

NOT AS MAN SEES

*a Cry for Leaders
to Be After God's Heart*

A D R I E N N E S C O T T
B R A V E S P A R R O W P U B L I S H I N G

Not As Man Sees:
A Cry for Leaders to Be After God's Heart
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For my son, Winter Michael Scott
...so that you may know the certainty of the
things you have been taught. Luke 1:4

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, NASA released a short documentary about life on the space station.¹ In one section, the astronauts were commenting on the way Earth looks from the station and how human activity and influence are almost undetectable during the day. The camera shot pans out, looking at water and land with no borders. Then the shot changed to night hours. Oh, man, at the lights. The evidence of human life reached across the globe—hot spots beamed with light, little flickers here and there, and even long strings of river-like lights.

Although the message of the documentary was primarily about human influence, the image of Earth at night often comes to mind when I think about the church. In the darkness of the hour, kingdom activity will be so brilliant as it reaches across continents, divisions, state lines, denominations, and offenses. Lamps will be filled with oil, shining and pointing people to Jesus, our coming king. It will be something to see! As a friend

¹ *Down to Earth: The Astronauts Perspective*, 2021

says, this will be the finest hour of the church. I couldn't agree more.

But for that to happen, for the church to be light in deep darkness (Isaiah 60:1-3), we need to be after the heart of God. We need leaders who will fearlessly pursue God's heart *and* equip others to do the same. This book is a cry for kingdom leaders to revisit an ancient, unshakable, tried and true approach to leadership. This is the standard God seeks,

*The LORD seeks for a man after his own heart—
For the LORD sees not as man sees;
man looks on the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks on the heart.*

1 Samuel 13:14 & 16:7

When I say leaders, I am not only referring to pastors and overseers. For the purpose of this book, a leader is anyone who is a mature believer and can (or is willing to) equip others to grow in Christ. It doesn't matter what your occupation is or if you're on staff at a church or ministry. We need disciple makers everywhere.

I am writing this message with two convictions. My first conviction is that our highest calling is to pursue the heart of God, and our greatest honor is to lead others to do the same. The church is the body of Christ doing the work of Christ under his headship. Church leadership serves that purpose by first pursuing God's heart and, as a result, inheriting his heart for generations.

The second conviction is to equip kingdom leaders who are lineage-minded. Or, disciples who make disciples who make disciples who make disciples. James and Peter warn us of leading from selfish ambition, compulsion, and dominance (James 3, 1 Peter 5). We see this type of leadership demonstrated in King Saul. Saul was rejected by God as king because he was after his own way instead of being after God's heart. The kingdom of God is eternal, and the characteristics of kingdom leaders should also be eternal-minded. Selfish gain cannot be the motivation in leadership. If we trample on disciples to promote ourselves, we put spiritual lineage at risk.

These convictions circle back to the picture of Earth at night. The church is and will be a brilliant, hopeful light in the days ahead. A shaking has already begun and will continue to grow. It will take out every shakable foundation the church is trying to stand on, including governmental support. I believe the premise and laws of our nation have served the church well for hundreds of years. But freedom isn't in the laws of a nation. Freedom is in the tailwind of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17). He always leads us to Jesus, the firm foundation. Every other foundation is faulty and shakable. It is necessary to continually check our footing as we unify with the Spirit and each other. The church will be victorious as we are built in the Cornerstone, as we are after God's heart.

Not as Man Sees covers six topics that have been essential for my own discipleship journey and even more as I've grown as a leader. I've already mentioned the two topics that bookend this book, *Being After God's Heart* and *Lineage*. The other four topics vitally sit between them as characteristics of leaders who are pursuing God: *Authenticity*, *Humility*, *Devotion*, and *the Fear of the Lord*. This is not the only approach to leadership. There is a plethora of solid, valuable leadership training out there. But, for me, these topics are ground zero and have been the most effective and most treasured approaches that I've seen displayed in others.

I'll resound the cry—pursue the heart of God as you've never done before. We don't have time to waste. In his heart, we will find the longing for unity, the wisdom to endure, and a vision for a victorious church. There is no time for kings like Saul in the body of Christ. Isaiah prophesied that the Lord will arise and his glory will be seen on his people (Isaiah 60:2). That's what we want as leaders. We want God's glory, and we find it in his heart.

CHAPTER 1

AFTER GOD'S HEART

I knew from an early age that I felt called to be in full-time ministry and church leadership. Even still, I struggled with being a leader for a long time. I admit to you in full disclosure that the first problem was me. I wasn't a disciple yet. I wanted to be in a position of leadership more than I wanted to know God. Big problem! Another problem was the structure of church leadership exemplified as I grew up. I don't think the details will be helpful. I will say, though, it was more man-focused than God-focused. And it came with a lot of pressure that was easy to pick up on, even as an adolescent.

I want to be clear. I believe the church leaders who influenced my early life were (are) sincere followers of Christ who loved him deeply. I'm so grateful that the Word of God was taught and for the early introduction to the Holy Spirit through the church. What an inheritance! At the same time, the pressure of that

leadership structure was not something I would have been able to live or lead under.

As I pursued ministry training after high school, I encountered a different type of leadership. This leadership stirred a hunger in me for Jesus and the kingdom of God. Something inside of me clicked into place about leading people. It was also a model that I could operate in. Oh, I still had lots of maturing to do. But over the next several years (decades, really), my motivation to be a leader changed. Phew! It went from a desire to have a leadership position to wanting people to experience what I was experiencing with the Lord. Forget the title. Forget having a fancy office in the church building. I want people to know Jesus because I've tasted and seen that he is good, and I know nothing else satisfies.

I'm hungry for God. I want you to be hungry for him, too. I've noticed over the years that leaders who genuinely pursue God reflect his glory and are most effective for the kingdom.

What Does it Mean to Be After God's Heart?

The phrase *after God's heart* comes from 1 Samuel. It is our introduction to David. The nation of Israel was begging for a king. God said, *I'm your king*. But they wanted a man they could see and elevate, so God presented them with Saul. But in choosing an earthly lineage for Jesus to be born into, God sought someone who was after his heart. He found David, a boy who

tended sheep, protected them, led them, and fought for them. A boy who sang of the wonders of God while no one was watching.

David didn't look like a king. He was too young, too short, too far down the list. But starting before David (think Moses the stutterer and Rahab the prostitute), God chose people from a different standard. He looks for people who see him and choose him instead of other ways. This quality of being after God's heart has little value in our society and is often overlooked. At times, it is flat-out rejected. But the victorious path of the church and the effectiveness of its leaders will come down to being after God's heart. It is an ancient, unshakeable approach to leadership.

One pitfall we should be aware of is viewing our pursuit of God as a stepping stone to promotion. David didn't pursue God so he could be king. He was anointed king because he was after God's heart. There is a difference—a big one. We can't manipulate God into promoting us, nor can we earn our way into leadership. It doesn't work like that in the kingdom. We pursue God's heart because he is the source of life, and then we go where he leads.

Being after God's heart seems self-explanatory. But in an effort to communicate clearly, I want to give us a working definition for the phrase. *Being after God's heart is simply spiritual hunger.*

Spiritual hunger, like natural hunger, leads us to food. In the same way food fuels our physical bodies, God's Word and presence feed our spiritual lives. The necessity of his heart makes it our highest goal. God is the source of life. We are made to live from his presence, to delight in him.

The idea of spiritual hunger is echoed throughout the Bible. One of my personal favorites is Isaiah 55. It is an invitation to pursue, to come and know the Lord.

*Come, everyone who thirsts, come, buy and eat!
You with no money, come, buy food with no price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not
bread, and your labor for that which does not
satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is
good, and delight yourselves in rich food. vs 55:1-2*

Through Isaiah, God is calling us to grow feet, move toward his heart, and partake. He loves setting the table for us and feeding us. Think about manna from heaven, the table in Psalm 23, and the banqueting feast in Song of Songs and Revelation.

The best part about spiritual hunger and the invitation to pursue God is the promise attached to it. We will be satisfied! Jesus says, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied* (Matthew 5:6). When we ask, it will be given. When we seek his heart, we will find it. When we knock, the door will be opened to us (Matthew 7:7-11).

Hungry disciples are after the source of life—they are after God's heart. In turn, leadership done from the place of spiritual hunger is effective leadership!

Aspects of Being After God's Heart

The following are aspects of being after God's heart, or what spiritual hunger looks like in our lives. Within them are little tastes of the next five chapters: authenticity, humility, devotion, the fear of the Lord, and lineage. They are an inescapable part of journeying through God's heart. And what a journey it is!

1. God's Heart Captures Us

To be after God's heart is to be fascinated with him and why he is so wonderful. His beauty stirs the hunger within, compelling us to pursue. The Bible is full of this captured wonder with God, especially in the Psalms. Here is a familiar example.

