge right now, and this word is for you: *throw your heart over!* Change will take courage, but there is another side, unseen yet held by God. Your Father already occupies that space, and you can trust Him.

Someone reading this wants to give up, but God wants you to know you have another mile in you. Deep down, you know you are meant to be on this track. And the opposition you face is evidence of that.

3. Recognize the Crossroads

Illustrations like these can inspire us! But the Bible gives us the clearest examples of courage at life’s turning points.

In the book of Ruth, two young widows faced a pivotal moment when their mother-in-law, Naomi, decided to return to Judah from Moab.

Together, they packed their belongings and set out for

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Bethlehem. Along the way, Naomi offered Ruth and Orpah the choice to return to Moab or join her in Judah.

Orpah chose to stay, but Ruth made the extraordinary decision to accompany Naomi.

Often, we arrive at a crossroads and have a choice between clinging to familiarity and going the way that is unfamiliar.

With great courage, Ruth dedicated her life to staying with Naomi and becoming her family. She burned her bridges, so to speak! Here is where we find those remarkable words:

“Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.”

(Ruth 1:16-17a, NLT)

Like herds of buffalo or cows facing storms over the mountains, we too encounter crucial moments.

These are crossroads where we must choose between building character and taking the easy path. If we don't recognize these defining moments, we'll just go with how we feel in the moment!

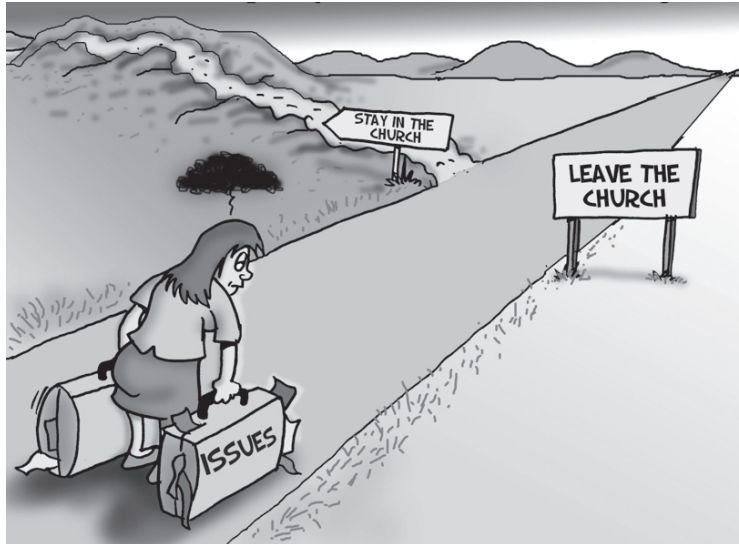
Crisis at the Crossroads

Sometimes, there is hurt at the crossroads. This cartoon is from my first book, *“Prophetic People in a Changing Church,”* and it illustrates a moment that forever changed my life.

It was when I chose the difficult path to remain in a church situation where I was experiencing conflict. Little did I

know that God had an upgrade for me that would propel me into His destiny for my life!

I was carrying a lot of “issues” at that time, but I was about to be set free.



Many of us have faced this kind of crossroads at some point. You might know someone who has left the church feeling disillusioned or offended.

The best thing I did, with God's grace, was to stay, reconcile with my pastors, and take the tough road. I unpacked my "issues" with the help of some prayer ministers and took time to receive ministry.

I emerged lighter, in a grace-filled relationship with my leaders, and continued along the path to my destiny.

4. Give it Time—Because God Does

Character is so important to God that He will take whatever time He needs to—and allow circumstances that will set us up and test and grow our character (such as Moses' 40 years in the wilderness)

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God cares more for your character than He does your comfort. He cares more about your character than He does releasing you into the call before you're ready.

- Urgency and pressure concerning your calling or assignment are not from the Holy Spirit!

5. Receive Grace for Your Weakness

Timothy stood alongside Paul through the good and hard times. But he wasn't the only young leader who faced challenges. Mark's journey shows us that even when we stumble, grace makes restoration possible.

Mark, who was Barnabas' cousin, also became an assistant to Paul. But he wasn't consistent when he started his ministry. In fact, Paul and Barnabas had a "bust up" over him!

"Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work.

Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus."

(Acts 15:37-39, NLT)

A character weakness can divert us from the path God has set for us, but we can be restored. Later, Paul commends Mark in his letters:

"Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. As you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way."

(Colossians 4:10, NLT)

Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry.”

(2 Timothy 4:11)

The Storm of Spiritual Warfare

Some storms arise not from circumstances or relationships, but from spiritual warfare. These too can become opportunities for character growth.

Inevitably, we will face storms that are instigated by demonic means. And other storms will be *accompanied* by it. Peter warns,

“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”

(2 Peter 5:8, NLT, see also Eph 6:10-12)

We know that Christian leaders are a target for spiritual warfare. But we can be mindful and prepared, remembering that:

- The enemy wants to smear our character and our reputation (and that of the church in general).
- Many eagerly wait to discredit Christian leaders
- We live in an environment where temptations abound

There are instances where we have integrity, and are obeying God—and yet our character (or doctrine, or something else) is attacked.

This is *persecution*.

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But for now, let's focus on how we can respond to demonic pressure coming through *temptation*.

A Way Through Every Storm

Under today's pressure and scrutiny, how can we protect our character and make our ministry fail-proof in this area?

Firstly, we can be assured that God has provided a way through every storm—even spiritual warfare.

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”

(1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT)

“*More than you can stand*” or as another translation says, “*more than you are able*” (NKJV). This is where strength of character comes in.

- God does His part, and we do ours.

According to God's Word, there's a way out! Let's keep in mind that we do not fight *for* victory, but *from the victory we already have*. The victory Jesus has already accomplished (Col 2 14-15).

Why Does God Allow Spiritual Attack?

There is an intriguing story, where Jesus knew about a demonic attack coming against the disciples, but He didn't stop it. He was seeing the bigger picture.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus told Peter,

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”

(Luke 22:31-32, NLT)

Through Jesus’ prayer, God turned the attack into something good. The outcome was Peter's repentance and transformation, leading to his emergence as a new, humbled, and empowered leader.

In other words, character growth!

This shows that God knows in advance the trials we face, and Jesus intercedes for us.

The armor Paul describes in Galatians 6, for protection, and the weapons for overcoming the enemy, serve as a reminder:

- God uses spiritual warfare to grow our authority.
- He allows tests, but His purpose is always victory!

We already stand in Christ’s victory.

Don’t Give the Enemy a Foothold

We can attribute some of the trauma of leaders who fail morally, to spiritual warfare. But we must also recognize that the enemy needs a *“foothold”* to take ground (Eph 4:26-27).

And that issue, or foothold can become a *stronghold* when it is not immediately dealt with and brought into the light

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(Eph 5). A “foothold” is like a chink or crack in our armor, that the enemy tries to take advantage of.

But in discovering our vulnerability, we have an opportunity! We can present it to God for healing and foil the enemy’s plans.

This, of course, will take humility.

Paul explains in Ephesians 4.

“...throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.”

(Ephesians 4: 22-27, NLT)

Paul emphasizes our personal responsibility and choices regarding our lifestyle and thinking. As you ponder this, remember:

- God has given you everything you need.
- You are already an overcomer.

Transformation or Breakthrough?

Some storms are short and pass over quickly. But other trials take longer, and we wonder what God is doing. Think about this: Breakthrough and transformation are both ways God works in our lives—but they are very different.

- Breakthrough is sudden, whereas transformation is gradual!
- Transformation takes place over a period, during which you are cooperating with God.

We often pray for breakthrough, but God may be inviting us into transformation—because He’s doing something deeper in us. He wants to take us on a journey of transformation in our character.

We want the “quick fix.” But His higher purpose for us is that we become like Jesus. He is working on our character.

“So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”

(2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT)

Be a Transformer

Transformation is not only about God’s work in you—*it’s also about God’s work through you.* While waiting, you can be used of God to transform the environment around you.

When Joseph was in the darkest place, in prison, he did not wait passively for his breakthrough. He brought transformation, order, and leadership to the prison environment. There in that dark place, his spirit, gifts, and skills shone.

Just as Joseph participated with God to be a transformer in humble situations, so can we!

Positioning for Breakthrough

There are times when we want our breakthrough in our

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calling now. But our Father knows that if He brought the breakthrough suddenly, we would not be able to contain it.

- Our thinking to be enlarged, as does our faith
- We may have skills to gain and wisdom to learn

Being on the journey of transformation does not mean that the breakthrough will never take place. It means that you are *positioning* for the breakthrough.

By the time the breakthrough comes, you have a proven track record. You have participated in transformation. And like Joseph was, you will be a good steward of what God is giving to you.

So, a good question to ask is, *“Father, is right now a season for breakthrough, or for transformation?”*²¹

Glorious Rewards

Having a vision for character gives you the fuel to persevere through every storm:

- When serving faithfully seems unrewarding, when studying feels like a huge investment, or your calling comes under attack
- Or your leadership is challenged

Like the buffalo, may we be those who turn into the storm with faith—knowing that on the other side, God has growth, transformation, and destiny waiting for us.



Reflection:

Think about some areas that are challenging to you right now:

- What is one area where you sense God is inviting you to grow through perseverance?
- Is there a trial or difficulty you've been trying to avoid, that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to face with faith?
- How might your current situation be an opportunity for transformation, rather than just a breakthrough?

Recognizing that some of the “storms” we face include aspects of spiritual warfare leads to an important shift in this topic:

And that is, the *spiritual* nature of character.



Coming Up:

In chapter 7, we turn to the heart of your calling—to carry God’s presence and reflect His glory. *Radiance* is not just a quality; it’s a mark of those who walk closely with Him.

And this is where character is of the greatest value.

Radiance: Shining with the Presence of Jesus

“The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.

Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see...”

(Romans 13:12, NLT)

When it comes to character, we understand that anyone in the world can have a good character.

- Character is the quality of a person’s *soul*, rooted in their values
- And the evidence of it is seen in every part of their life

But as followers of Jesus, we carry something far greater: the very presence and radiance of Christ.

“We belong to the day”. And we operate from a different realm—the Kingdom of God. This brings into focus the

unique nature, and importance, of our character as Christians.

Because we are spiritually alive and the Holy Spirit dwells in us, His presence shines through us—revealing Jesus to the world!

- We offer the world a glimpse of God's Kingdom



Reflection:

Think about the differences between someone of good character who is a Christian, and someone who isn't.

Someone may come to mind who is an example of each.

- What catches your attention?
- How are we similar or different?



Distinctions Between a Christian and Non-Christian

Paul draws a clear line between the spiritual lives of non-Christians and those who are born-again.

- He shows the contrast between a life that is dark and lifeless versus one that's alive and filled with the Holy Spirit

As we study character, we need to pay attention to this—because it's a game changer!

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Without Christ, we may have displayed what the world calls good character, but spiritually, we were still living in darkness.

“Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.

But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

(Titus 3:3-7, NLT)

Paul includes powerful reminders in his letters of where we once were. But now we are born again; we are spiritually alive!

- God Himself—the Holy Spirit—indwells us, and with Him, the “*mind of Christ*” (1 Cor 2:16)
- We have the Bible to inspire and guide us

So, it’s clear that we have a gift that should enhance our character, that is entirely supernatural.

And that is, the presence and radiance of Christ.

Our character becomes a vessel—beautiful and refined—to hold the glory of God.

Character is the Setting of our Spiritual Life

Christian character is like the gold band of an engagement ring—one that holds a sparkling diamond.

- The gold ring is the setting, and the diamond is the glory.

While the diamond is the focus, the setting is also important. If we were to choose such a ring, what would we look for?

We want the setting to be well-made, unique, and suited to its purpose.

In the same way our character is able to be a worthy setting for Jesus' presence in our lives. It's like the elegant setting of a ring, carefully crafted to showcase the dazzling brilliance of Christ within.

Yes—despite our imperfections and unfinished state!

Now consider what that gold has gone through to reach this stage—it's been heated, purified, shaped, and refined. That sounds a lot like character!

As we walk with Jesus, through the highs and lows of life, we become more like Him.

- God's goal for our character is Christlikeness—and to be a vessel for His glory.

The Radiant Glory of Jesus

The writer of Hebrews reveals the highest calling of Christian character. He says this about Jesus:

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“The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God...”

(Hebrews 1:3a, NLT)

Now, think about this for a moment. Let’s pause and reflect on this truth. The Bible also says,

“As He is, so are we in this world”

(1 John 4:17b)

Let’s turn this into a declaration and feel the impact of it:

“I radiate God’s glory and express the very character of God...”