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter and conceal me under his cover. Psalm 27:4-5

What was it that captured David's heart, making him declare *one thing I seek*? What was it about God's presence that made Moses cry out *show me your glory...I'm not leaving this place unless your presence goes with me*? What did the woman see

that would lead her to break open her alabaster jar of oil and pour it out on Jesus?²

The answers to these questions are what we discover as we pursue him. We learn God's presence by being after his heart, and when we find him, it stirs more hunger in us. Our life cycle should be: seek, find, partake, repeat. It only takes one second in his presence to know there is nothing else like it. There is no one like God. He is holy—completely separate from what man sees and validates. He is life, he is the giver of life, and he is our portion. His faithfulness is stronger than any other force we will encounter. It never ends.

My heart aches to equip this type of leader—fascinated leaders who are continually after God's heart. The church is in desperate need of his heart. We won't survive without it. The bride Jesus is coming back for is pure and devoted to him, and our preparation for his return begins in God's heart.

2. God's Heart Consumes Us

Being after God's heart will not only capture us, it will also consume us with a zeal for his presence and his dwelling place. This zeal is necessary for both building up and for tearing down.

David's passion for God's presence evolved into a zeal for God's house. *See now, I dwell in a house of*

² Exodus 33:12-23, Mark 14:3-9

cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent (2 Samuel 7:2). It can be said a dwelling place for God was the sum of David's life and reign. Psalm 132 is a good summary of his consumed heart.

*I will not enter my house or get into my bed, I
will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my
eyelids until I find a place for the LORD, a
dwelling place for the Mighty One.* vs 3-5

It is important to remember that in the new covenant, we are the temple of God through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). We are being prepared as God's dwelling place for eternity (Revelation 21:1-4). Pursuing God's heart will consume us with a desire for unity, to build up together. This is the victory and glorious future we've been promised, and a zeal for God's house aids this preparation.

The other side of being consumed with God's heart is knowing when to tear down obstructions. When Goliath was spewing threats, it was a zeal for God and his people that got David fired up, *Who is this uncircumcised giant defying the armies of the living God* (1 Samuel 17:26)? And we see it burning in Jesus as he flips over money tables in the temple. *My house shall be a house of prayer, but you make it a den of thieves* (Matthew 21:13).

Being after God's heart will wage war on everything that defies him and his people, everything not found within the parameters of his heart—every dream,

comfort, falsehood, ideal, and idol. We will find ourselves unable to stand on the sidelines while the enemy mocks. We will find ourselves filled with the confidence of the living God. We will make our way to face off against bears, lions, giants, and money tables.

A continual pursuit of his presence matures this zeal so that we know when it's time to build up and when it's time to tear down.

3. God's Heart Will Consecrate Us

Being after God's heart consecrates us to our first love, and we won't be separated from him for very long. That doesn't mean we are perfect. I can't say that enough. We know the story of David and Bathsheba. What a mess. But having a heart after God means being quick to repent when we miss it, get sidetracked, or stumble.

Mixed into David's songs of gazing, adoration, and devotion are some of the most beautiful descriptions of repentance and restoration. A heart after God will joyfully embrace phrases like, *Have mercy on me...wash me thoroughly from my iniquity...Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me* (Psalm 51).

This fervent dedication to God's presence will not always be understood or appreciated by others. David was despised by his wife for dancing with all

his might as the ark of God returned to Jerusalem. Mary was ridiculed for pushing past cultural norms to sit at Jesus' feet. Even Jesus was rejected by many, including his hometown. But the rejection (and praises) of men wash off quickly as we pursue God's heart, and I have found the riddance of those two things will accelerate our journey.

4. God's Heart Will Change Us

Being captured, consumed, and consecrated by God's heart are the first steps to being changed into his image. Everything about us will change. We will address this more as the book continues, but I want to mention two changes here.

- First, our desires and motivation for life will change. They not only affect our everyday decisions as disciples they also shift the way we lead others. Jesus wasn't after his own agenda. Consider these words and responses from him.

Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?...and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature. Luke 2:49

It is written, You shall serve the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. Luke 4:1-13

What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me...The words that I say to you I

do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. John 12:50, 14:10-11

Abba! Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. Mark 14:36

This is my simple but earnest prayer. *Jesus, make me more like you!*

- The second change has to do with becoming glory carriers. In the introduction, I talk about our planet at night and how spectacular the lights are across the globe as a picture of Isaiah 60.

For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen on you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. vs 60:2-3

If we cross-reference Isaiah 60 with 2 Corinthians 3³, we get a glimpse of how this unfolds, at least in part. Paul starts by reminding us of how Moses had to veil his face when he came down from meeting with God. In comparison, he says that the glory provided through Jesus in the new covenant

³ 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

and the ministry of the Spirit will *far* exceed the brilliance on Moses' face. Paul goes on to explain,

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is Spirit.

vs 3:16-18

When we pursue God's heart, we behold him. When we behold him, we become like him—reflections of God's glory. Being after God's heart transforms us into glory carriers, and we become light in the deep darkness. His glory resting on us beckons people to come, taste and see the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).

5. God's Heart is Contagious

Have you ever sat around with friends talking about your favorite foods, and then the next thing you know, everyone is hungry? I believe it works the same way in the spirit. Some of the most influential leaders in my life are the hungriest for God. When they talk about the kingdom and revelation they are getting from the Word, I get hunger pains in my spirit. They come to God's table ready to eat.

Earlier we looked at the zeal David had for God's dwelling place. The same zeal is inherited by his son, Solomon, and others who served King David. He stirred their hunger for God's presence. Can you imagine a young Solomon watching his father worship God, listening to his poems about God's glory, and helping him dream of a dwelling place for God? I think it is safe to say that David's writings continue to stir people into spiritual hunger.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the topic of lineage, but let's think for a second about the overall arc of the Bible. It's about God and his people, and this story has been observed through the ages. Why? Because we are created to be with God, and when people who know him talk about him, it stirs the longing for our purpose and calling. It makes us hungry for our destiny.

Leaders, pray to get hungry.⁴ We need leaders who are faint for God because hungry leaders find the food and know how to lead others in the same way.

Last Thoughts

If you step back and look at the life of David, all the good and the ugly, we see a continual pursuit of God. From when we are first introduced to him as a shepherd boy, from his early years as king bringing the ark back to Jerusalem, from a major failure, and until he was out of

⁴ John G. Lake

breath, David was a man after God's heart and led others there, too. Listen to his cries in Psalm 71.

*For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
Upon you I have leaned from before my birth;
you are he who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.
I have been as a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge. vs 5-7*

*O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim
your might to another generation,
your power to all those to come. vs 17-18*

Spiritual hunger is a life-long mark on our lives. As leaders, being fascinated with God and what he is doing should be the motivation for every aspect of life. If we aren't leading others from the place of God's heart, what is the motivation of our leadership? If we aren't leading others to pursue the heart of God, where are we leading them? What are we equipping others to do if not to grab hold of God?

Leaders, run after God's heart like the inexhaustible treasure that it is. This is our highest calling and greatest honor, and it is the leader God seeks. Be a lovesick disciple first and foremost. Then, equip others to do the same.

CHAPTER 2

AUTHENTICITY

When I was a child, even into my teen years, I was often told that I was an original and marched to the beat of my own drummer. People used the word *unique* a lot. These comments became a part of my identity. I took pride in them as if being unique made me a cut above the rest. But the Lord began to chip away at this false identity. One of the ah-ha moments came during a college course—Art Appreciation.

I remember learning about different types of artwork or pieces: original, authentic replicas & prints, and forgeries. Authentic replicas are often created by the original artist or have been commissioned by them, and have conformed to the original artwork by reproducing essential features. When done this way, they carry value as well. Forgeries, however, are not considered authentic because they are not commissioned by an authorized agent and usually hold no value other than decor. I find this interesting and relatable to discipleship and leadership. We are not original. That title belongs

to the Godhead. They have always been—from everlasting to everlasting (Genesis 1; Psalm 90:2).

Although we are not original, we are designed by the Creator in his image and called to become like him. So, in a way, we are like authentic replicas of the Creator. We bear essential features of him more and more as we mature in Christ. It's through Christ's authority, through his name and his work, that we are commissioned in this way. Likewise, being authentic leaders will carry the authority of Jesus. If we are living and leading from any other place, we run the risk—a great probability—of being like forgeries.

The meaning of forgeries is "to be a false representation." We don't want that description as leaders. Most art forgeries exist for one reason. Profit. I heard it said once, "Holy business is presence over profit. If our aim is profit and promotion, we will never see the purpose of the business."⁵ If our aim as leaders is to lead people to Jesus, selfish ambition will not accompany us. Authenticity is real and actual, and it exists to bare the essential features of the original. Authentic leadership looks like the one we are following; it looks like being after God's own heart.

What is Authenticity?

The word authenticity is not in biblical language, but the idea of it is throughout scripture. Here is another

⁵ Bert Sprenger

working definition for us. *Authenticity is us in our simplest form: created, called, and empowered.* Let's look at Luke 9 as an example.

And [Jesus] called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Luke 9:1-6

Our approach to authentic discipleship and leadership is to remain in our simplest form: to be who God created us to be, to do what God has called us to do, and to go in the power and authority God gives us. We can build other support systems to hold us up, but the more it points to us and our accomplishments, the closer we are to forgery.

What we see Jesus doing in Luke 9 is stripping the disciples—his ministers and leaders—from the false comforts they could lean on instead of relying on him. The instruction was to go with no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra clothes, and not even dust on their feet. But, in exchange, they were given what

they really needed, what they were created and called to carry: power and authority from Jesus.

Aspects of Authenticity

1. Authenticity is Simple

Let's consider what the comforts or unauthentic supports found in Luke 9 might represent. As you read these, the Holy Spirit may give you more insight. Be faithful with what he shows you.

- **No Staff = No Fake Identity**
In biblical times, a staff was used for support, and it was often a reputation or status marker. They spoke to the identity and accomplishments of the person using them.
- **No Bag = No Extras**
We use bags to carry things that keep us comfortable or keep crutches within arm's reach. It is easy to have a bag of tricks as leaders that we resource. Perhaps, too easy.
- **No Bread = No Necessities**
In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said *do not worry about what you will eat or wear*. Jesus was giving the disciples an opportunity to trust and practice this principle.
- **No Money = No Provision**
Money is also a sign of status and reputation, but even more than that, it's a giant comfort.

The fear of not being prepared or of things going wrong binds us to money in inhibiting ways.

- Only One Tunic = No Vanities
Authentic ministry is not about us or our vanities. This particular false comfort reminds me of Saul trying to put his armor on David (1 Samuel 17:38-40). When our vanities are removed, we won't look like much to the people around us. But, remember, God does not see as man sees.
- Shake Off the Dust = No Offenses
Offense and the rejection and praises of men will try to hitchhike on our journey as disciples and as leaders. If we don't dust (kick) them off, they will become the story we tell, the message we preach, and the highlight of our ministry.

The disciples were sent out in their simplest form: created, called, and empowered as ministers of the gospel of Jesus. He sent them out in their most authentic state. He calls us to go in the same way.

Let's think about this for a minute. What are we carrying that makes our ministry or leadership unauthentic? Are we carrying comforts around like trophies? Like heavy bags? Holy Spirit, search our hearts, soul, mind, and strength for the extras.

2. Authenticity Enables Worship & Fascination

A second aspect of authenticity is worship. Our English word *worship* derives from the Old English word *worþship*. It describes “the act of giving *worth* to something or someone.” One of the Hebrew words for worship is *hawa* (or *saha*), meaning “bow down” and literally “to present our bodies before the Lord.”

The ability to bow down is inhibited by the false comforts we carry around and the extra supports we lean on. But being in our simplest form allows us to present our bodies to the Lord wholly and quickly. Authenticity enables worship. There is no better view of God than in a posture of worship, and there is no other way to be after his heart than to be bowed down before him. Authentic leaders will be worshipers.

If authenticity enables worship, then worship enables fascination—to be compelled to gaze on Jesus. That is what defined David as a person and a leader. He had an intense interest in God’s presence and dwelling place.

Worship and fascination can’t be faked. It has to be an authentic, genuine pursuit of God. Some of the best discipleship advice I’ve received is to keep a consistent loop of scriptures that describe Jesus among my Bible reading and studies. Regardless of where I am in my rotation of reading through the

Bible, there are passages and chapters that I read and pray more than any other. They keep my eyes on Jesus, and they are constant reminders of who he is and who I am in him. With help from the Spirit of revelation and wisdom (Ephesians 1:17), these verses never get old. I encourage you to do the same because it sets a standard of worship and fascination for the communities we lead.

3. Authenticity is Transformative & Trustworthy

Authentic, worshipful fascination with our Beloved is part of pursuing God's heart. Choosing to worship God allows him to enlarge our hearts (Psalm 119:32), and a beautiful transformation begins. We become what we behold (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

God is alive. His nature is teeming with life. Without him, we are dead. Lifeless. We are only ourselves, and there is nothing trustworthy about self-focused leadership (James 3:16). Consider the description of idols and the work of human hands found in Psalm 115.

*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name
give glory...idols are silver and gold, the work of
human hands. They have mouths but do not
speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but
do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have
hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk;
they do not make a sound in their throat. Those
who make them become like them; so do all who
trust in them. vs 1-8*

The psalmist states that those who make idols become like them—dead. And so do those who trust in them. I don't want to serve a god that doesn't hear, see, and talk. Do you? I don't want to be a deaf and mute leader, either. Do you? The church doesn't need lifeless leaders. The world is desperate for real, authorized agents of the kingdom of God. God's faithfulness is trustworthy, and as we transform into the image of Christ, we carry his life and light into darkness.⁶

Last Thought

We are created and called to be where the Lord leads and sends us. In this simplest form, we are free to worship, to obey, and to trust God's leadership. Power and authority do not come from trying to be a leader, from wanting to be a leader, or from trying to be like other leaders. It's not what man sees in us that gives us authority.

When David was brave enough to face Goliath, the people around him didn't see him as a champion, *You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.* David kept pleading his case until the king finally said *okay, but wear my armor.* But David knew that he couldn't fight in someone else's armor. It was his simple authority as a shepherd and the

⁶ Chapter 1, page 22

simplicity of a slingshot that silenced a giant (1 Samuel 17:31-40).

Authentic leadership comes as we pursue God's heart because that's where we transform into his image. It is where we learn to demonstrate his heart to others, and it is where we exchange all of our extras for his power and authority.

CHAPTER 3

HUMILITY

The following story is extra embarrassing. Everyone deals with pride on some level, but this part of myself seems particularly awful. So let me preface this event by saying it is history. It has been many years since it occurred, and I am not the same person. As a matter of fact, I would like the record to show that it was this event that inspired... no, that plunged me into a study about humility. Thank God for his goodness.

I received a phone call one day from the leader of a ministry that I served. I had been invited to a special prayer meeting. Only a select few had been invited to come and seek the Lord for wisdom as we embarked on a new season. It was an exciting and encouraging phone call for me to receive. I'll be honest, I was still growing in the Lord as a daughter and minister. And, well, I usually got called into meetings to be corrected rather than included in ministry strategies.

So, sure, I was feeling good and could see the progress I was making. I arrived at the meeting to find the people I suspected to be there and a few people I was surprised to see. For example, one of the summer interns was sitting in a circle with us. It bothered me. It insulted my sense of growth and special achievement. As we began to pray, all I could focus on was the presence of the intern. Then it happened. The worst, most condescending thought came to my mind. "What's she doing here?" Now, I knew better than to say things like that out loud, but, oh boy, it was blaring in the speakers of my heart and mind. Ugh!

I tried to pray and earnestly listen for some insight to add to this meeting. I wasn't listening to hear the Lord's wisdom, rather, so that my invitation to this meeting would be validated and I could prove my worth. Nothing. I couldn't hear anything. I couldn't even make something up. To make matters worse, the Lord gave the intern an incredible prophetic picture for the ministry. Even to this day, the insight she received is valid. I was so offended.

It was about that time in the meeting when I noticed that my stomach was hurting. I shrugged the subtle nausea off and prayed even harder. My prayer language was worn out. Still nothing. The only thing I was sensing was an upset stomach. Others in the meeting were getting words, more revelation revolving around the intern's vision. With each new prayer released, I became more sick.

I finally gave up on trying to add to this meeting. By this point, I just wanted to get out of the room before I embarrassed myself. The nausea was that bad. I gathered my things, and as quietly as possible I exited the special prayer meeting. My new goal was to make it home before it got gross. No such luck. I made it to the parking lot. I knelt down by a curb, more like fell to my knees, and violently vomited all the contents of my belly onto the freshly cut summer grass.

I apologize for being so graphic, but it was that exact moment when I finally heard the Lord speak. Finally. He said, "I reject pride." I immediately understood. I had no follow-up questions or snarky comments.

I needed (need) that experience to understand the grossness of pride and to jumpstart my study of humility. This picture of God rejecting pride is lodged in my heart. I will forever remember what pride feels like and looks like to the heart of God. He hates it. It doesn't settle with him. He will not tolerate it, and there is no place for it in his presence.

We will look at pride in part two of this chapter. Before we do, let's dive into humility.

Part One

What is Humility?

One of our biggest disservices as leaders is to assume we have an understanding of humility. Along with the other topics in this book, we never graduate from

learning about it. It's one of those words, or concepts that, in my opinion, gets diminished with half a meaning. So let's start with a meaning.

In both Hebrew and Greek, the words for humility are *avanah* and *prautes*. They translate as our English words, *humility*, *gentleness*, and *meekness*. They mean "to be lowly and mild." I will use these words interchangeably.

In his definition of humility, Willam Mounce writes, "Gentleness means to approach others (including one's enemies) in a humble and caring spirit, not using force to get one's way." Take note of "not using force to get one's way" because we will continue to see its application throughout the chapter.