This is our high calling on earth! Above our ministry, mission, vocation, and our leadership calling.

- Abiding in Christ
- People encountering us meet Jesus

So, it's no surprise that we face spiritual battles over our character and reputation—the enemy wants to damage the image of Christ within us.

The Holy Spirit is God’s Glory Within You

Spirit, Soul, Body

This is a key to understanding Christian character: We are triune beings—spirit, soul, and body! Paul sums up the nature of our lives this way:

“Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord

HELEN CALDER

Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:23, NLT)

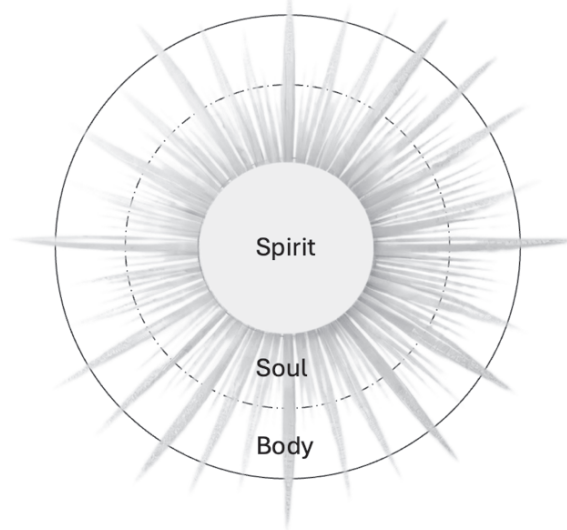
On the following page, I have adapted a commonly used diagram used to illustrate spirit, soul, and body:¹

I’ve added a symbol for the radiance of the Spirit to show how God’s presence is connected to our character.

This illustrates how God’s glory flows from our spirit outward—impacting our soul, body, and environment.

Radiance:

A life yielded to Jesus Christ



Limitations of the Diagram

Of course, this diagram is only a *representation*. There is much interaction between spirit, soul, and body, hence my inclusion of “dotted lines”.

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However, we must remember that the Bible emphasizes the distinction between soul and spirit:

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”
(Hebrews 4:12, NLT)

We know that our physical bodies are like an outer “tent” while we’re here on earth (2 Cor 5:1-8).

- Jesus also said that the life of the Holy Spirit would flow from within us—from our heart (John 7:38).

A problem I have with the diagram (in its original form) has to do with scale. It feeds the notion that our spirit is the “smallest” part of us—hidden—and by implication, less powerful.

But Paul reminds us that the spirit comes first—before the soul and body. Our spirit is vast and powerful because the eternal One lives within us.

Our Spiritual Presence is Powerful!

Our spiritual life is meant to lead, shaping our physical life, soul, heart, and mind. The Holy Spirit both dwells within us *and* rests upon us.

Jesus said,

“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”
(Luke 24:49, NLT)

The word translated as “endued” is the Greek word *endyo* (Strong’s G1746), which also means to be clothed in!

Just as God’s presence was seen in the wilderness—above His people as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day—His presence in us is meant to be visible to the world.

Your life fully surrendered to God—your spiritual presence—is powerful! Remember how Peter’s shadow healed the sick (Acts 5:15) or how people were healed by touching the fringe of Jesus’ robe (Matt 9:20-22, 14:34-36).

Greater Than You Realize

So, keeping the above in mind, the goal of my adapted diagram is to serve as a humble demonstration, of how God designed us to shine with His glory.

You are a greater influence than you realize—a living encounter with the presence of God.

“For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”

(1 Corinthians 4:6-7, NLT)

May we begin to see beyond our physical selves, recognizing that we are vessels of power, chosen and anointed by God.

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The Glory is a Person

Many of us have been waiting for God's glory to come, or to be revealed *to* us. But I believe the Holy Spirit is emphasizing that His glory is being revealed *through* us.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul says:

We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away.

But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

(2 Corinthians 3:13,16-18, NLT)

God's glory, anointing, and power is not an impersonal force—but flows from *someone*, the Holy Spirit.

It's evident that the glory is a Person, who resides within and upon us. The story of David's anointing clearly illustrates this.

“So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil.

And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on.”

(1 Samuel 16:13, NLT)

Radiance and the Glory of God

Radiance is the natural expression of God's glory, much like the shining of the sun. Our sun sends light and heat from its core, radiating energy outward. It sustains life, and we respect its power.

In the same way, "radiance" is the evidence of Jesus' transforming work in you. This glow of God cannot be described by human charisma, or happiness, or even goodwill. It can be seen in:

- The fruit of the Holy Spirit expressed in your actions and attitude
- Unexplainable peace, joy amid pain, light in dark times, and hope in the face of despair
- The atmosphere around you
- Your face and expression as you worship
- God's power, anointing, and gifts touching others through you

What other qualities come to your mind?

Not a "Super Spiritual" Quality

This radiance is not an unreachable "super-spiritual" quality for a select few. You can shine with God's glory as you walk with God, whether you realize it or not.

While it should be evident in all Fivefold Ministry, radiance is meant for every child of God.

I see it in our church greeters—people simply reflecting Jesus in their joyful welcome. A church usher was instrumental in leading me back to God when I was 22 years old. His contagious joy caused my husband Malcolm and me to

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hunger for what he had. We had been disconnected from church for a few years, but from that moment on, we began attending church again.

And soon afterwards, rededicated our lives back to God. Those of us who have the gift of *discernment* often perceive this radiance—we sense the Holy Spirit and His anointing.

When it is absent, especially in fivefold leaders, discerners can feel it deeply. We miss it and grieve.

Attend to the Source of Your Radiance

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable about ten bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom. The theme is being ready for Christ's return, and one of the stand-out messages in this story is,

- *“Attend to the supply of oil for your lamp!”*
- Pay attention to the source of your radiance

The bridegroom is delayed, and they all fall asleep. Then at midnight, they hear a shout announcing that the bridegroom is coming!

Jesus says,

*“All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’
“But the others replied, ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’ (Matthew 25:7-9, NLT)*

Costly Oil

“Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves”

It’s costly oil. No one can do this for us. Our pastor, or apostle can’t do this for us. Our spouse or parent can’t do this for us.

We must take care of the anointing, our relationship with Jesus, and our connection to the flow of the Holy Spirit. He is the source of our radiance—our shine. As Paul wrote to Timothy,

“This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

(2 Timothy 1:6-7, NLT)

“Fan into flames”

Paul reminded Timothy this was his responsibility. Nobody else could do it for him! Jesus concludes His parable by saying,

*“Later, when the other bridesmaids returned, they stood outside calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’
But He called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’”* (Matthew

25:11-12, NLT)

This tells us that *the lamp, the oil, and having a relationship with the bridegroom* are inextricably linked.

It’s not enough to know who He is, and to call Him Lord, to attend church and even to operate in his gifts and power (see also Matt 7:21-23). He wants us to know Him as He is, and to walk with Him.

Fivefold Leaders and Radiance

Let's think about platform ministry for a moment.

A worship team, or anyone serving in platform ministry, can radiate the light of God's presence. The worship team is like the candlestick that holds the candles or lamps. The goal isn't to draw attention to ourselves, but to shed light on what truly matters—Jesus.

True radiance is not acting showy; neither is it to be confused with charisma. It does not come *from* the soul—it shines *through* the soul.

You are a son or daughter of God—called, appointed, and anointed for His purpose. You can have confidence that when you enter a room, Jesus enters with you.

And so does His glory; His radiance.

Barriers to Radiance and Ways to Strengthen It

Barriers to Radiance

Jesus taught, "*You don't hide a lamp under a bowl!*" As fivefold leaders, it's essential to recognize and remove things that dim our light.

"Radiance blockers" include insecurity, fear, shame, judgment, pride, and idolatry. Think about it:

- Fear causes someone to put up a shield of defense
- Shame or insecurity can cause us to hide behind a mask
- Pride brings self-reliance

“Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.”

(Psalm 34:5, NLT)

Anything we hold dearer than “Christ in us”—any shield we rely on for self-protection—is an idol. It becomes an obstacle to His presence shining through us.

These things are like an outer “shell” that stops others seeing God in us.

6 Tips to Protect and Strengthen Your Radiance

Here are some practices that help us protect our radiance:

1. Maintaining an attitude of *reverence* for God and His holiness
2. Staying sensitive to the Holy Spirit, so that when He reveals something that stands in the way of radiance (people seeing Christ in us) we will deal with it straight away
3. Being continually aware of Jesus’ grace
4. Keeping a close relationship with Him, walking with Him personally
5. Seeking godly mentorship
6. Cultivating hunger and a deep desire for His presence.

Can you think of some more ways to strengthen your spiritual character and shine radiantly?

The Power of Good Works

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“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:14-16, NKJV)

Our light isn't just inward; it shines outwardly through good works that bring glory to God. Radiance is shown in action and impact.

The Greek word Jesus uses for “works” here is *ergon*, which means:

1. Business or occupation
2. Anything accomplished by effort, creativity, or skill
3. An action or deedⁱⁱ

While this verse often encourages acts of kindness, Jesus meant more than general good deeds.

These works are inspired by God and point back to Him. Jesus did only what He saw His Father doing (John 5:17, 19, 20). Likewise, when our works are also *God's works*, He is glorified!

God's Work, God's Way

Imagine a Christian leader doing many good works, but:

- The works are glorifying themselves (making their name great), rather than God
- Ethical or value compromises are creeping in
- The leader or people are exhausted from the effort

Shining our light is not just about doing good works, but about doing:

1. God's work
2. Sourced in God's strength
3. In God's way

This is when we truly radiate His presence!

Our "good works" are really God's works.

The Fiery Lamps

In the book of Judges, God calls Gideon to lead only 300 Israelites against a Midianite army. They seem completely outnumbered and outmatched—it looks impossible!

He instructs them,

“Keep your eyes on me. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do. As soon as I and those with me blow the rams’ horns, blow your horns, too, all around the entire camp, and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon!’”

Then, we learn,

“It was just after midnight, after the changing of the guard, when Gideon and the 100 men with him reached the edge of the Midianite camp. Suddenly, they blew the rams’ horns and broke their clay jars. Then all three groups blew their horns and broke their jars.

They held the blazing torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands, and they all shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

(Judges 7:16-20, NLT)

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I love the image of the clay jars being broken, revealing fiery torches hidden beneath.

Remember, Jesus said, *“You don’t hide a lamp under a bowl!”*

It provides a prophetic message and image that speaks to us today:

- The glorious sons and daughters of God are being revealed

The enemy's camp collapsed as the Midianites turned on each other, and those who survived fled.

The radiance of Christ in us is a key to overcoming! As in the time of Gideon, we live in the day God’s glory will be seen in His children. These earthen vessels will reveal the fiery lamps.

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

(1 John 4:4, NKJV)

Seeing the Golden Vessel

One day, I had a life-changing encounter with God when He lovingly admonished me,

“Stop looking at the earthen vessel and start seeing the golden vessel!”

I had become preoccupied with my physical weakness, but the Lord showed me a different perspective.ⁱⁱⁱ

We need to perceive our radiance, and to honor the presence of God in us! When we look in the mirror, we need to look beyond the external.



Reflection:

Imagine what could happen if we took a moment of reflection—*as we see our reflection*—to perceive Christ in us.

Next time you look in the mirror, pause and declare: “*Christ in me, the hope of glory!*” As you do, ask God to help you perceive the radiance He has placed within you. And consider:

How can we expect others to see God’s glory shining through us if we don’t see it ourselves?



Ours by Inheritance

Let’s remember God gave Adam and Eve this glory in the beginning, and Jesus has restored it to us.

God’s glory is not ours because we are worthy—it’s ours by birthright and inheritance. We are children of God!

“When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?

Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.”

(Psalm 8, 3-5, NLT)

For years, the Christian community has longed for this day:

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“All nations will come to your light; mighty kings will come to see your radiance.”

(Isaiah 60:3, NLT)

It’s available right now—but we must first catch the revelation of it. And simply believe God’s Word, that we are radiant..

“Jesus is the Light”

In Revelation 21, an angel took John to a high mountain and showed him the heavenly city, *“the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*

“The lamb is its light” (v23).

In Jesus, we shine with Heaven’s glory now. Radiance isn’t just a calling; it’s who we are with Him.

“So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal.”

(Revelation 21:10-11, NLT)

This is the culmination of the ages—the bride of the Lamb is being revealed. And what stands out most about the city?

Radiance.

Clothed in God’s Armor: Janet’s Story

Janet Rice, who worked with us in Asian Outreach over 20

years ago, shared a story that impacted me deeply. She spoke of her past struggle with fear, insecurity, and anxiety.