In my studies, meditation, questions to the Lord about humility, this is the best summary I can pen: *Humility is the willingness to say I need you, Jesus. I cannot do this by myself.* With that working definition, the best picture of and passage on humility I can find is John 15—abiding. Take a moment and read this passage. Let it sink in.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and

withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. John 15:4-6

We can't do anything without being connected to the vine, including leadership. But to abide in him takes the willingness to say *I need you, Jesus*. That is humility in action.

Aspects of Humility

1. Humility is the Nature of God

Humility is the very nature of God. Each person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—are described as *gentle*.

- God Almighty is Gentle
2 Samuel 22 is a record of David's Song of Deliverance. There are 51 verses beautifully describing the way God delivered, strengthened, taught, defended, and guided David into victory. He gave God all the credit. It's one of those passages that you can meditate on to get consumed with God.

Just past the halfway mark, David writes an intriguing, almost contradictory, description of God. In the middle of all the grandeur and might, David declares, *Your gentleness made me great* (vs 36). David is crediting his victory, his success, and his glory to God's *avanah*—God's humble nature.

- Jesus is Gentle

In Matthew 11, after teaching on hard issues like persecution, the sword, and repentance, Jesus invites us, *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden...* From the start of this passage, his gentle nature is evident. He goes on to teach them, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus invites the crowd to see a piece of his heart, to experience his nature. What does he choose to say? I am *prautes*—gentle and lowly. Need rest? Come to me.

- The Spirit is Gentle

Paul warns the church to keep in step with the Spirit and not to live in the flesh. Flesh is sexually driven, impure, idolatrous, divisive, envious, etc., and it will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things.* Galatians 5:22-2

The Spirit is producing *prautes* in us because it flows from his very nature. We can't produce humility on our own. It is a product of the Holy Spirit; a work he reproduces in us.

2. Humility is a Strength

In other places in the Bible, we find actions or verbs associated with humility. This is crucial in understanding the strength of humility. It may be gentle and mild, but in these passages, we see the strength and sure footing it creates for us as we serve.

Humility is a refuge. Seek it. *Seek the Lord, seek righteousness, seek humility and you will be hidden.* Zephaniah 2:3

Humility is a cause. Fight for it. *In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness.* Psalm 45:4

Paul gives an apostolic urging to bear with one another by wearing and walking in humility instead of force. Force leads to dominance, not unity.

Humility is a covering. Wear it. *Put on then as God's chosen ones...compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another.* Colossians 3:12

Humility is a path. Walk in it. *I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.* Ephesians 4:2

In each of the last two verses, Paul uses two words consecutively that are similar: humility and

gentleness. Seems redundant, right? In Greek, these are two different words with two different meanings. One is *prautes*, humility as we have been studying. The other is *tapeinophrosynē*. It means “humbleness of mind” or “a humble opinion of oneself.” (See also 1 Peter 3:8.)

When we are gentle (*prautes*) and have a correct view of ourselves (*tapeinophrosynē*), we are walking in a strength that unifies the body of Christ. It takes both gentleness and a humble view of ourselves to obtain and maintain unity. Here, again, we see the importance of authentic leaders. We can’t boast in the extra comforts we carry. Only in the power and authority of Jesus can we boast.

Humility is the way we stay united in one Spirit, one hope, one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ephesians 4:1-7). That leads us to the third and fourth aspects of humility.

3. Humility Keeps Great Company

Humility is never isolated. In the next section we see how humility is the way of community. For now, let’s look at other principles and virtues that humility is joined with in scripture. It keeps some pretty great company.

- Humility is in fellowship with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control as part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

- Humility is connected with wisdom, purity, and a host of other qualities found in James 3.
- And as a result of humility, grace is given to us by God (1 Peter 5:5).

Humility is also tied to the fear of the Lord, wisdom, and honor (Proverbs 15:33). And as another result of humility, God will promote us in the right way (1 Peter 5:6).

Can you see the great company humility keeps? I'll say it again, humility is never isolated.

4. Humility is the Way of Community

At the beginning of this chapter, I said *humility is the willingness to admit we can't do it by ourselves*. Bill Thrall says it like this, "Humility is the way into and the ability to stay in community."⁷ I see this in two ways: community with God and community with each other.

The idea of community comes from God. Remember how we looked at each person of the Trinity and found humility (gentleness) in their nature? Because of that, the Trinity exists in perfect community and sets a beautiful example for us. Jesus taught about this in John 16:13-15.

⁷ "Communities of Grace" in *Kingdom Life*, Bill Thrall

...[the Holy Spirit] will not speak on his own authority...for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

This demonstration of living in humility by the Godhead enables us to commune with them *and* to commune with each other in a like manner. Daniel Migliore writes, "The power of the triune God is not coercive but creative, sacrificial, and empowering love; and the glory of the triune God consists not in dominating others but in sharing life with others..."⁸

This perfect community is even a part of Jesus' prayer for us.

...that [believers] may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us...and that they would be one even as we are one... John 17:21

Why is community so important? Community cultivates trust, which leads to reproduction. As we grow in relationship with God, we trust him more and begin to reproduce or transform into kingdom likeness. Likewise, as we grow in community as the church, building trust, it leads to disciple making—disciples who make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

⁸ *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Daniel Migliore

Community leads to trust, trust leads to reproduction. Here's another fantastic quote, "If you encounter a definition of humility without the concept of healthy interdependency, the idea of trusting others, you have found a definition that is inadequate, does not function, and does not reflect the community of the Trinity."⁹

Humility is the willingness to say *I need you God, and I need your church*. But we must be aware that humility comes with opposition. Pride hates community. It drives a wedge that keeps us from living as one with God and as one body.

Part Two

Pride: Pursuing Our Own Way

No teaching on humility is complete without addressing pride to some degree. Technically, I could just say pride is the opposite of everything humility is, everything it means, and everything it produces. It's that simple. But, let me indulge for a minute.

As leaders, it's easy to be independent and see our own beauty and strengths. It's easy to be overly confident in our abilities and forget that God is holding everything together. It's easy to manipulate others so we can get our own way. We have to guard against pride—continually.

⁹ "Communities of Grace" in *Kingdom Life*, Bill Thrall

We've already touched on bits and pieces of 1 Peter 5, but it will benefit us to look at it in context. Peter is training leaders, shepherds, in this passage. Take note of the humble and gentle, yet strong role of the shepherds.

Therefore, I urge the elders among you, as your fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and one who is also a fellow partaker of the glory that is to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not with greed but with eagerness; not domineering over those assigned to your care, but by proving to be examples to the flock.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your cares and anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him.
1 Peter 5:1-9, NASB

Here is a summary of Peter's charge.

- to exercise oversight not compulsion
- to display eagerness but not with greed
- to be an example to follow but not domineering
- to be clothed in humility
- to cast anxieties on Jesus
- to be sober-minded
- to be watchful
- to resist the adversary

Our leadership should mirror the Chief Shepherd. We don't force people to follow us. We don't step on the backs of those under our care for personal gain. Paul also writes that the authority of a leader is not for destroying but for building up (2 Corinthians 10:8). Humility doesn't manipulate, scheme, strong arm, use, or abuse. These are qualities that King Saul possessed, and they are evidence of pride.

God is looking for leaders after his own heart. God does not coerce us to love him because *love does not insist on its own way* (1 Corinthians 13). He beckons us to draw near and to come and follow. Friends, he is the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18).

What is Pride?

The Hebrew and Greek words for pride are *marom* and *kauchema*. Both words mean "heights and to boast." These meanings are the exact opposite of humility's definition of "lowly and mild."

In researching, I came across a biblical counseling journal that addresses pride. It says, "Pride is a heart-attitude sin that overflows into a person's motivation, decision-making, and activities. Pride is at the root of nearly every problem we struggle with in counseling!"¹⁰

Humility is also a heart attitude that overflows into a person's motivation, decision-making, and activities. It just has the better result. It guards our hearts against the enemy. Our willingness to say *I need you, Jesus* defends us against pride.

The Lord gave me a picture one day that helped me see how pride is always vying for the highest place in my heart. 2 Corinthians 10 talks about destroying strongholds that raise themselves against the knowledge of God. In the vision, there was a line that separated the highest place in my heart from its other parts. The knowledge of God was reigning in the highest place and as a result, it flooded the rest of my heart with everything God is: love, mercy, wisdom, strength, etc. Then, in the vision, the love of money raised itself and knocked against the dividing line. It kept knocking until it overtook the highest place. Once it was reigning, roots of all kinds of evil began to grow in the remaining parts of my heart. I looked back and could see the heart where the knowledge of God reigned and noticed two guards on either side of the line that separated the highest place. I knew those two guards to be humility and devotion.

¹⁰ Biblical Counseling Coalition, retrieved 2015

When we guard our hearts with humility and devotion to the kingdom of God, we are saying *I need you, Jesus, and I'm not letting go*. In return, the highest places of our hearts remain reserved for Jesus so he can reign in every part of our lives.

The love of money in this vision is only one representation of pride. If we trust money or our ability to produce it more than God's provision, pride has our hearts. But you could replace the example of the love of money with any other form of pride and get the same result. *Pride leads to destruction*. As leaders, we have to ask ourselves, who has the highest place in my heart? God or me?

Aspects of Pride

1. Pride is Independent

If humility leads to healthy interdependency and submission, then pride leads to isolation and rebellion. The biblical counseling article went on to say,

"The truth is, we all want our own way about things, and we usually will do almost anything to have it our way. The sinful nature leads us to desire independence, and we rebel at the thought of being under anyone's control or authority."

This idea is demonstrated in Isaiah 14. In a description of the fallen king of Babylon, we also

find an illustration of the fall of Satan from heaven through him.¹¹ Notice the independence and rebellion recorded in these verses.

You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' Isaiah 14:13-14

That's a lot of "I will" statements. Consider, also, these verses on pride.

In his pride the wicked does not seek [God]; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. Psalm 10:4

And haughty eyes and a proud heart—the unplowed field of the wicked—produce sin. Proverbs 21:4

Pride leads to isolation and rebellion every time.

2. Pride is Destructive

Peter warns us to be watchful and describes the devil as prowling like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). The path our adversary leads us down is always to destruction. He kills, steals, and destroys (John 10:10) and will use every ounce of our pride to do it. Look at Nebuchadnezzar's fall.

¹¹ *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, A. R. Fausset. See also Luke 10:18

But when [Nebuchadnezzar's] heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. Daniel 5:20-21

3. Pride is Rejected by God

This last aspect of pride is even worse than devastation and destruction. It's rejection. Pride is rejected by God. Violently vomited from his belly, if I may remind you.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for, "God rejects the proud but gives grace to the humble." 1 Peter 5:5

God will not share His glory with anyone or anything. Not because he is a tyrant, a dictator, or selfish, rather it is because he is good, faithful, wise, and he is the giver of life. Paul writes that Jesus is holding everything together (Colossians 1:17). Our pride will try to carry, control, and coerce what God is faithfully holding. It will never lead us to trust him or bear his fruit in our lives.

These descriptions of pride and its path grieve my heart. I don't want to be anywhere near them, and I don't want them describing my leadership. Pride is not in God's heart. If God is rejecting pride, so am I!

Last Thought

Before David was anointed king, Israel was under the leadership of King Saul. He looked like the king Israel wanted. But Saul did what he thought was best in his eyes while forsaking the word of the Lord. Humility is the willingness to say *I need you, God, and I need your people*. It's the willingness to be after God's heart instead of our own because we know it's the better choice.

The pride of men tells us that humility is a sign of weakness and it won't command respect. But God sees things differently. Leaders after God's heart will reflect the gentle yet strong nature of the Chief Shepherd.

I mention David's Song of Deliverance early in the chapter. I want to look at it one more time. In 2 Samuel 22, David demonstrates a heart of humility. This is a man, a king who knows that his strength and ability come from God.

Here are highlights from his song.

In my distress I called upon the LORD...he heard my voice and my cry came to his ears...

He sent from on high, he took me; drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me...

You save a humble people...For by [the LORD] I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. 2 Samuel 22:7, 17-18, 28-31

Jesus, we need you! Let's take a minute and let the Holy Spirit search our hearts and mind on matters of humility and pride. Where has pride taken up residence in our life? How can we grow in humility?

CHAPTER 4

DEVOTION

I was married for almost nineteen years before my husband passed away. Our marriage wasn't easy for a number of reasons. Most marriages aren't, but we both added to the difficulties. Part of our testimony hits around the halfway mark of our years together. It was a particularly bad time in our marriage. When I say bad, I mean dead. At the time, Jonathan was not walking with God and was at his lowest points in a couple of addictions. To make matters worse, love and grace didn't flow from my mouth, or my heart, for that matter. One day, I found myself staring at the back of a door. Jonathan had just left, and I was flummoxed by the events and conversations that had occurred. I braced myself on the counter, looked toward heaven, and said, "Can I leave now?" After a pause, I heard the Lord respond so gently, "Yes. But will you stay?" I then leaned on the counter with both elbows and buried my head in my hands. Somehow, it must have been a miracle, I replied, "Yes, I'll stay. But why? Why?"

I proceeded to take my frustrations out by cleaning the refrigerator. The rest of the house had already been cleaned two or three times over. In the back of the fridge, I noticed a Tupperware bowl had fallen behind the bottom drawer. I retrieved it, opened it, and instantly regretted it. I don't know what was originally in there, but it had become furry and mossy and had its own ecosystem. I put the lid back on and tossed it into the trash can. As it flew through the air, I heard the Lord say, "I don't throw people away like Tupperware." He had just answered my "but why" question. I knew the Lord was inviting me to trust him, but it wasn't a natural yes. And it was a couple of more years before I saw evidence of why he asked me to stay.

We celebrated our thirteenth wedding anniversary with a trip to St. Simons. It was the first time we had celebrated an anniversary in nine or ten years. What we witnessed just prior to that was restoration. I watched the Lord take a weak yes and move mountains. He was loyal to our willingness. We not only experienced forgiveness and redemption, we also received the gift of having a few years together as a unified couple. I'm so glad I said yes to the Lord that day when the better ending wasn't in sight yet.

It was this experience that got me searching out loyalty and devotion. I didn't have an understanding of love and how it hopes and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13). I had seen and experienced loyalty, but I did not know it. Those few years of concentrated devotion were

marked by rapid growth as a disciple and child of God. To this day, I still reference lessons learned during that season for all kinds of situations. The idea of devotion is always relevant, especially in leadership. So here are a few treasures I've gathered and continue to search out.

What is Devotion?

The Hebrew and Greek words for devotion are *shalem* and *antecho*. In each language, these words mean "full, complete, perfect, peaceful; hold, holdfast." Other words or translations include loyalty, commitment, and wholeheartedness.

In English, one related concept to the idea of devotion is adhesion or to adhere. I really like this strong picture of devotion. For me, it points us back to the vine analogy (John 15). Let's look at the verse one more time.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.

Devotion is more than handholding. It's a marriage. It's not just a verbal commitment. It's a covenant. It's abiding, it's adhering. To consolidate these meanings and images, here is a working definition for us to use. *Devotion is grabbing hold of God's heart and not letting go.*

In the sermon on the mount, there is a section on treasures. Jesus is teaching his followers about the necessity of picking your treasures wisely and then protecting them. *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other* (Matthew 6:24). He was warning us that treasures have a way of demanding our devotion.

We have an innate instinct to be devoted to something. That instinct has been perverted and abused throughout history under the curse of the fall. The redemption of devotion is demonstrated through the community of the Trinity and their devotion to creation—all the way to the cross. Our devotion is righteous when we abide in Jesus the vine. All other treasures fail and pass away.

Devotion has also been misused as loyalty to people rather than to God. We have to remember that our devotion is to God and to his Word. If we negate that adherence, we will have insecure footing. As leaders, this is especially important because we want to lead from the place of grabbing hold of God and not letting go—from being after God's heart.

Aspects of Devotion

1. Devotion is a Choice

Devotion is a choice, and it is based on need. When we realize our need to abide in the vine, we choose

Jesus every time. When we don't realize our need, we detach from the life source (Revelation 3:17).

It's a choice to get up every day and set my heart on Jesus. It's a choice to meditate on him and the kingdom of heaven. I do it because I know I need him, and I know I am prone to wander. So, when I feel my belly growl for breakfast, I remind my soul that it is hungry for Jesus. When my body moans for coffee, I remind my heart, too, that it needs the river of life.

Choosing differs from striving.¹² Mary was choosing to be with Jesus as she sat at his feet in her house. Martha was choosing to serve him as she made dinner and cleaned. When Martha asks Jesus for help, he defends Mary's choice. *One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her* (Luke 10:42).

Feeling obligated gets back to the idea of misusing loyalty, and can become burdensome. Mary's choice, as is ours, was based on need. Needing the heart of Jesus is the main thing. When service to him—including leadership—robs us of being fascinated *with* him, our devotion becomes ministry-focused instead heart-of-God-focused. That's a problem.

“Beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ...The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for Him...We count

¹² *Adoration*, Martha Kilpatrick

as service what we do in the way of Christian work; Jesus Christ calls service what we are to Him, not what we do to Him...The one aim of the call of God is the satisfaction of God, not a call to do something for Him.”¹³

God does not see as man sees. He is looking for hearts that are satisfied in him.

2. Devotion Draws the Attention of God

According to 2 Chronicles 16, God is looking over the earth for hearts that are devoted to him.

For the eyes of the LORD move here and there throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of those who are wholehearted toward him. 2 Chronicles 16:9, CJB

There is a divine purpose to God's search for devotion. He is not looking to outscore the enemy. He's already won! God wants to show up and support his people. He wants to see heaven demonstrated on earth too. I want to experience and know that kind of strength as a child of God and as a leader in the church.