It was a big problem in her life.

One day, a woman Janet ministered to was hospitalized for mental health treatment. Feeling compelled by God, Janet visited the lady, despite her fear and trepidation. A pastor friend went with her for support.

But as she walked in those hospital doors, she had a sudden impression of seeing herself clothed in the armor of God! She perceived that as she walked, demons scattered and fled on every side.

At that moment, she had a revelation of who she was.

And the experience, Janet said, permanently changed her life.

- If only we could see ourselves as we are in the Spirit, we would walk boldly in Him

Coming Up:

We've seen that radiance flows from our relationship with Jesus. But what does it look like to stay in that place—to live so close to Him that His anointing transforms us?

In the next chapter, we'll discover that proximity to God is the key to carrying His presence with power.

Proximity: The Key to Anointed Character

“Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled, he said, “Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So the servants followed his instructions.”

(John 2:6-8 NLT)

Many of us enjoy the story of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. But have you ever wondered why Jesus specifically chose those stone vessels for this miracle?

4 Keys to Anointed Character

This story contains some insights for us, as we seek to have anointed character:

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

HELEN CALDER

(2 Corinthians 4:7, NKJV)

Like those stone jars, we have been chosen to be vessels for His glory.

1. Proximity

Firstly, they were nearby. On hand!

“Standing nearby were six water jars”.

This idea of proximity reminds me of that story in Acts chapter 3, where Peter healed a lame man in Jesus’ Name. Then, the ruling priests arrested Peter and John. We read,

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

(Acts 4:13, NKJV)

They radiated a boldness that was unmistakable. And the likeness was such, that there could be no other explanation:

- They had been with Jesus of Nazareth

Anointing: “To Smear or Rub with Oil”

Think about our English expression, “*to rub off*”. It means “*to have an effect through close association or contact...so as to make similar.*”¹

For example, if you brush up against a freshly painted door, wet paint rubs off on you.

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- The Greek word translated anointed, which is “*chrío*”, means “*to smear or rub with oil.*”ⁱⁱ

The imagery speaks of the physical act of anointing and is used metaphorically of being anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Close Contact Changes Us

Jesus’ character, attributes and anointing *rubbed off* onto His disciples. Their close contact with Him changed them—and this can be our experience!

We are continually in God’s presence, and there is never any time He departs from us (Matt 28:20). Yet, something happens as we *consciously* and intentionally take time for God.

- We can be aware of the mutual love and affection between us and Him

Take a moment to reflect on God’s presence within you right now. Consider Jesus’ words:

“No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

(John 14:18-20, NLT)

2. Compatibility

The stone jars at the wedding that day were chosen because they were close at hand. But there were also other reasons why Jesus selected them.

“Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.”

The jars were already in service. They were consecrated, and Jesus found them suitable for the miracle. And this reminds us—He uses what is already set apart for special use.

What is Compatibility?

The dictionary defines “compatibility” as:

- A state in which two things can exist or occur together without problems or conflict.
- A feeling of sympathy and friendship; like-mindedness (note: Google search “define compatibility” 5 Feb 2024)

I learned the phrase “*Compatibility with the Holy Spirit*” from David McCracken. He says,

“When you see that the anointing is only but a pouring out of the expression of the Person, then to walk in the anointing you must be compatible with the Person.

I can be bold with the person because my life is compatible with His life.”ⁱⁱⁱ

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A Vessel for Honor

Paul emphasizes this when he tells Timothy:

“In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.”
(2 Tim 2:20-21, NLT)

As the NKJV puts it:

“...be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”
(2 Timothy 2:21, NKJV)

And this is important:

- Paul doesn't say that we are prepared *by* every good work—but *for* every good work

In other words, good works don't make you ready for God: instead, God makes you ready for good works!

What great news. Your “compatibility” is not found through duty, trying, or effort, but it's found in a Person—Jesus.^{iv}Today, the Lord asks,

“Will you be one who is set apart for my use? For I love you and have designed you with a purpose”.

Enoch Walked with God

We often say we "walk with God" to describe a close relationship with Him. This phrase comes from the Bible, and it speaks volumes! It's more than a metaphor—it's a picture of intimacy, friendship, and trust.

The disciples walked along dusty roads with Jesus in the Gospels—and we can see ourselves in their journey. Imagine this:

- The fellowship, the familiarity, the ease and frequency of conversation
- Sometimes confronting, always honest
- Comfortable moments of silence
- Shared experiences

One of the earliest prophets in the Bible was Enoch (Jude v14) and he was known for his intimacy with God. We are told that Enoch walked with God and he "*was not, for God took him away.*" (Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5)

Enoch became so close to God that he was literally transported to Heaven without experiencing death!

3 Reasons Staying Close to God Matters

1. We Represent His Character

By encountering God as a Person, we become acquainted with His character and values. This was the difference between Moses, who had a close relationship with God, and the people of Israel.

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“He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel.”

(Psalm 103:7, NLT)

When we know Him this way, we can share the tone of God’s voice—His love and kindness, even when sharing tough truths. We represent His character well, including His holiness, and people encounter Jesus in us.

2. We Hear Him More Clearly

Jesus said,

“The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.”

(John 10:3-4, NLT)

We become familiar with His voice and recognize the Holy Spirit’s communication—His cues and prompts. This helps to distinguish His voice from others.

As a result, those of us who want to grow in the prophetic gifts, become sharper and more accurate. We hear Him more often, gaining prophetic insights from the Holy Spirit, and receive guidance and wisdom for our ministry.

3. The Power is of God

When we are reliant upon God in our relationship with Him, the power flowing through us is seen to be of God. He receives the glory!

“We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are

like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”

(2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT)

The Power of Anointed Character

One way you can describe character is what *characterizes* your life. It flows through your attitude, to your actions and words.

In the previous chapter we posed the question, what is the difference between the good character of a Christian, and that of a non-Christian?

- Character is always important, but we can have *anointed* character.

Listen to how all these attributes are related to character:

“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

(Galatians 5:22, NLT)

The fruit of the Holy Spirit flows forth from the Person who dwells within us.

- Anointed character is character that is infused with the grace and power of the Holy Spirit

So, we may be naturally short of patience, but with the Holy Spirit we can have *anointed* patience. How is this possible?

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- We've experienced God's grace and patience in our relationship with Him.
- We also share in the power of a crucified life through *identifying* with Christ.

“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

(Galatians 2:20, NLT)

I don't only want to be kind; I also want to be *anointed* with kindness. I want to have my kindness anointed with the supernatural presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

And I pray God stirs this desire within you also.



Reflection:

Here are two questions to consider:

- How would my life be different if I brought the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence into the picture of my life?

How could I live if I considered, not my own inability, but His ability, for every moment, every challenge, both present and future?



3. Sensitivity

Now, let's explore a third key to anointed character. We've covered *proximity* and *compatibility*. This third essential quality in our relationship with the Holy Spirit is *sensitivity*.^v

Sensitivity involves:

- Being aware of the Holy Spirit's presence
- Recognizing where the Spirit is moving
- Seeking harmony with God's presence within us

Jesus provides a helpful analogy for this partnership:

“Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me”
(Matt 11:29)

In Bible times, two oxen worked together under a wooden yoke, always aware of each other's presence. Similarly, as we respond to the Holy Spirit, we grow more sensitive to His guidance, prompts, and desires.

The Lightest Touch

I love the metaphor of the yoke because it is a vivid picture of how we can respond to the direction of the Spirit. Will we respond to His lightest tug? Will we be sensitive to His desires? Or will we pull against Him? Our desire should be to respond to His slight movements.

One of the meanings of the Greek word for Spirit, “*pneuma*”, is “*a movement of air*” (G4151, Strong's). A current, a breeze—in other words, air in motion!

When we are in tune with God's Spirit, miracles happen! As we keep learning to respond to Him, our sensitivity to His presence within us grows stronger.

The “Now” Working Power of Christ’s Blood

Sin and God’s Spirit cannot coexist—think about it—He is the *Holy* Spirit.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden. But when sin entered, they could no longer remain in His presence. Now, in the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus takes care of sin.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...”

(Ephesians 1:7, NKJV)

We can walk in the constant confidence in the “now” working power of Christ’s blood. Jesus has dealt with the compatibility problem once and for all time:

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.”

(Hebrews 10:19-22, NLT)

Jesus has taken care of compatibility, but we have a mistaken view of grace if we think our role in that doesn’t matter.

Relationship at the Center of our Ministry

Five years ago, the Lord said to me, *“From now on your focus will shift. Your emphasis will no longer be about where you are going to, but how you walk.”*

Decades into my ministry, the Lord was realigning my focus. I still had a structure, a board, a vision, and responsibilities. But God was addressing some internal "drivers" that were not from Him—insecurities and ambitions. These were causing:

- The pressure to keep up with, or be like, other prophetic ministries
- Being centered on my own priorities rather than His

The truth is anything that replaces a relationship with God at the center of our lives is an idol. And that idol could be an ideal or even a good strategy that worked in the past.

He invites us to simply walk—and work—alongside Him.

“Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

(Matthew 11: 28-30, NLT)

Beware of “Selective Sensitivity”

Selective hearing happens when we focus on what we want to hear, while tuning out anything we’d rather not listen to. This can be a good thing. It’s important to filter out

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distractions that compete for our attention and hinder our focus.

For instance, background noise can be disruptive when you're trying to concentrate (as I write, I'm surrounded by the chatter of Australian birds in the background).

But selective hearing in our relationship with God is a different matter. We might believe we're truly hearing from Him—but we're only paying attention to what He's saying about certain things.

- Meanwhile, we are ignoring His voice on other important matters

This makes us “selectively sensitive”!

You have a great love for God and desire to serve Him. Like me, you may be involved in some kind of ministry or service, or helping people, or preparing for ministry. That's why you're here.

The Father wants you to know that He knows and cares for every area of your life intimately. Think about your family, relationships, health and wellbeing, or having a break.



Reflection

God does not have a hierarchy of concerns—every part of your life is valuable to Him. This is a good question to ask:

“Father, what area of my life do You want to talk to me about—but I haven't been good at listening?”

Take some time aside to reflect, journal and pray.



4. Stability

The large stone jars Jesus chose at the wedding in Cana had another benefit. They were created to hold a large volume of water—they were stable!

Another metaphor for stability is the hull of a boat. This is the bottom part of the boat that sits in the water. Its shape helps the boat stay upright and balanced, so it doesn't tip.

The hull's design also helps the boat move smoothly through the water by reducing resistance. So, the hull is a crucial part of a boat, ensuring it stays steady and safe while floating.

But you can't *see* it when the boat is on the water—which brings us back to this familiar theme of character:

- It's what's underneath that counts!

“Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.”

(1 Timothy 1:19, NLT)

When the Titanic sank, many people went down with it. If you think of the wider families and communities, a lot of people were impacted.

Likewise, when a leader in ministry has hidden inner issues that haven't been brought into the light, they can be like that iceberg.

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A tragedy waiting to happen—and when it does, many people can be affected.

Shipwrecks

Many of us have seen the results of leaders who were promoted beyond their character—and placed in situations that have tested it to the point of failure.

At this moment, I can think of two ministers who led us in church and ministry, who are not walking with God. Once, they were shining lights. But they left their situations disillusioned and hurt, and never went back.

We also spent years involved in an international mission ministry. During those years, one of the painful things we observed, was leaders in developing countries who were suddenly faced with western temptations, such as money and fame. And they were not prepared in their character or culture to bear the weight of those things.

God is the great Designer—and we find His blueprint for our inner life in His Word. When we have integrity, we are shaped by God's Word and have a strong internal moral compass that guides us according to His ways.

- A weakness in integrity is a hidden crack underneath the waterline—unseen but dangerous.

We know that at the end of the day, the stability of the boat in the water (our ministry) will be tested. In that moment, it is not only the design of the boat that counts.

It is the presence of the Savior in the boat.

Live Connected to the Vine

Jesus said, "*I am the Vine, and you are the branches*" (John 15:1).

God Himself produces anointed character.

We are the branches.

May we be so close to God that we can't imagine life or ministry without Him—being dry, empty, or disconnected. Only in proximity, surrendered to Jesus, can we bear life-giving fruit.

- This is how we have anointed character

The Stature of the Fullness of Christ

- Our relationship with God is like the engine of a train, and results, the carriage.

We sometimes forget to check what success looks like in God's eyes! Christian leadership differs from worldly leadership, where "success" is the primary driving force.

Let's remember that Jesus is our ultimate destination (Heb 12:2), and Christlikeness our supreme purpose: "*the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13). This is also the goal of Christian leadership.