We are in times, more than ever when nations are raging and people are standing against God and the Word of God. People are demanding their rights while walking away from the counsel of the Lord and

¹³ *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers

questioning leadership. We see a similar scenario in Psalm 2. *Why do nations rage and kings of the earth stand against the LORD?* The answer to this question is written just before in Psalm 1. These psalms may be separated into two chapters, but it can be argued they are one thought. Listen to the psalmist's declaration.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD. He is like a tree planted by streams of water bearing fruit and not withering. Psalm 1:1-3

In other words, abide. Adhere. Need wisdom? Need support? Grab hold of God, and don't let go. Lock eyes and arms with God and the kingdom of heaven. Come sit at his feet because that can't be taken from you. It's the better portion. Don't stop gazing on Jesus. Don't stop asking for wisdom. Don't stop adhering to what is true and holy. That's the leadership the church needs in this hour and in the days ahead. This is the leadership God looks for to carry the lineage of his name and his glory.

When we are found loyal, it stirs the affections of God—he can't hold back his strength. He will show up, and he will show up strong. He can't resist the humble, he raises us up (1 Peter 5:5-6). We become like a tree planted by water whose leaf does not wither (Psalm 1:3).

3. Devotion Protects

In a PBS series from several years ago, one segment was on emperor penguins and how they survive the winter seasons in Antarctica. It's known as the harshest winter on Earth. The only chance of survival for the penguins is to huddle together. In the episode, you can see a huddle of countless penguins moving the entire time. The shape shifts to the right and then to the left. It's living. Every penguin gets time in the center and serves time on the outer border. And let me tell you, those birds are tucked in tight, abiding together. As an introvert, I'm uncomfortable watching the closeness. But, then again, there is something greater happening than personal needs. It's remarkable to watch.

Before they show the penguins starting to huddle together, they mention an important purpose. It's not only the adults trying to survive the winter, they are also protecting the babies that were born just weeks before the temperature dropped. The commitment to gather and stay tucked in ensures their life and another generation of emperor penguins.

Devotion protects the relationship and the fruit of the relationship. Devotion to the body of Christ and devotion to God is a shield. It keeps us abiding in the vine. Abiding ensures life flows in and out of us. In the following verses, consider the protection offered to us by God.

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion...they
go from strength to strength...I'd rather be a
doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in
the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a
sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and
honor. No good thing does he withhold from
those who walk uprightly. O, LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you! Psalm 84:5-7,
10-12*

4. Devotion Results in Generations

The last chapter of this book is on lineage-focused leadership, but I want to briefly mention it here.

Devotion is instrumental to the idea of generations and lineage. If we want to continue in the long line of faithful followers and have it continue past our lifetime, it starts with devotion.

I'm beginning to see that my life isn't really about my life, who I am, the titles I may be given, and the possessions I gather. I would say that's true for all of us. I believe the intentions of our lives have much more to do with the seeds we are sowing than the harvest we may see. Through my parents, grandparents, mentors, and other leaders in my life, I get to partake in a harvest that was sown before me.

A prayer for my life is that I'm sowing just as many seeds and providing fruit for another generation (Psalm 102:18). Why? So they can see the goodness of

the Lord too. Our life is about life in the vine, life in a lineage that we get to be part of. It's a real, authentic part, but just one part of a much larger vineyard.

I don't want to leave behind a legacy. Devotion to ourselves is investing in a legacy that won't last. At the end of it all, my name, your name, our names are fleeting. Jesus is the name above all names. Devotion to the kingdom of heaven is an everlasting investment. It's lineage that carries the life of Jesus from generation to generation—that keeps giving, keeps sowing, keeps producing—repeat.¹⁴ It's a glorious spiritual law.

Last Thought

Leaders devoted to God won't look like the leaders promoted by the world. We won't look like the world's value system, but we will look like our Creator. Devotion is God's idea. As we are after God's heart, we will see it towards us, towards his kingdom, and towards the people around us. It keeps us from being self-serving leaders and from leading people to false gods.

Grabbing hold of God and not letting go keeps the body of Christ huddled together around the goodness of God. But the only way to remain there is to keep our need for him front and center.

¹⁴ See John 12:20-26, Hebrews 11:36-12:1

So how's our devotion looking? How secure is our connection to the vine? Secure, splitting, or hanging on by a thread?

Before moving on to the next chapter, let's take a minute and meditate on these verses from Psalm 19 that demonstrate adhering to God and his ways. Holy Spirit, search our hearts!

*The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether...*

*More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward...*

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation
of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. vs 7-11, 14*

CHAPTER 5

FEAR OF THE LORD

I woke up one morning to the fear of the Lord pulling me out of sleep into an upright position. It was awful. In hindsight, it was awesome, but in the moment, it was awful. I knew exactly what I was experiencing, and within seconds I understood why it was so present in the room. A conversation I had participated in the night before was no good. In the thickness of this holy fear, I felt the heart of the Lord impress on me, "That type of attitude ruins lives. Be far from it."

I will never forget that morning. I will never forget the weight of God's wisdom laying on my thoughts and heart. It saved me from disaster. Since then, the fear of the Lord has been a welcomed companion of mine.

I'm learning that the fear of the Lord is not only weighty but also full of wonder. The same God who split the sea so his people could escape captivity is the same God who cursed the fig tree that wasn't producing fruit. The same God who made barren women give birth is the

same God who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of the outcry against them. The same God who woke me from slumber and said to be far from sin is the same God who restored my dead marriage.

The fear of the Lord is as wonderful as it is weighty. I treasure the fear of the Lord, and I want to keep growing in it as long as I'm alive. I don't want to walk, talk, teach, or lead without clinging to it. The fear of the Lord sets the boundaries of God's wisdom and holiness in our lives. When we are after God's heart, we will be living within its parameters.

What is the Fear of the Lord?

As with the other chapters, I want to give a working definition for us to use as we talk about this subject. Let's start with breaking down the phrase.

The word for "fear" is *yare* in Hebrew, and God is the most common object of the verb. Although it can denote a sense of terror, especially if you're an enemy of God, to those who see God rightly, *yare* is a sense of awe and worship, or wonder. The second part of the phrase is "the LORD." This is the proper name of God, Jehovah or Yahweh, also seen as Adonai. It means "existing one, the one who gives existence or life, and everlasting." If you do a study on the names of God, Jehovah is the root of many of his names. For example, Jehovah Jireh means "Lord our provider" and Jehovah Rapha means "Lord our healer."

I know the word *fear* often triggers negative connotations that can be hard to move past. In an effort to see the fear of the Lord as a protective, positive part of life, here is another way to look at it. The fear of the Lord is awe (weight and wonder) with the giver of existence. We have to remember that the LORD, the self-existing one, is holy. He is set apart from everything we know. There is nothing like him. No thing comes close to a comparison. That's not only wonderful, but it is also weighty.

We will talk more about holiness in the next section. For now, the weight that accompanies the fear of the Lord is actually covenantal in nature (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Deuteronomy 17:14-20). As with any covenant, there are many benefits and blessings. But there are also repercussions when breached. Inside the kingdom of God is a treasure of everlasting, incorruptible goodness. Everything outside of God's protection is fading and failing. It is sin—death to be precise (Romans 6). The parameters that the fear of the Lord sets into place are for our safety and good. That's covenant. Ultimately, it is saving us from God's severity, according to Romans 11:22.¹⁵ The fear of the Lord may be uncomfortable at times, but I'd rather experience him in that way than not know him. That's a severity I cannot endure.

So, I propose this working definition of the fear of the Lord. *The set parameters for our lives that allow us to experience the fullness of the LORD.* When we live

¹⁵ Read all of Romans 11 for complete context

within the fear of the Lord, we are living within his ways in both weight and wonder.

Aspects of the Fear of the Lord

1. The Fear of the Lord is a Function of the Holy Spirit

Understanding that the fear of the Lord is a function of the Holy Spirit is crucial. Let's look at Isaiah 11.

Then shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him, and the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:1-2

This is a prophecy describing the coming Messiah which is fulfilled in Jesus. It describes his leadership—his perfect leadership—that is in community with the Spirit as we talked about in the last chapter. There are seven functions listed here of the Spirit, one of which is the fear of the Lord. Remember that the Holy Spirit is sent to us as a helper. He helps us stay in community with God.¹⁶ The next verse says,

And [the Messiah's] delight will be in the fear of the Lord. vs 3

Isaiah goes on to say he will lead in righteousness, equality, authority, and faithfulness (vs 3-5). As leaders

¹⁶ Chapter 3, page 43-44

pursuing God's heart, we will find these qualities, including the desire *and* need for the functions of the Spirit. If Jesus' delight was in the fear of the Lord, ours should be too.