But if we don't attend to this, which is clearly God's priority, we can get so busy that other things take precedence. It's even possible to be busy using the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our leadership, while neglecting our inner life.

Remember, this is the key to the radiant life:

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- A life with God at the center

Depending Upon the Holy Spirit

When we say someone has a “gift” we usually mean they have a special ability or skill. This is a common expression, even outside the Christian community.

A gift can be something we possess or part of our identity. But the gifts of the Holy Spirit come from the Spirit Himself. They are His expression through our unique abilities.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord.

God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.”

(1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NLT)

Some leaders once told me, *“You have a great gift.”* I was momentarily confused and thought, *“I don’t have a gift. I have a relationship.”*

For me, the prophetic has increasingly become about staying aware of the Holy Spirit and depending on Him. First and foremost, the Holy Spirit isn’t only a giver of gifts.

He *is* the gift.



Reflection:

What does a life “*with God at the center*” look like in practice?

Not generally, but personally?

Reflect on times in your life when you felt especially close to God, and how that may be different to where you are now.

Ask, “*What burdens am I carrying that God doesn’t require me to carry?*”

Pray and commit your life to being a vessel of honor.

Choose to live with a continual awareness of the Holy Spirit’s presence within you.



Coming Up:

Living pure in today’s world can feel hard.

But in the next chapter, you’ll discover that purity is about walking with Jesus—and He gives you all you need to do it.

Purity: Becoming a Vessel for God's Glory

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 2: 20-21, NKJV)

Today, hear Jesus say, *“Remember who you are!”* You are My golden vessel.

“Remember where you are!” You are in a *“great house”*—your Father’s house.

Sometimes, I hear from leaders who are struggling with some area of personal weakness. With all their hearts, they long to be used by God in their prophetic calling, but there’s something tripping them up.

I hear their pain.

I believe God has freedom and healing for all those who

are struggling with private brokenness, addictions, or other issues in their personal lives.

Paul continues his letter to Timothy:

“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.”

(2 Timothy 2:22-23, NKJV)

What does this tell us?

- There is a way out—there is a door marked exit
- “Fleeing” is active

Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife when she attempted to seduce him. (Genesis 39)

Fleeing temptation caused Joseph short-term pain and persecution, but his long-term prophetic calling was assured by the action he took.

Paul says,

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”

(1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT)

The Parable of the Pipe

Before I address the “way out” of grace, let’s remind ourselves of why this is so important for Christian leaders.

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To illustrate this, here's a story the Holy Spirit used to speak to me.

One day, I turned on my tap (which is Australian for faucet) and instead of the clear, pure water I was expecting, dirty brown water flowed out.

My local water supplier told me that during repairs on a water pipe a short distance from where I live, mud had entered the pipeline. So, they told me to turn on my outside tap for 10 minutes to give the water time to clear.

Later, when I was preparing for prophetic training, the Holy Spirit brought this to mind.

Like the water flowing through the pipe, a word or gift of the Holy Spirit is pure and untainted at its source. But if our ability to love has been damaged, our brokenness can affect the way we share that gift with others.

And it becomes tainted.ⁱ

How Impurity and Brokenness can Affect Our Ministry

A weakness or issue in our lives may be hidden and might not seem to impact others directly. However, it can still affect our ministry. Here are some examples:

- **Fear and intimidation** can stop us from sharing a prophetic insight, speaking God's truth, or addressing issues when confrontation is needed.
- **Hurt or bitterness** can taint our prophetic ministry and affect how we interpret or share insights from the Holy Spirit.

- **Insecurity** limits our ability to reach our full potential and be authentic, causing others to miss out on God's best through us.
- Even if **lust or pornography** is kept secret, it can still affect someone's ministry. It impacts their mind and imagination, hindering their ability to see in the Spirit and operate in visions and dreams.
- It also taints the pure impartation of the Holy Spirit and breaks trust with those being ministered to, who expect integrity from the minister.

David writes,

“I will lead a life of integrity in my own home. I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar.”
(Psalm 101, 2b-3a, NLT)



Reflection:

Take a moment to reflect on the image of being a vessel of honor. What does this picture mean to you:

In your ministry role—generally speaking?

Personally, right now—and how might God be refining you for greater usefulness?



Grieving the Holy Spirit

But it's not only those we minister to who are impacted by our struggles with sin. In Ephesians 4, Paul warns Christians about ungodly lifestyle and speech, and he says:

“And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.”
(Ephesians 4:30, NLT)

The word, “sorrow” in the Greek is also translated “grieve”.

The Strong’s concordance says of this word (G3076, *Lypeo*) to cause grief, to affect with sadness, to offend, to throw into sorrow.

We are Led By the Spirit and our Conscience

The Holy Spirit is at work in our conscience, which is the lighthouse of our soul, guiding and warning us. It helps us to be sensitive to God. In the book of Proverbs, we read:

“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart...”
(Proverbs 20:27, NKJV)

When our inner reserves are low, we may be tempted to ignore our conscience and seek comfort in soulish things. In these moments, we can be aware that:

- We have not only the voice of our own conscience, but the voice of the Holy Spirit.

We have an “enhanced conscience!” And we have the Holy Spirit within us—which is why we feel His checks, warnings, and prompts.

‘For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.’
(Romans 8:14, NLT)

Being a Temple of the Holy Spirit

According to Paul, we are *“a temple of the Holy Spirit.”* He says,

“Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17, NLT)

Later, Paul reiterates this on a personal level,

“Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20, NLT)

Let’s reflect on this:

God, pure and Holy, all-powerful, sanctifies us with His presence. If we truly love and value Him, we will want to honor the Holy Spirit's presence—and not grieve Him.

God's Quest to Dwell With His People

The Old Testament tells the story of God's quest to dwell with His people. He gave them the tabernacle and later the temple as places for His manifest presence.

The Bible shows how His presence was affected when people defiled the temple, causing His glory to depart. And how God grieved over His people, at times expressing Himself as a broken-hearted lover and other times as a pleading Father (see examples in Jeremiah 3).

He wants us to know—those accounts are more than a historical record. They are His personal message to us!

James says,

“Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?
(James 4:5 NKJV)

In the Old Testament, God sought to dwell *among* His people; in the New Testament, He dwells *within* us:

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:27)
“And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.” (1 John 4:13)

The Way of Freedom

We're convinced that God wants us to live a godly life. We desire for His holiness and long to be a vessel for His glory.

So, what do we do with this struggle of personal weakness?

1. Perspective: The Lens You See Through

This is the foundation for true freedom—realizing where we are situated in Christ.

We began these studies with the image of the red door, symbolizing that we are already in the Father's house.

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV)

Many years ago, I had a vision that has impacted my life more than any other prophetic experience I have received from the Lord.

It came during a prayer time, when I asked God to teach me about faith. As I uttered the prayer, a picture suddenly came to mind.

“I saw a small boy, standing on tiptoe, his face pressed against a shop-front window. It was a candy store and the entire window was filled with all kinds of cakes and goodies that any child would find desirable. Somehow, I knew that in his back pocket he had one small coin and oh, how I felt the limitation of that one little coin!”

Then the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said,

“Same boy, same amount of money in his pocket—but his Father owns the store.”

Suddenly, even though no detail of the picture had changed, I had a complete paradigm shift.

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It was no longer how much money he had in his pocket that would determine what the boy could receive, but how much his Father was willing to share with him.

All he needed to do was ask.

You see, put a Father in the picture, and the perspective changes. When we stand in the Presence of God as His sons and daughters, we see life differently. As a result, we will speak, think and act differently.

“...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”

(Romans 8:14-15, NKJV)

What is Perspective?

Another expression for perspective is “point of view.” It is the way we see something.

The word “*perspective*” comes from two Latin words, meaning “see” and “through”. God wants us to see from heaven’s viewpoint—the perspective revealed in His Word. Through the lens of being “*already righteous*” in Christ.

When our standing is that of sons and daughters of a loving and powerful God, we will view life differently—we will have a Kingdom perspective. We will live “*righteousness conscious*”, not sin conscious.

As we settle our standing with God, and our perspective, we have the basis for our freedom journey.

2. Bring Your Weakness into the Light

Just as the dirt and earth needs to be dug out from around a break or crack in a pipe for that pipe to be fixed, brokenness in our lives can only be healed when it is exposed to the light.

As Paul says

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”

(Ephesians 5:11-13, NKJV)

What does bringing sin "into the light" mean? Firstly, it means genuine repentance to God and receiving His healing and forgiveness.

This isn't about expecting God's harshness, but rather experiencing His goodness. Shame cannot hold you!

Instead of seeing sin as a barrier between you and God, see yourself free to air that issue in His presence where it can be dealt with.

As Spirit-filled believers, the Holy Spirit is “already in the room” with us.

1 John 1:9 says

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

(1 John 1:9, NKJV)

Anointed Character

I love Esther's example. What did she do with the enemy? She invited Haman to dine with her and the king. There, with both in the room, she exposed his evil plan, and he was stripped of power.

Like Esther, we can bring issues into the presence of Jesus where truth is revealed:

- And there, in the light of His grace and saving power, the enemy's plans are thwarted

Benefit from Wise Counsel

“Bringing into the light” also means there's power in confessing to another person: As James says,

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

(James 5:16, NLT)

It took a skilled and equipped plumber to fix our local water pipe issue. Certain problems require specialist expertise, so let's normalize seeking help. May we be up front about these challenges, which are common today.

Seeking help is courageous and shows integrity, and God honors it. The Bible says,

“Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

(Galatians 6:2, NLT)

(And if you are a leader or pastor, Be aware that those you lead may benefit by having someone other than you to share with).

The Cracked Pipe

I wrote about the analogy of the cracked pipe in my notes for the prophetic training.

A few weeks later, I was going over these for the upcoming seminar with Rosie, our business manager. This was at a time when I was on team, working from David and Margaret McCracken's home base.

It was the first time I'd shared with anyone about it. And as we walked out of her office, we noticed an unusual item on the kitchen bench. It was a piece of cracked pipe, along with a note from the plumber.

It was as though God confirmed the parable with a real-life object lesson!

I was unaware that David and Margaret had called him to check on some flooding at the front of their property. And while I was sharing with Rosie what the Holy Spirit had shown me, a plumber was leaving a physical example of it just outside her office, on the front bench.

When Weakness is Not a Sin

A weakness isn't always sin or something broken that needs fixing. It might be an old wound that's healed, but the scar remains. So don't automatically see weakness as failure.

God could be showing you a weakness today, not to heal it, but to remind you of His grace. And to further strengthen you in that area.

Knowing God's Love and Grace Vital to Prophetic Ministry

Grappling with personal weakness is something we all face continuously. Understanding how the Father responds to this is vital to prophetic ministry.

It's through our own experience of God's love and grace that we can share redemptive, life-giving words with others.

I would go as far to say that we have no business prophesying unless we are acquainted with the heart of God towards our human frailty.

“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing.”

(1 Corinthians 13:1-2, NLT)

Without understanding the Father's heart for us, our prophecy will lack depth and may harm others instead of healing them. We risk misrepresenting God, portraying Him as a harsh judge rather than the loving Father He truly is.

As we walk in purity of character—cleansed, healed, and anchored in God's grace—we are positioned to minister with authenticity.

- But purity doesn't stop with who we are privately; it flows into how we express and carry the prophetic publicly

This is why it's vital to consider *purity of expression* in prophetic ministry—how we present the message, what drives us, and whether our delivery truly reflects the heart of God.

Purity of Expression in the Prophetic Ministry

As prophetic ministers, it's not only our personal lives that need purity—how we *express* what God gives us also matters deeply.

Our delivery, motivations, and even our storytelling can carry subtle impurities. And these can arise from motives that are unwise, immature, or not fully surrendered to God.

One area that calls for special attention is a “soulish” appetite—a desire that appeals to the senses rather than the Spirit. And at times, this pressure doesn't come from within us—but may be projected *onto* us by those we minister to!

As Paul writes,

“For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths.”

(2 Timothy 4:3–4)

What Paul says about sound doctrine applies equally to prophecy. As we share our experiences with God, our goal must always be to offer what is genuine and brings glory to Him.

So, to close this section, here are a couple of tips for sharing prophetic signs and experiences with wisdom. These insights will also empower you to lead others who are growing in prophetic gifts.

How to Stay Wise With Signs

1. Focus on the Fruit

When sharing a prophetic experience, focus on the fruit, or outcome, not just the event itself (John 15:8, Luke 6:43-44).

- Does it (or will it) bring glory to God—such as a prophetic insight, biblical truth, changed life, answered prayer, or healing?

It may not be the right time to share. Remember, genuine supernatural experiences are signposts leading to Jesus.

2. Share With Wisdom

Be thoughtful about how you share supernatural experiences. Consider ahead of time how they might be perceived.

Some critics look for ways to discredit God's work, and we don't want to give them fuel. Then, there are sensationalists who are drawn to the emotional excitement of the supernatural and want to focus on them (Col 2:18).

It is human to be drawn to the “wow” factor, but the New Testament shows that divine interventions produced “awe” (Matt 9:8, Acts 2:43).

Truly Hungry for God

Let's consider what appetite we are appealing to: does it promote holiness and service? Is it compatible with God's Word—and have we gone to the Bible to assess what God is saying through it? Does it produce good fruit that remains? Or will it elevate an experience?

God has called us to minister to the hungry. Here is the mark of those truly hungry for God:

- They will accept the nourishment of the whole counsel of God.

I firmly believe there's no hierarchy of the ways we hear from God. And there's a danger in elevating some prophetic experiences above others.

A practical, but God-breathed, word of wisdom and an open vision from God have the same source—the Holy Spirit!

Each need to be administered with humility. Both need to be weighed up and tested, and each can be used of God to release His power and work miracles.

Let's give Jesus all the glory.

Coming Up:

In every word we speak and every gift we carry, may purity of heart and a revelation of God's grace be our hallmark. In the next chapter, we'll explore how integrity builds on this foundation—becoming the taproot of character that empowers us to walk consistently, inside and out.

Integrity: Being the Same Inside and Out

*“He also chose David His servant...to shepherd Jacob His people,
and Israel His inheritance.
So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and
guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.”
(Psalm 78:70, 72, NKJV)*

Let’s pause and think about these words of the psalmist as he sums up David’s life—keeping in mind these words are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

How did David lead God’s people?

- With integrity of heart
- And skillfulness of hands

The Power of Having a Vision for Integrity

David not only had skill and success, but he also had integrity—it’s what God saw in him from the beginning.

And it's what the prophet Samuel heard from the Lord before he poured out the anointing oil upon David's head:

“People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

(1 Samuel 16:7b, NLT)

God looked for integrity of heart *first*. So, foster this vision for your life because God does. When you see yourself in your mind's eye, a year, a decade away—or further, towards the end of your life.

Being able to say,

- *“With integrity of heart and skillfulness of hands, I completed what God called me to do.”*
- *“I guided my family, my relationships and responsibilities with integrity of heart and skillfulness of hands.”*

What stands out? Integrity is a heart issue. Hear the cry of the Lord, *“Beloved! Keep your heart!”*

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”

(Proverbs 4:23, NLT)

Integrity is the “Taproot”

If character can be seen as the whole sum of the hidden roots of a tree—that provide a secure foundation for all that is seen, and all future growth—**then integrity could be seen as the taproot.**

Some plants or trees have a taproot, which is like the one

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main root that goes down into the earth, the largest and most important one.

- That's how important integrity is.

Like the taproot that anchors a mighty tree, integrity anchors our character. It also draws nourishment from deep within our relationship with God—reaching into the hidden wells and springs below the surface.

Being “Rooted and Grounded”

Inner strength is the subject of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3. He reveals that the source of our inner strength is the Holy Spirit's power, and the result is that we are *“rooted and grounded in love”* (Ephesians 3:17).

Integrity is about loving God, so that we want to follow Him willingly. It's also about loving and honoring His Word.

What is Integrity?

Integrity is alignment—our walk lines up with our talk! That means that our inner values, outwardly held beliefs, words and actions are consistent.

A life of integrity means there are no guilty secrets, no double life, or inconsistencies. As a result, we have harmony and peace with ourselves.

When we have integrity, we also have a strong moral compass.

- We consistently follow ethical and Biblical principles in our actions

- This is not by following a set of rules, but by being true to our own values and beliefs—from *the inside out*

*“This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day,
says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their
minds...”*

(Hebrews 10:16, NLT, see also Jeremiah 31:33)

It’s the Divine imprint of God upon our hearts.

Whole and Undivided (Alignment)

Our English word “integrity” comes from a root Latin word, *integritatum*, meaning whole.¹ When we have integrity, we are at peace with ourselves and God. We are whole.

Undivided.

*“Teach me Your way, O Lord;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.”*
(Psalms 86:11, NKJV)

This is what we are created for—to walk in unity and whole-heartedness before God. It’s what we long for, deep down.

3 Powerful Benefits of Integrity

1. Running at Our Optimum

There’s a harmony that comes as we align with the way God designed us:

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- We're no longer competing or performing, but being ourselves—our best, in our sweet spot!

Deep down, our souls long for this place of health. For when we are whole, we are running at our optimum. This joy of growing in wholeness is always available, because it's our inheritance in Christ, our place of rest.

Integrity enables us to commune with God, face to face—without shadows or inconsistencies. We are born to have this relationship with God.

Remember the verse we started with?

“If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.”
(Luke 11:36, NLT)

2. Finishing Well and Passing on a Legacy

In the Bible, there is a link between walking with integrity, finishing well, and passing the baton to the next generation.

“Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.’

(God to King Solomon, 1 Kings 9:4-5, NKJV)

“Integrity of heart and uprightness”.

The Hebrew word translated “*integrity*”, (Strong’s H8537) comes from a root word meaning “*completed*”. And “*upright-*

ness” (Strong’s H3476), comes from a root word meaning “to be straight or even” (Strong’s H3474)

Again, we picture a tree. It’s the roots hidden deep below the ground that support a tree and keep it upright regardless of the season. (Psalm 1:1-3)

The stories of kings and priests in the Old Testament are written to guide us as we live in the Kingdom of God.

“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

(Revelation 1:6, NKJV).

A common theme is that kings either followed David’s example of loving and honoring God or were evil kings who met a bad end.

May our life’s dream be that we not only *appear* above reproach, but with all our hearts, may we desire to walk constantly in integrity with God.

3. Integrity is Essential to Healthy Prophetic Ministry

How does this particularly apply in prophetic ministry and Christian leadership? Here are some aspects to start with:

Personal Alignment

- We live a lifestyle that is consistent according to our values, both privately and publicly
- Being a clean vessel for the Holy Spirit, (I talk about this more in the “Purity” chapter)
- When people receive ministry through us, they

know we're genuine and trustworthy—we “walk the talk”

Ministry Accuracy

- Our prophetic insights are authentic. We're honest when we know something by natural means, or when we're unsure
- Prophetic insights are truly sourced in the Holy Spirit, and not in bias or opinion
- We consistently communicate the Word of God in our lifestyle and our prophetic ministry.

As leaders and ministers, people trust and assume that we have a close relationship with God. After all, we are spiritual leaders.

This is especially true in prophetic ministry, where people rely on us for "fresh bread" and new words from God.

It doesn't mean we'll always be perfect because we're on a journey, but we'll always be in a place of accountability. And I pray, that will be your heart's desire.

4. The Cry of the New Testament Apostles

One thing that stood out to me in this study is the importance New Testament leaders placed on integrity and a clear conscience. Integrity enables leaders to finish well.

Leaders like Paul, Peter, and James emphasized this. And I believe the Holy Spirit is bringing it back to our attention. The writer of Hebrews (echoing Paul) said:

“Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do.”

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(Hebrews 13:18, NLT)

Peter:

“But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.”

(1 Peter 3:16, NLT)

Paul:

“Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.” (2 Timothy 1:3, NLT)

“We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don’t try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.”

(2 Corinthians 4:2 NLT)

Paul valued good moral character and integrity. He even made it a point to mention it publicly:

“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”

(Acts 23:1 NKJV)

“This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.”

(Acts 24:16, NKJV)

These words from Peter, Paul and the writer of Hebrews remind us: integrity isn’t optional—**it’s foundational for leaders who want to finish well.**

Nothing Between the Lines

Paul placed a high value on integrity, and writes of him and his team,

“Our letters have been straightforward, and there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can’t understand. I hope someday you will fully understand us, even if you don’t understand us now. Then on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, you will be proud of us in the same way we are proud of you.”
(2 Corinthians 1: 13-14, NLT)

Now, read that again: *“Nothing written between the lines”*. What an extraordinary description of integrity! Say it out loud and feel it. May that also be your goal, dream, and vision.



Reflection:

Take a moment to reflect on these questions:

1. Where is God inviting you to be the same person in private as you are in public?
2. How might He be strengthening your foundation of integrity today?



7 Essential Qualities of Integrity

1. Sincerity

Paul writes of he and his team,

“We can say with confidence and a clear conscience that we have lived with a God-given holiness and sincerity in all our dealings. We have depended on God’s grace, not on our own human wisdom. That is how we have conducted ourselves before the world, and especially toward you.”

(2 Corinthians 1: 12-13, NLT)

Sincerity means the absence of pretense, deceit, or hypocrisy.

Pretense cannot be sustained in the long-term, like all character traits. It will be revealed under pressure! It may be rooted in insecurity and the desire to “keep up appearances”.

- Sincerity is *not* saying something “as though” we mean it
- But rather, meaning what we say

Think about that distinction for a moment.

2. Giving Credit Where it is Due

A leader with integrity gives credit openly to team members who contributed to their success. They also attribute others who have given them significant ideas.

Needing other’s input and strengths, is not a weakness—but a strength! God designed us to work together as one body (1 Corinthians 12).

Integrity means being open and truthful during disagreements, and handling team conflict with respect. It involves

admitting personal mistakes that affect the team and owning up to the team's mistakes that impact others.

In other words: integrity means taking responsibility as a leader. This sets a powerful example for those around us.

3. Keeping Confidences

A leader with integrity can be trusted with their speech. They can also keep others' confidences secure, knowing when to be a “vault”. A person of integrity is not careless or loose-lipped!

James encouraged believers to watch their words.

“If you claim to be religious but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.”

(James 1:26, NLT)

4. Reliability - Mark’s Example

Integrity honors a commitment once it is made. It honors contracts and promises and work hours. And integrity is consistency.

A character weakness in Mark—his lack of dependability—caused Paul to make a tough leadership decision and reject him from his team, in Acts chapter 15.

But later, Paul asked Timothy to send Mark to him, commending him for being ‘useful’ or ‘helpful’ (2 Timothy 4:11). Perhaps that crisis was one of the things Mark needed to address a character issue in his life.

5. Keeping Promises

Mark’s story reminds us that being reliable and maintaining our commitments are key aspects of integrity.

If you find yourself overextended, don't hesitate to be honest and offer an apology—after all, we all face the unexpected from time to time! It's important to be a person of your word, setting an example for others, as emphasized in James 5:12.

When you promise a certain standard of work, make sure you can keep it. This not only shows integrity but also builds trust and respect among your peers. Being reliable and maintaining your commitments are key aspects of integrity.

6. Handling Money With Integrity

In 2 Corinthians 8, the apostle Paul explained how they would handle donated money.

Paul took care to explain how they would manage the finances and deliver them safely. He wanted to not only follow godly principles but also make sure everyone understood them clearly.

“We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable.”

(2 Corinthians 8:20-21, NLT)

Then, he went on to describe the team members he was sending and their credentials. There were even representatives from other churches (3rd parties), not just his team.

It's a reminder of the importance of transparency and integrity when handling finances.

This is a biblical standard.

7. Integrity in Marriage and Family Life

Paul emphasized a high standard of morality for leaders, and he addresses this at length in his letter to Titus (see chapters 1 and 2).

A leader who breaks the covenant of his or her marriage with a third party wounds their families and hurts the church. This can also be true of sexual sin in general.

My Story: How This Affected Our Family

I know this from first-hand experience, for my parents' marriage was ended through infidelity in the church leadership. I was brokenhearted—six months pregnant with our first child. Suddenly, my dream of bringing our son to his grandparents' home, a nurturing family center, was broken.

Our parents divorced and the horizons of our lives changed permanently. And not only our own—five children in the two marriages were affected.

The church was hurt and many left, disillusioned.

Sadly, it's a familiar story, and to me it became personal.

Now, we can testify that God is a Redeemer who can make something beautiful out of these broken situations. But this doesn't happen overnight—it takes place over time.

While the issues may be complex, inevitably, character weakness is involved. And it takes time to forge it strong afterwards—if the leader is willing to do the hard work and engage accountability.

Can trust be rebuilt? Many times (to be realistic) this may not be possible, and each situation is unique. But preven-

tion is better than cure. And we have an opportunity to put the guardrails in place and have a long-term vision for godly character.

Each of the qualities we have looked at—sincerity, integrity in relationships, reliability, and more—helps forge a life of integrity.

One that reflects Christ and builds lasting trust.