2. The Fear of the Lord is the Acquisition of Wisdom

Solomon's proverb is probably the most familiar connection between the fear of the Lord and wisdom.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Proverbs 9:10

But it's not the only time we see it. Besides being repeated in the book of Proverbs, this connection is also found in Job 28, Psalm 111, and even Isaiah 33.

According to these passages, when we stay within the set parameters of the fear of the Lord, we acquire wisdom. Wisdom is a set-apart aspect of God and his kingdom. In both Hebrew and Greek, the words for "wisdom" denote the capacity to not only understand something but also act accordingly. In other words, wisdom isn't only knowledge, but also the application of knowledge. Application separates wisdom from knowledge.¹⁷ J.I. Packer writes this about wisdom,

¹⁷ "Wisdom" in Mounce's Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, William Mounce

"Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness. As such, it is found in its fullness only in God. He alone is naturally and entirely, and invariably wise."¹⁸

Wisdom is from God. He founded the earth by wisdom (Proverbs 3:19-20), he is the only wise God (Romans 16:25-27), and all wisdom belongs to him (Daniel 2:20). The covenantal boundary line is only the beginning of the deep riches of wisdom (Romans 11:33). There is a treasure to collect. Solomon repeats the phrase/idea *Get wisdom, get understanding* (Proverbs 4 & 16). James also tells us if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously (James 1:5).

One last perspective on wisdom. Jesus says,

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds beat on the house, but it did not fall. Matthew 7:24-25

That's what we want, leaders! The strong foundation of wisdom, of listening and obeying will set the church apart in the days ahead of us. We need

¹⁸ *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer

wisdom to navigate life. We need wisdom to disciple others, and it is only found as we *delight in the fear of the Lord*.

3. The Fear of the Lord Completes Holiness

If the fear of the Lord sets the parameters for our lives, holiness moves us far away from flirting with what's on the other side of God's boundary line. It is a place of fascination with him to the point of transformation. Briefly, let's remember who we are talking about and what holiness has to do with it.

To be holy is to be pure, set apart, and distinct. So that means *holiness* is the very essence of God. The first three commandments given to Moses are about the nature of God. They distinguish him from all the other gods, idols, and names. He is holy. The rest of the commandments are about conducting ourselves in a manner that keeps *us* separate from other gods and idols. In Leviticus, God gives the command, *You must be holy for I am holy* (Leviticus 11:44-45, See also Ezekiel 44:23).

This command is repeated throughout scripture, including 1 Peter 1:14-16, *...do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy*.

Paul gives a similar charge, but notice how he ties it to the fear of God,

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1

Our holiness comes through Jesus. It's not a work we could accomplish. However, the devotion we have to our new, clean, sanctified selves is a choice of holiness—to *bring holiness to completion*. I believe the pursuit of holiness is important for two reasons. We are made in the image of God who is holy, and his dwelling place is holy.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ assure a way back to living in God's image. We are washed clean and made new in him. In Psalm 24, David writes about the what, why, and how of God's presence.

Who can ascend God's holy hill? Who can stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands, a pure heart, and does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. Psalm 24:3-5

To dwell with God, we must be holy. In the new covenant, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The distinction between God's temple and the world is the fear of the Lord. It keeps us in holiness and poised toward our glorious future. As we talked about in Chapter 1, we are

being prepared as the pure bride of Christ, a holy city for God to dwell with his people forever!¹⁹

I never get tired of saying this. God's desire from the beginning has been to be with us. To walk and talk and commune with us generation after generation after generation. It's the whole point. The way back to that dwelling is through holiness, *Such is the generation of those who seek him, who see the face of the God of Jacob* (Psalm 24:5-6).

4. The Fear of the Lord is Friendship with God

In a cluster of psalms, David pinpoints the desire and need for the fear of the Lord. Psalms 24, 25, 26, and 27 each have pieces to a whole thought, in my opinion. You can read them separately and gain so much. But when you read them together, a fuller picture can be seen.

We just looked at Psalm 24. In Psalm 26, David continues in devotion to God's way and to his presence, *I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells* (vs 8). And we know in Psalm 27 he avows, *one thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...*(vs 4).

In the middle of these Psalms, David makes an incredible declaration as he cries out to know the

¹⁹ Chapter 1, page 19

path and truth of God. Take note, also, of the generational blessing.

*Who is the man who fears the LORD?
Him will he instruct in the way that he should
choose. His soul shall abide in well-being,
and his offspring shall inherit the land...The
friendship of the LORD is with those who fear
him, and he makes known to them his covenant.*

Psalm 25:12-14

David, a man after God's heart, leaves us with keys to the kingdom. *The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him*—with those who pursue, draw near and nearer to him. The LORD's secret is with those who have their eyes fixed on him, who refuse other loves, who long for his presence. We've got to get to his heart.

Last Thought

As men and women after God's heart and as leaders in the church, it is essential that we shed off (get to our simplest form) every reason we've become bored with God, bored with the kingdom of heaven, and have let the doubt and disbelief of the world keep us in a stupor. How can we be bored with the Everlasting? Why would we settle for unholy, lifeless counterfeits when the giver of life knows us by name?

I don't think we can live within the parameters that the fear of the Lord sets into place without first embracing authenticity, humility, and devotion. They prepare and mature us to the state where we willingly say *I want to live in the wonder and weight of the Lord. I want to be set apart from everything else. Nothing else will do.*

The heart of man sees boundary lines as restrictions and limitations and seeks his own way, freedom, and path. But as pursuers of God's heart, we will embrace the fear of the Lord because it draws us into the depths of God's vast, pure, glorious life. This is the place we become effective leaders and equippers to other disciples. If for no other reason than it is this place, the deepness of God's heart, that we begin to look like him—where we carry his glory. This is when the lineage of God's kingdom is the life we invite others to join. It's no longer about us and a legacy. It's about generation after generation after generation living in the heritage that Jesus provided for us.

Leaders, are we living in the inheritance set apart for us? Are we living in the fear of the Lord? Is our life set apart from the world as holy? *Jesus, make known to us the weight and wonder of who you are even more. We want to be your friends!*

Take a minute to meditate on the following psalm. Make it a prayer.

The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

*You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Psalm 16:5-6

CHAPTER 6

LINEAGE

If you've driven through southern Georgia, even parts of lower Alabama, chances are you've seen a pecan farm or two. Rhythmic rows of big ole trees with just enough space for them to sway and breathe and tractors to mow and gather. As you drive by, grove lines transition from diagonal to straight to crisscross. And on the right day, you can see sun rays delighting between limb and trunk, casting long shadows as it illuminates one branch at a time. It's southernly iconic and beautiful.

I've traveled many times through scenic routes of Georgia, and pecan trees are an anticipated highlight. I've noticed over the years how farmers add new rows of seedling trees that extend the grove—another generation planted. But even more exciting are the young trees that have been planted next to big ones. They are peppered throughout the inner rows of mature pecan trees, also called bearing trees. For whatever reason, the natural process, I assume, space has become available, and the farmer has placed the new

with the old. And I can't help but see this as a rightful picture of the body of Christ. Generation next to generation next to generation sharing space and reaching, rooting, and bearing fruit together.

If you'll remember, one of the aspects of devotion in Chapter 4 is generations. I mentioned the realization that my life is less about me and more about the vineyard I am a part of—the harvest I partake in are seeds sown by others before me, and the seeds I'm sowing are for others to harvest. In a parallel picture to a vineyard, if I think about my life as a grove and the people I've been planted next to, I am overwhelmed with gratefulness. It starts with the foundation my amazing parents gave me, to the mentors and ministries that have equipped me, to churches that gave me space to grow in my gifts, and to the friends beside me along the way. This is surely the kindness of the Lord.

This chapter is on kingdom lineage, and I believe it is at the center of God's heart.

What Is Lineage?

Merriam-Webster defines *lineage* as “a descent in a line from a common progenitor or ancestor.” In biblical terms, the word most used to describe lineage is genealogy, and is used as a way of listing people in tribes and clans. For example, Boaz was the father of Obed; Obed was the father of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of David. But I want to use this term as a way of talking about spiritual and kingdom lineage, and the

closest words in the Bible to that idea are generations, posterity, and inheritance. Spiritual lineage moves beyond natural lineage and encompasses individual disciples and whole generations regardless of race.

Kingdom lineage is a long, very long line of faithful followers in The Way. It starts in Genesis, technically before that, and has continued through the ages and years all the way to present-day. Take a moment and think about how many people that has been. How many men and women have pursued God and his Word—the number of people who shared the gospel and demonstrated the kingdom of heaven on earth? We can read about many of these people, but consider the lives that are not historically recorded. I think the latter far exceeds the ones we can read about. Can you hear the tribes and languages represented? Whole families sharing a common love for Jesus for generations. And even first-generation Christians who are just starting to pave the way for others. Wow! That’s a really big pecan grove.