Challenges and Threats (Dangers) to Integrity

1. Continually Running on Empty

When we're running on empty, it's easy to put up a facade. If we allow that to linger, we have an integrity issue. One reason (apart from health and honoring God) to stay replenished is to have your heart genuinely engaged.

Now, let's be honest—all of us can get tired, or down, or be struggling. And there's grace for those moments! These *variables* of feelings, from moment to moment, are not an integrity issue.

But if they are sustained, it's a sign we should attend to it. It's time to take a break for replenishment or get the help we need.

Having integrity in front of others starts with being honest with ourselves.

2. Hidden Greed and Integrity Cannot Co-exist

In 2 Kings chapter five, we see a clear contrast in integrity between Elisha and his servant Gehazi.

This is within the story of how God healed the Aramean

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commander, Naaman, through a word of instruction by Elisha.

Naaman offered Elisha money and clothing for his healing, but the prophet refused. Then the prophet's servant, Gehazi, sneaked behind Elisha's back to ask for money from Naaman. Additionally, he pretended that Elisha had sent him.

Gehazi's greed and pretense were his downfall. He may have had the opportunity to carry the mantle of the prophet to a third generation, but he lost it.

3. Social Pressures Against Integrity

It's important to recognize that many forces are constantly challenging our integrity. Perhaps you can recognize some of these:

- Media.
- The pressure of others' opinions on how we should act
- Stereotypes and social expectations
- Ideas of success, even our own
- Worldly values and cultural pressures
- Temptations and spiritual opposition

Don't Depend Upon People

Let's place a high value on integrity, desire it, and prize it!

Pursue learning about what the Bible says about integrity, find leaders who are characterized by integrity, and follow them.

But don't depend on people to be flawless models of

integrity and remember that sometimes the lessons they give are through their mistakes.

I can relate to this—the first book I published in 2007, was about lessons I learned from my own mistakes and failures, due to being mentored in an Old Testament style of prophetic ministry.

Let's put our trust in Jesus, the only Person who has demonstrated complete and perfect integrity.

Now, this brings us back to humility, *“Oh Lord, we are wholly reliant upon you. Live Your life through us.”*

The Power, Persecution and Promotion of Integrity

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, along with Daniel, were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar and transferred to Babylon to be trained up for the pagan king's service. (Dan 1:1-7)ⁱⁱ

In these tragic circumstances, the young leaders could have lost heart. They could not yet see God's purpose in their relocation to Babylon. And yet they chose to live with an excellent spirit, to honor and serve God in the setting of darkness and captivity.

They stayed true to their Jewish heritage and faith in God with their lifestyle.

The Fourth Man in the Fire

Integrity is the proving ground of spiritual authority. When we are faithful in character, God entrusts us with greater revelation and influence.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to a golden statue, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered

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that they be thrown into a fiery furnace. But as they tumbled in, the King saw them walking freely in the flames, accompanied by a fourth Man.

The only thing destroyed by the fire was the cords that bound them. (Dan 3)

After this, the king honored them and, in a written declaration to the entire kingdom, gave glory to the God of Israel (Dan 3:28-30).

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego reminds us that keeping your integrity may sometimes get you persecuted. But ultimately, having integrity means that you will be someone that God trusts with His anointing, power, and promotion.

Integrity and Open Doors

Do you want to be one in whom God can trust with prophetic revelation—and the fullness of His power and authority? There may be doors and opportunities that will only open when you are ready to bear the weight of that responsibility.

And when your character comes into alignment with that level of authority, a significant measure of God's power is going to be released through you.

But more than that, be someone whose greatest desire is simply to honor God and be like Him. And especially, to be with Him.

That, right there, is the key to everything.

Today I pray that the Holy Spirit will infuse you with the great desire and passion to be a son or daughter who

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honors God in all you are, and in all you do.

Coming Up:

Integrity forms the foundation of our lives—but *consistency* keeps us aligned over time.

So next, let us look at how our relationship with God's Word helps us stay on track.

Consistency: Staying True to God's Word

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”
(Hebrews 4:12, NLT)

The Plumb Line

A plumb line is a simple tool with a weight hanging from a string, that ensures walls or posts are perfectly vertical. It's often used as analogy for alignment and integrity.

The Word of God is our plumb line, used by the Holy Spirit to reveal and adjust us. This alignment is invaluable!

When our lives line up with God's Word, we have integrity in lifestyle, speech, and ministry. We can flourish in every area—we are whole.

So, let's explore how Scripture anchors us, helping us stay aligned with God in every season.

More than a Source of Encouragement

The Bible is more than a source of encouragement, or a collection of God's promises. Using it fully allows us to experience His complete grace:

- Correction readjusts our course
- Instruction opens new pathways
- Reproof demolishes strongholds and sets us free

God's Word provides a glorious, life-giving way. So, let's administer it with wisdom, power, and grace.

While writing this chapter, I experienced a life-changing moment of reproof. Our pastor was preaching about a lifestyle of worship and said:

“We have to tell our body to come into alignment with our spirit.

The spirit in you is the real you.

“I don't feel like it.” Which you—your fleshly you, or your spiritual you.?”

(Pastor Russell Evans)*

That word rolled over me like a wave and spoke directly into my situation. It led me to repentance and freedom as I realigned my perspective.

God's Word and Fivefold Ministry

Continuing the plumbline analogy, here is a truth I believe the Holy Spirit is bringing to our attention. We often miss it—and yet it is of primary importance today.

* Sermon titled “Everything is Worship,” Planetshakers Church, October 12th 2024

Anointed Character

The purpose of the “Fivefold Ministry” is to equip and mature the church in Christlikeness (see Eph 4:11-14). And a key outcome of this maturity is,

“...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine...”

(Eph 4:14, NKJV)

Addressing False Doctrines

This was important to Paul because in his day fake “Christian” teachers were infiltrating the church! Some—Paul called them Judaizers—were leading the people back to works and the Law of Moses.

We read his passion about this, and how much it grieved him, in the letter to the Galatians.

At the other extreme was lawlessness. Some false teachers, such as the “Nicolaitans” Jesus addressed in Revelation chapter 2, practiced immorality. Others got caught up in "hidden, higher knowledge" and promoted mystical experiences.

- John addressed false beliefs in his letters
- Paul tackled the issue of those who worshiped angels and detailed their experiences (Col 2:18)
- Jude warned about false teachers, and Peter did the same in his second letter

Jesus also strongly addressed the Pharisees and religious leaders for misrepresenting the Father. So, this was a common theme throughout the New Testament.

The Bible and the Culture

Winds of doctrine will always challenge us. Today, social media amplifies these voices, and many are influenced by online teachers who are not anchored or accountable.

Hear the heart cry of God: come back to the plumbline of the Word of God, *“rightly divided”*.

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

(2 Timothy 2:15)

There will always be a temptation to mold Scripture to our preferences or comfort. And the comfort of others.

Yet, we must allow the tension between culture and the Bible to remain, letting the Word shape us and our message—not the world.

The God-Breathed Word

We can have confidence in God’s Word, and His hand in the canon of scripture. This is the Bible’s testimony of itself: There are many contributors, yet one Author. And that Author saw the whole, before one word was penned:

“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven”

(Psalm 119:89, NKJV)

“Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.”

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(2 Peter 1:20-21, NLT)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”

(2 Timothy 3:16, NKJV)

That word, “*inspiration of God*” in the Greek is “*theopneustos*”, meaning divinely breathed (Strong’s G2315). Paul was referring to the Old Testament!

Let’s meditate on this for a moment. Add to this the “greater glory” of the Gospel of Christ—the New Testament.

The psalmist exclaims,

“I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure.”

(*Psalm 119:162, NLT*)

Today, many are treating the Bible as an archaeologist treats an archeological site:

- As though they must move away what they perceive to be “dust and dirt” to locate the fragments of the treasure.

But the Lord says, “It is ALL treasure.” And as leaders, we are called to be treasure hunters.

6 key reasons why studying the Bible is vital to prophetic ministry and leadership:

Think of how central our relationship with God’s Word is to prophetic ministry. When we teach on prophecy, we emphasize the importance of Scripture.

1. First, we know and encounter God in His Word

If we aim to represent God faithfully, we must first know Him, and the primary way to know Him is through the Scriptures.

2. Second, the Bible is our primary source of revelation

It is the main way through which the Holy Spirit speaks.

Jesus said, “...*the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*”

(John 14:26)

The Holy Spirit not only gives fresh revelation but also draws on:

- Things God has spoken to you in the past
- What you have learned through encounters with Him
- Wisdom from teachings you have received
- Scriptures, Bible stories, and biblical principles

For our spiritual gifts to grow, we must supply the storehouse the Holy Spirit draws from. This means positioning for encounters with God, learning from sound sources, and especially, studying the Bible.

I pray the Lord stirs up a strong desire in you to study His Word and build your storehouse.

3. Thirdly, it is essential in weighing prophetic insights

Scripture helps us assess every prophetic word or discernment. When we practice biblical integrity, we let the Scriptures refine and weigh up our prophetic messages, rather than choosing verses out of context to fit our own insights.

4. Fourthly, it aids us in personal Growth

Meditating on God's Word and allowing it to refine us helps us grow personally in our character, relationships and lifestyle, as well as in our gifts and ministries.

5. Fifthly, it helps us comprehend prophetic symbolism

The Bible provides a foundation for understanding prophetic symbols, visions, and dreams. It is the first place we turn for help, as we interpret these spiritual experiences.

Our desire for prophecy should never surpass our hunger for God's Word. Honoring the Holy Spirit, His gifts, and our ministry begins with a deep engagement with the Bible.

6. Sixthly, our doctrine is on display when we minister

When we prophesy, teach or counsel, our doctrine is on display, whether we are aware of it or not. This makes it even more important to be a people of sound doctrine.

The way we share and interpret prophetic insights, signs, spiritual encounters and symbols reveals our underpinning beliefs.

Powerful Keys to Maximizing God's Word

1. Embrace New Testament Teaching on Gifts and Character

What a sobering thought! If someone tore out (or quietly removed) all the passages in which the apostles of the New Testament warned and exhorted the church about godly living—would we miss them?

But in letting them warn and challenge us, we obtain a great gift.

- A radiant church, bringing glory to God!
- Leaders of good character and doctrine.

The message of the Holy Spirit is, *“Don't look away!”* Hear the cry of the Lord through the New Testament apostles. We must prize character above all else!

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and opened by stating, *“you come short in no gift”* (1 Corinthians 1:7)

What praise! Paul speaks to a church where the gifts of the Holy Spirit abound. Yet in the same letter, he rebukes them for being divisive, prideful and for tolerating immorality.

And for putting Apollos, a charismatic leader who was not a true father, on a pedestal (chs 2-4).

Apostolic Instruction is for Today

The warnings about pride, discrimination, and putting up with immorality Paul writes about are recorded for us today.

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- And yet, how many of us eagerly pass over them to study the gifts or read his great love passage in 1 Corinthians 13?

Prioritizing gifts, power, and anointing over character, biblical understanding, and discipleship poses a significant danger—especially within the prophetic movement.

I pray, and I ask you to join me, that we will see this turned around in this generation.

2. Receive the Word “First-Hand”

When Paul arrived in Berea, the people were eager to listen to his message but took the time to verify it for themselves. One might think that if anyone from that era could be trusted, it was Paul.

- He had direct revelation from Jesus, wrote letters that became Scripture, and was a learned theologian
- Paul even visited the leaders of the Jerusalem Church to ensure his Gospel was in alignment with theirs (Gal 2:1-3)

Yet Luke notes (and the Holy Spirit through him),

“And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.”

(Acts 17:11-12, NLT)

. . .

The Greek word *prothymia* (translated as “open-minded”) suggests eagerness and readiness of mind.

We must be like the Bereans—first-hand students of God’s Word, not relying solely on second-hand teaching. Let’s engage deeply with the Bible, considering its context, language, and overall narrative, always through the lens of the Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ.



Reflection:

Consider what it would look like today to have a “Berean” attitude today.

- How would it affect your response to Bible-based messages that challenge you?
- How would the Bereans detect false teaching?

Let’s be eager to study the Bible personally, especially in an age where AI can create messages for us (eliminating our need for direct engagement and study). May we always return to Scripture for our guidance.



3. Have a Post-Resurrection View of God’s Word

Let’s pay attention to Jesus’ example after His resurrection. Luke highlights this in two examples in Luke 24. On the

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road to Emmaus, Jesus walked alongside some disciples, who didn't recognize Him.

“Then, Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

(Luke 24:27, NLT)

Later, when He met with a larger group of disciples, He said:

“When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

(Luke 24:44-45, NLT)

This is the Gospel. This is the power of transformation—Jesus at the center. Paul speaks of being transformed as we behold God's glory through His Word (2 Corinthians 3:18). Why? Because we see Jesus!

- True radiance comes from beholding God through His Word.

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus had an intimate knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures and knew they applied to Him Jesus knew the heart of the Lawgiver—His Father—and how the law was fulfilled in Himself.

The Bible tells Jesus' story, and in it, we find our own.

4. Have Conversations About Doctrine and Leadership

We have an object that looks like a ruler, called a “spirit level”. In contrast to the plumb line, this tool works for *horizontal* alignment.

I’ve found this very handy for hanging picture frames. You know you are holding it straight when a liquid bubble suspended within the ruler is perfectly centered.

The Bible is our “Spirit level”—what the Holy Spirit uses to keep us aligned with God’s will, and balanced in our understanding and doctrine. Paul’s words to Timothy apply to each one of us:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

(2 Timothy 2:15, NKJV)

As emerging leaders, we can learn to test doctrines and understand the foundation of what we teach. I’m reminded of this during Q&A sessions when listeners challenge common beliefs about prophetic ministry.

These are healthy moments that highlight my need for deeper understanding.

a. Being Doctrinally Self-Aware

It’s vital to recognize if there’s a disconnect between our *outwardly held doctrines* (what people perceive we adhere to) and our inner beliefs.

b. Moral Integrity

James warns that those who teach will be judged more

strictly (James 3:1). This is not a reason to fear, but a reminder to steward well the ministry Jesus has given us.

And to honor God’s Word as holy.

To have moral integrity, we need to be living the life we teach. So, let’s be aware when we are experiencing doubts, temptations or challenges.

As leaders, we must be able to seek guidance from mentors we trust and provide “safety nets” for those under our leadership.

(For more insights on this, see chapter 9 on “Purity”).

c. Representing Ministries with Integrity

Consistency means faithfully carrying the heart and message of the ministry you represent. When Paul wanted to impart his DNA—his lifestyle and teaching—into the church at Corinth, he sent Timothy (1 Cor 4:15-17). Paul had complete confidence that Timothy would faithfully represent him.

Similarly, when we represent ministries (e.g., a church, network or organization) it’s crucial to understand their core doctrines, and expectations.

Because if you are *representing* them in your ministry, they are trusting you to honor their priorities, values, doctrine, and mission.

Personal Example: My “Held Doctrine”

As I seek to encourage conversations around this, here is how it works for me:

I have a background in Presbyterian and Charismatic Renewal, the revival movement of the 90s, and have spent the last 22 years in the Australian ACC movement.

When it comes to my *“held doctrine”*, my alignment is to the ACC statement of doctrine.

This provides clarity for anyone who wants to investigate it. While I don’t advocate blind acceptance—let’s be like the Bereans—I do stand for doctrinal integrity.

I continue to study deeply and critically reflect on the Word. My prayer is that this sparks conversations around the importance of doctrinal integrity within the prophetic movement. We need the input of gifted theologians and fivefold teachers now more than ever.

My desire is to be anchored securely in my relationship with God’s Word.

And to be established in a community—with others around who can shape and challenge me.

I believe true consistency in ministry begins with being anchored in Scripture and accountable in community.

Your background and present situation may be very different to mine. But my prayer is that this stirs up a much-needed conversation among us.

5. Approach God’s Word as a “Novice in the New”

In Matthew 13:52 Jesus says,

“...every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

(Matthew 13:52, NKJV)

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The same word appears in Matthew, when “*The wise men opened their treasures*” (Matthew 2:11) There’s treasure in both the Old and New Testaments for a teacher to draw from!

And I believe right now, the Lord is highlighting this:

- As leaders, we often rely on what we already know —the “old treasures” in our storehouses.
- But the Lord wants to open brand-new storehouses to us.

While core doctrines of the faith are unchanging, our relationship with God and the vastness of His Kingdom are ever-expanding.

We must remain novices in the “new,” continually discovering the marvelous insights within God’s Word.

How to Receive More Gold!

A few years ago, I was about to teach on a new topic and excitedly introduced it to my board. Instead of being enthusiastic (as I expected them to be) they expressed concern. They requested I share my teaching with them before presenting it publicly.

I’ll admit, I found it frustrating at first! But this experience taught me the value of approaching every situation with a mindset of learning.

It sent me back to study, yielding even more biblical insights on the topic! I would have not received this gold if I hadn’t sought to be accountable with my teaching.

But I was the richer for submitting it.

I've discovered that being teachable opens the door to deeper revelation and lasting fruit in ministry.

Sweeter Than Honey

Speaking of the Scriptures, the Psalmist wrote,

*“They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold.
They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.
They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who
obey them.
How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from
these hidden faults.”*

(Psalm 19:11-12, NLT)

Honey is a healing agent with antibacterial properties. Not only does it provide sustenance, but it can heal and cleanse.

Being “sweet as honey” does not mean Scripture will always bring comfort. Sometimes, like the scroll that was sweet in John’s mouth but bitter in his stomach (Rev 10:10), God’s Word confronts and adjusts us.

When it comes to character, there will always be issues of our soul that we are unaware of. The message of the psalmist is this: receive the healing sweetness of God’s Word. But don’t stop there, and don’t just scan the Scripture.

Allow God’s Word to scan you.

Let us not only treasure God’s Word—but let it shape us daily, so we lead with consistency, depth, and truth.



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Reflection:

Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to align more closely with God's Word? What is one step you can take today to respond?



Coming Up:

As we align our lives with God's Word, we are positioned for lasting impact.

But it is honor that shapes how we lead, serve, and finish our race with integrity. Let's explore this, in our final—and perhaps most important study—yet.

Honor: The Path to Legacy and Finishing Well

*“A good name [earned by honorable behavior, godly wisdom, moral courage, and personal integrity] is more desirable than great riches;
And favor is better than silver and gold.”*
(Proverbs 22:1, AMP)

To protect our character, we must first honor it—recognizing the immense value God places on it.

Think about the different levels of protection for spare change, a wad of cash, and gold bars! The costliness of an item determines the degree of planning, and effort put into protecting it. What we value, we will invest in and protect.

- So, let’s not lose sight of the power of godly character—it’s priceless.
- Our character and legacy are intertwined!

Just as we guard gold more carefully than spare change, the value we place on character determines how we protect it.

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How to Guard our Character

To honor means to value highly, respect, and hold in esteem. When we *honor our character*, we will be proactive about:

- Developing our character
- Keeping our good name
- Maintaining our integrity
- Honoring God in our inner (private) life

In 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote of finishing well in ministry and likened this to running in a race. He exhorts,

“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!”
(1 Corinthians 9:24)

The Spirit-Led Life

The writer of Hebrews adds,

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:
“For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”
(Hebrews 10:35-37, NKJV)

Everyone who is a serious runner knows they must exercise self-discipline, and that includes *self-restraint*. And our obedience to God in the matter of character will call on us to take the hard road at times.

- But in our efforts, are we suddenly abiding by rules, or resorting to striving? No!

Paul speaks of this in Romans 8. His answer is not *in turning back to rules*, but in living the Spirit-led life:

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”
(Romans 8:1-2, NLT)

We possess godly character, and we value it enough to protect it. So, it's a matter of guarding what we have, not laboring for what we lack.

How to Guard our Character

1. Honor the Finished Work of Christ

Here's the ultimate protection for our character and our spiritual life—to *honor the finished work of Christ*. Paul described it this way:

“He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.”
(Colossians 2:15-15, NLT)

Jesus prayed:

“I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”

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(John 17:4, NLT)

Recall this verse in Hebrews:

“For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.”

(Hebrews 10:14, NLT)

In chapter one, I described the symbol of a “red door”, which symbolized salvation. Having been cleansed by faith in Jesus’ blood, we have passed through that door and are now at home in our “Father’s house.”

We have been transferred to the Kingdom of God, where we now live! Here, we are in Christ, made righteous with His righteousness, and partakers in His finished work.

2. Healthy Honor Towards Ourselves and Others

When we are secure in our worth before God, we recognize we are rich in His favor and honor. The psalmist writes,

“When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.”

(Psalm 8:3-5, NLT)

Knowing the value God has placed upon us, our eyes are opened to the worth of others. Then, we walk in honor and give it away.

God's Call to Mutual Honor

Honor is a major theme in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, which are key chapters about the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts in the church.

- Firstly, we are to honor the Holy Spirit and the unique ways He gifts us
- Then, we are to honor each other. This includes those who seem to have humble parts to play, along with honoring leaders

“And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it...”

(1 Corinthians 12: 23-24, NKJV)

The Greek word translated honor here, (*timē*, Strong's ref G5092) has to do with setting a price on.

Honoring Those in Need

James warns that being prejudicial with our favor is a sign of poor character (actually, the expression he uses is, “evil motives”).

James says,

“My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others? If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”

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—*well, doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?*”

(James 2:1-4, NLT)

We could summarize this by saying, *“Don't be selective with your honor!”*

As I've mentioned, Jesus expressed the heart of the Father and always had time for individuals who sought Him out. It didn't make a difference if they were rich or poor, young or old, influential or unknown.

He loved them all.

Honoring those in need, including strangers and outsiders as commanded by the Bible, leads to empathy and acts of kindness. (Hebrews 13:2, Matthew 25:41-46, Deuteronomy 24:17-22).

Honoring recognizes each person is loved and valued by God, and responding accordingly, with wisdom.

Integrity Flows Through Honor

When it comes to honoring people, honor is a dispenser, through which the gifts flow. Attributes like kindness, goodness, loyalty, patience and wisdom, all flow from honor, making it a vital key to character.

When we honor people *as God honors them*, it helps us operate in good character.

- For example, honoring those we work for vocationally leads to integrity in our labor for them

- When we honor someone, we handle our words thoughtfully and choose our timing wisely

So, when it comes to character development, honor is a powerful quality to pursue.

Apply Discernment to Honor

But let's be clear—there's a balance here, for this doesn't mean bending to *unhealthy* influence, for we honor our boundaries, our rights, and integrity as well.

We don't sacrifice one to serve the other.

- Honor and discernment must go together.

True honor is not weak; it speaks truth with love, maintaining values while seeking wise communication. Honor is not blind. It is clear-eyed.

- It is discerning.

To honor is not to idolize, for God is the only one we adore.

Our leaders have sacrificed to serve and be on the front lines. They have laid down their lives to serve Jesus and their people.

They are not perfect; they have foibles and weaknesses. Leaders are a work in progress as we are! And they won't always make decisions we agree with.

We don't bestow honor on *performance*. But we honor the *person* and the *office* based on God's viewpoint.

Anointed Character

- Using discernment and wisdom.

What Honor is and Isn't

How grateful I am for the genuine honor I experience in our leadership and church.

- Honor from the heart, that is modeled by our leaders and flows through every part of the community

Given that there are so many situations where leaders have broken trust, there's a distinction we need to reflect on. Honor simply means to value, but the *practice* of honor should be healthy and appropriate.

By "practice", I mean a set of actions or attitudes that we have come to associate with honor. Or that we *assign* to honor.

In some cultures, sadly, there has even been an unhealthy "code of conduct" and culture of honor that is pseudo biblical.

An Unhealthy "Code of Honor"

If you have experienced pain through an unhealthy code of honor, God has healing for you. You are not alone in your pain.

Remember that in 1 Corinthians 12, honor is multi-directional, flowing amongst us. If we honor someone but they dishonor us, break trust, or "cross a line", that's not biblical honor.

That is something we need to address.

We may need to speak honestly to the person, revisit our boundaries or create a safe distance. Or find someone appropriate and safe to share with.

I pray this introduction to such a weighty topic inspires meaningful conversations.

Honoring the Local Church

In Luke 4, we read this about Jesus:

“When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read the Scriptures.”
(Luke 4:16, NLT)

It’s worth considering that Jesus had a habit of regularly attending synagogue. And the letters written in the New Testament speak to Christians gathered in churches.

The writer of Hebrews says:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.”
(Hebrews 10:24-25a)

Local Church and Itinerant Ministry

We never grow out of a need to be vitally connected to a local church. Even itinerant apostolic and prophetic ministries can have a home base to report to regularly, just as Paul and Barnabas did with Antioch.

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“Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.”

(Acts 14:27-28, NLT)

And if we have a family, this becomes more important. Our children need to be planted alongside us in the life of our church. They need to see our example.

There is an aspect of accountability to this.

We were itinerant ministers for decades, but our local church pastors and leaders knew us well—not only our gifts and good points, but also our history, family life, weaknesses, and so on. It was humbling, and we went through many testing times with their support.

These days, we have a board and apostolic leaders with whom we share that personal relationship and accountability. But we consider being a part of our church essential, and one of the great joys of our lives.

Legacy, Church and Family

Honor is powerful when it comes to the legacy of a church. An example of this is the church David and Margaret McCracken founded in Auckland.

The baton of leadership has successfully passed on to a third generation with honor. The current leaders still recognize and value David’s legacy.

This stands in contrast with a church we briefly attended over 30 years ago. It was known for the moving of the Holy Spirit.

Yet three tiers of leaders were eventually found to have been in marital infidelity. All three people were known widely to be greatly anointed—and yet there was a pattern of hidden sin.

In these situations, it's not only about the loss of legacy—there are congregations whose trust has been betrayed.

And there are families involved, and the covenant of marriage to honor. My husband Malcolm and I have been married over 40 years and treasure every year of walking in God's calling together.

It's an honor that we don't take for granted, and it requires diligence—and vigilance.

When We Run Dry of Honor

We live in a day where honor is under siege, everywhere. But genuine honor is life-giving, and we need its flow! When we run dry of honor, it's like a warning light, signaling that something needs attention.

I believe that gratitude is a litmus test for honor. In other words, our level of *gratitude* reflects our degree of honor.

- We may struggle with honor when we are simply out of alignment and not positioned where God wants us
- This may be due to weariness and the genuine need to rest
- It may indicate deeper issues like hurts, a critical spirit or discouragement

So, let's learn to keep track of our honor, and to miss it when it is absent. We hear Him whisper, "*I place this choice before you. Choose the way that leads to life.*"

Anointed Character

The indwelling Holy Spirit is here to empower and help you.

Honor and Accountability Go Together

One of the ways our character can be forged is in the context of a family or team. Even those of us called to lead churches or ministries often spend periods serving this way.

- Others may identify serving in a team context as our primary calling

Long ago I realized that my personal response to leadership would be the breaking or making of my ministry. I can tell you it took a lot of breaking and repentance in an early period, to get me into a useful place!

But I realize now that being a great supporting leader is not about the length of time you have served; it is about having the right heart attitude.

It is about consistently allowing the Holy Spirit to work within you in times of pressure, to develop maturity and Christlikeness.

- Don't go to social media to learn God's plan for Fivefold Ministry.

We don't know all that goes behind the scenes, their churches, their apostolic leaders, their sacrifices. Or their accountability.

Let's not seek the ministry first but to build our personal foundations strong.

Prophetic Teams in the New Testament

When you reflect on the ministry of prophets in the Old Testament they appear as individuals, journeying alone, reporting directly to God.

Now, while we can learn many lessons from Old Testament leaders, a disconnected life is not one of them!

Even when we are called to be pioneers and for a period, we are spearheading something new. While we are marching off the map, we need leadership support.

In the New Testament, you see less of the individual prophet and more of prophetic teams. Consider the examples in 1 Corinthians 14:29-31, Acts 15:32, Acts 13:1, Acts 11:27-28.

Agabus is frequently highlighted as a significant prophet in the New Testament. When we first meet him, we see he is part of a prophetic team from the Jerusalem church.

Over the years, my husband Malcolm and I have served on numerous leadership teams. This has included churches, businesses, and organizations, where we've served in a variety of leadership roles.

We have seen teams go through good times and bad; forge ahead in unity and fall apart in disunity. And we have had our own bumps on the road.

Following are some insights from Timothy that have inspired us on our journey.

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Honor Leadership in the Tough Times

Think about it: There is nothing like being under strong leadership to test and build your character. We don't know but can guess that Elisha's life serving the prophet Elijah was not easy.

No wonder he pursued Elijah for that mantle at the end (2 Kings 2)—he'd already laid down his life for God's call.

Paul: A Strong Leader

Being on a team is a sure way to develop (and reveal!) character.

Look at Timothy, in the New Testament, who was on the Apostle Paul's ministry team. Paul was a strong character and would not always have been an easy person to get along with.

But remember the Apostle Paul said,

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 11:1, NKJV)

He was a strong leader *who also had integrity*.

If you have ever had difficulty with reporting to a strong or directive leader, consider what it would have been like to work with the Apostle Paul!

And yet he raised up a loyal and effective ministry team as he pioneered the early church amongst the Gentiles.

Two Traits for a Lasting Legacy

Here are two of the characteristics that propelled Timothy onto the Apostle Paul's team and into the pages of church history—and that inspire me in my own leadership journey.ⁱ Here, Paul speaks of Timothy:

1. Kingdom Priorities over Self-Interest

“For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Jesus Christ. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.”

(Philippians 2:20-22, NKJV)

Timothy willingly left his hometown to follow Paul. Following that time, he moved from place to place as Paul's messenger, and he faced the same persecution that Paul did.

It is possible that Timothy had a call from God to senior leadership in his own right. Eusebius, writing about A.D. 325, reported that Timothy was the first bishop of Ephesus.ⁱⁱ And yet he never sought self-advancement. Timothy faithfully served Paul, throughout Paul's lifetime.ⁱⁱⁱ

Timothy inspires us to seek God's Kingdom above our comfort. And when God calls us to serve another leader's God-given vision, to be faithful.

Other Team Members

Note, here, that Paul raised other team members with whom he had similar confidence: Titus (Titus 1:4),

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Tychicus (Eph 6:21-22), Epaphras (Col 1:7-8). In Romans 16 he greets co-workers, including many women.

I love this brief note about Phoebe:

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God’s people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.”

(Rom 16:1-2, NLT)

2. Longevity – Be Prepared for the Long Haul

It was not long into Timothy’s first missionary journey that Paul got into trouble, imprisoned for causing an uproar in the city of Philippi. (Acts 17:19-23)

Timothy stuck with Paul through good times and bad, through popularity and notoriety, through persecution and imprisonment.

And I note here, the quality of their relationship. This was no “professional” or passing relationship. It was a *bonded* relationship. In 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul remembers Timothy’s tears at their last farewell.

- Paul is writing from prison.

Timothy encourages us to have a long-haul outlook in our ministry, not leaving or withdrawing when times get tough.

Costly Honor

Honor is not merely something we acknowledge with words. It’s deeper than a verbal affirmation or a respectful

attitude—though both are important foundations. True honor is often costly.

Throughout this study, we have explored the life of Timothy, a member of the apostle Paul's team. His example—and many others in Scripture—shows us this truth: Honor recognizes value, and honor responds.

Think of Elisha, who left everything to follow Elijah! Honor may take us out of our comfort zones. It can stretch our time, our finances, and our priorities, as we choose to obey God and live by His principles.

Paul wrote that ministers of the Gospel are "*worthy of double honor*"—referring specifically to financial support. (1 Tim 5:17-18) Sometimes, honor means going the extra mile: showing up when it's inconvenient, following through on a personal instruction, or simply being fully present.

- It could be as simple as silencing notifications on our devices, and giving our full attention when a leader is speaking

Honor places us in a posture to receive teaching, blessing and impartation. This has been impressed upon me recently. When our pastors host a conference or special event, we intentionally set aside time to attend.

That might mean rearranging plans or covering travel and accommodation costs. But we do it because we value what is taking place—our leaders, and the ministers they've prayerfully chosen to speak into our lives.

The Holy Spirit also recently convicted me regarding our board. They faithfully bring prophetic insight and instruction at each meeting. Yet I realized I wasn't keeping those

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words in front of me or praying over them between meetings.

I sensed the Lord saying, *“Pay attention to costly honor.”*

Honor is one of my deeply held values—but I know I’m still learning. Because honor isn’t easy, but it is always worth it.

Honoring God’s Purpose for Your Life

“Perhaps you are here for such a time as this”

I know God has big dreams and prophetic plans for your life that would blow your mind if you fully knew them!

Maybe you have an idea of what these destiny dreams might be. God’s call for you may be in family, ministry, mission, online, the marketplace, government, or education. It might be for a few or many, but it's significant.

So, honor those dreams and receive God's grace to keep your character strong.

Enduring Leaders Leave a Powerful legacy

You may be called to prophetic ministry as a primary focus—or you may be a leader and influencer who has a prophetic edge.

To endure is to last over time and to stay on track for the long haul.

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...”

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(Hebrews 12:1, NKJV)

God's desire is that you run well, and that you finish well. That you build upon a strong foundation and have a legacy that will last for generations to come.

Honor the Assignment God Gives You

Imagine being Archippus, the person to whom Paul addressed personally in the closing words of his letter to the church in Colossae!

“Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”
(Colossians 3:16-17, NKJV)

The Greek word translated “fulfill”, *pleroo* (Strong's G4137) means to fill, complete or finish.

When that letter was read publicly, Archippus came under the spotlight in two assemblies of believers!

In a companion letter to Philemon, Paul addresses Archippus as “*our fellow soldier*” (Phil v2). So, it seems that Archippus was a leader and served Jesus in some capacity. Yet his role is a mystery.

And I believe there's a reason for that.

- Archippus could represent anyone. He could be me or you.

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So, receive this as your own personal word of instruction from the Lord:

“Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

(Colossians 3:16-17, NKJV)

God not only gives us a ministry calling, but He calls us to complete it. So, honor the assignments God gives you along the way, and aim to finish well.



Reflection:

Take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit: *“What is one assignment You are highlighting that I am to honor and finish well?”*

Be aware that seasons don't always close in the way we expected, or they are interrupted. But God's work in you has not finished, and He gives you grace for the next chapter.

He sees the bigger picture:

You, a vessel for His glory

And through your life of honor, others will encounter Him. You will leave a legacy that outlasts you.



Final Word: The Upward Calling

One of the challenges of character growth is that it is both an upward calling and an uphill climb! Yet there are many wonderful vantage points along the way—reminders of God’s faithfulness and presence with us.

It helps to remember that the journey is full of grace as we walk with Jesus.

Throughout this study, we've explored the balance of grace (the finished work of Christ) and growth (our participation with Him to grow in Christlikeness).

During the months of writing these studies, I was aware of my own shortcomings and frailties.

Though this series feels imperfect and incomplete, I pray it stirs you and sparks a meaningful conversation.

I love the way Eugene Peterson puts this in his paraphrase of the Beatitudes:

Final Word: The Upward Calling

“When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

(Matthew 5:1-5, MSG)

When I came across this, I was moved because it summed up the character journey so well—using relatable words and imagery.

I encourage you to look up the complete chapter, and to read the Beatitudes across various translations.

“Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:16, MSG)

You are here to be light bearers, so shine! God is calling us to be a radiant people, radiant with his glory.

May it be our prayer that nothing stands in the way—that we live uncovered and fully yielded to Him.

Now, let’s put our hands up. Let’s volunteer for the climb!

Stories and Feedback

Final Word: The Upward Calling

I'd love to hear what has stood out to you in this eBook:

- What impacted you?
- What you would like more of?
- And any questions you have

Send me an email at info@enlivenministries.net

About Helen Calder



Helen Calder is a prophetic minister, Bible teacher, and writer with a passion to equip and empower Christian leaders.

She is the founder of *Enliven Blog* (since 2009), a widely-read resource that brings timely encouragement and prophetic insight to believers around the world.

As a prophetic preacher, Helen's passion is to be a catalyst, bringing a timely word from God to impart encouragement and breakthrough to churches, businesses, organizations, and individuals.

She loves to help people have life-changing encounters with God, in which they see who they are through His eyes and catch a glimpse of the destiny He has for them.

Helen has a unique gift of equipping in the areas of hearing God's voice, prophecy, and prayer

Through her teaching and online courses, Helen helps leaders grow in Christlike character, develop their spiritual gifts, and hear God's voice with clarity and confidence. Her ministry is marked by a strong prophetic anointing, biblical depth, and practical application.

Helen's online *Prophetic School* and *Prayer School* have trained thousands globally and are available at

[courses.enlivenministries.net](https://www.enlivenministries.net)

She is the author of *Unlocking the Gift of Discernment* and other books, available at

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Helen and her husband Malcolm are members of Planet-shakers Church in Melbourne, Australia. They have been married since 1983 and frequently travel and minister together.

Enliven Blog—Prophetic Teaching by Helen Calder

For teaching and resources on the topics of discernment, prophetic ministry, spiritual gifts, and prayer:

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1. The Father's House: Beginning with Grace

- i. Luke 1.25
- ii. Insights from Enliven Blog: Red Door: God Says, 'This is Where I Turn Shame into Glory'
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- ii. I first shared the essence of this chapter in 2016 at Planetshakers College, and later published it on the Enliven Prophetic School <https://courses.enlivenministries.net/courses/prophetic-school>

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