For one last time, I want to give a working definition for us to use. *Spiritual lineage is possessing and preserving the heart of God and inviting others into the inheritance we have through Jesus and empowering them to be fruitful.*

Young pecan trees planted in the middle of mature trees are no less in the pecan lineage because of their age and size. They’ve been given a place among a

generation of trees to be a part of more generations. Not to mention, those seedling trees are the offspring, the fruit, of the older trees. They belong together. They are a grove, they are a family.

This picture of generations growing together reminds me of Isaiah 59. God makes a covenant with his people through Jesus. *My Spirit and word will not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring from this time forth and forevermore.* vs 59:21

Before we move to the aspects of lineage, let me briefly address why I am not using the term legacy. When I hear the word legacy it is almost always centered on a person. *Bob is leaving a legacy of hope. Suzy's legacy is kindness. Our world is better because of Jane and her legacy of hard work.* More often than not, what is remembered about these types of statements is the person and what they left behind.

If legacy focuses on what is left behind, then I believe lineage implies what is ahead. Kingdom lineage is a celebration of our history, but, even more, a preparation for what is coming. Legacies left behind change ownership and therefore are susceptible to fading out, but lineage remains faithful to the common line and its inheritance.

Kingdom lineage is about the inheritance we have through Jesus. It can never be about us and our battles,

us and our reputation, us and our charisma. Those things are shakable. Lineage is a heart to continue the kingdom of Heaven through our lives and to equip others in the same way.

Aspects of Lineage

1. Lineage Comes with Authority

As sons and daughters of God, we have a full birthright and access to full authority from the moment we accept and confess Jesus as Lord. Discipleship is learning about our lineage, citizenship, and the power and authority given to us. Remember our simplest form from Chapter 2—created, called, and empowered? As leaders after God’s heart, we use this authority to invite others into the spiritual lineage. It’s not about a title, degree, or position. It’s about our authority as children of God. I believe the days ahead for the church will look different, maybe even getting back to what we see in the New Testament—smaller communities, neighborhoods, houses, and groups. So it is essential to understand our birthright, inheritance, and the authority given to us through Jesus for equipping (Ephesians 4:1-16). The church cannot be driven by leadership the way the world sees it. It’s going to look different because we are a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation called to bring forth the praises of God* (1 Peter 2:9). I think it’s going to be surprisingly awesome!

A great example of this gets us back to David and Goliath. David understood the authority he possessed. He was not only fearless in facing a giant but he was also outraged by the threats being spewed. Goliath was bad-mouthing God, and the army of Israel was cowardly letting him rule the valley. But David wasn't having it. How did David get to this courageous state? He grew in authority as he meditated on God. He observed his majesty, wonders, and strength as a shepherd in the fields. And his physical skill (knowledge and application) to tackle bears and lions increased with every encounter.

The battle between David and Goliath has many layers of applications. I love to reference it when I'm knocking down personal giants. But at the core of this story is a son of God who knew the authority he possessed. He not only silenced a threat, but he also preserved and honored the life and name of God as he did it. This is the heart of lineage.

2. Lineage-focused Leadership is an Invitation

There have been times as a leader and someone who disciples others that have been discouraging. I often think about the first group of girls I disciplined many years ago and how most have continued to follow Jesus. But a few of them have chosen a different path to live by. At one point, I was so discouraged by this I decided that I would never disciple anyone ever again. It has been helpful to learn that I'm not the only one who has "lost" a

disciple. Even in the Bible, there are examples of people who turned away from God, and there are many heroes of our faith whose own children chose a different path. After countless hours of weeping in prayer and continuing to pursue God's heart about this subject, I've come to understand the power of invitation, regardless of the result.

Not everyone will say yes to the Lord, and not everyone will persevere until the end. Jesus warns us about this repeatedly. And I know that can be heartbreaking. I know. But never, never underestimate the power of the invitation and continued prayer. We often forget the strength within the seed we plant by sharing the gospel and demonstrating kingdom life on earth. The Word of God is powerful, it is living, and does not return void (Hebrews 4:12-13, Isaiah 55:11).

It may seem odd to say, but our ability to choose is a design of love. Only dictators and tyrants demand loyalty.²⁰ I admit it would be easier if everyone would stay within the beautiful parameters God sets into place. But, as with every other part of our lives, we have to trust the Creator, the Father of Glory, with each of our (his) children, disciples, and mentees—short or long-lived. He is faithful. God's unrelenting love for people is more than we can fathom.

²⁰ Chapter 3, page 47

Being lineage-focused is the willingness to extend the invitation to others, to call them into their heritage in the family of God. It's the willingness to share the gospel regardless of the result. And, friends, that is a *great* honor!

3. Lineage is the Heart to Equip

I mention in the first chapter that my desire to be in leadership changed the more I pursued God's heart. It went from wanting to be in the spotlight to wanting others to experience Jesus. As I've grown even more, that desire has developed into wanting to disciple others so that they can disciple others. This is lineage-focused leadership.

Equipping others moves past focusing on us and it strengthens the whole family. One opposition to discipling others is jealousy. If we fail to understand our identity as sons and daughters of God, equipping others will not be in our hearts. This is another reason why authenticity, humility, and devotion are critical to being after God's heart. We have a place in the family, and it's important, but the best part is watching fruitfulness unfold, watching the family grow. It's quite remarkable. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn." I'm certain the sentiment also applies to pecans groves.

Kingdom leaders will be lineage-focused because generations, a great big family, are at the center of God's heart.

4. Lineage is Every Nation, Tongue, and Tribe

I'll be honest. A small part of the reason I'm including this aspect is because the church can be seclusive, because our nation still struggles with racial issues, and nations are still warring against each other. And, because we still have caste systems, even if called something else, in our society, schools, government... churches. And it's not okay.

But the main reason for this fourth aspect is found throughout the Bible, but beautifully and prophetically summarized in Revelation 7. There was no chance of me leaving this out. Kingdom lineage is every nation, tongue, and tribe!

...and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9-10

Jesus broke through every cultural barrier: race, gender, class, and age. He changed everything as he demonstrated the heart of God the Father for all people.

When the outpouring of the Spirit was prophesied, no one was left out.

And it shall come to pass, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my spirit. Joel 2:28-29

No one is left out. I heard it said recently that it's time for the arguments to cease about who God can use. There is a harvest in need of laborers. Empower everyone who is willing.²¹

Kingdom lineage includes a desire for and a rejoicing in the body of Christ in all her regions, colors, sounds, and splendor. And lineage-focused leaders will grow up and mature out of biases.

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

James 2:1

5. Lineage is Prayer and Blessing

The Bible is full of fathers and mothers, kings and priests, prophets and apostles praying for their children, their people, their followers—for the coming generations. These prayers are both intercession and blessings. Moses charged Joshua as a new leader (Deuteronomy 31:7-8). Hannah interceded for her son, Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11).

²¹ James Goll

Ananias laid hands on Saul so he would be healed and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17-19).

Jesus prayed for his disciples and empowered them, he interceded for us to the Father (Luke 9, John 17), and he is still making intercession for us (Romans 8:34).²² If you really think about it, the New Testament letters are not only instructions for the church but are full of apostolic intercessions and blessings. Like Ephesians 3:20, *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to his power at work in us.*

Intercession is searching for and agreeing with the heart of God over a matter. We already know that lineage is at the center of God's heart. So, of course, we will find wisdom for people and situations there as well. And when we do, we get to declare those truths! We get to bless people with God's words!

When we pray as leaders, we are laying down our position, title, and legacy to contend for the line of Jesus to continue. I'm convinced that we won't fully comprehend what is accomplished through the Spirit and in prayer until all things have been made new. Lineage-focused leadership is rooted in prayer, and it is powerful!

...the prayers of the righteous have great power.
James 5:16-18

²² See also Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1

Last Thought

The letters from John start with powerful words that I believe capture the heart of lineage.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the words of life...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 1 John 1:1-4

Lineage is the center of God's heart. It celebrates our history while also preparing for what is ahead. Lineage-focused leaders have pursued the heart of God, taken possession of it, and now desire for others to share in the inheritance. It's no longer about them but about the place they have in the family of God as harvesters and as sowers. This is often contrary to the way man thinks. We can get caught up with wanting to build something with our name on it, but legacies are fading. Spiritual lineage, the inheritance we have in Jesus, isn't going anywhere. And our greatest joy and honor is inviting others into the family and equipping them to do the same.

Take a minute and read this Psalm of Asaph, a contemporary of David's. He is someone who caught the zeal for God and his dwelling place. Make it prayer.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!...to tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders he has done...so that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God. Psalm 78:1-7

Why do we tell another generation? So they will set their hope in God. Amen!

CONCLUSION

Not as Man Sees revisits what God is looking for in leaders. He wants us to be after his heart. He is true, very good, and is the only source of life. When we are after his heart, we rest in his perfection instead of our abilities. It lets us be unique and diverse instead of robotic. When we are after God's heart, we surrender to the strength of heaven and the way the body of Christ is supposed to work together. It weeds out pride and its destructive path. When we are after God's heart, our hearts become singular and devoted to the kingdom of heaven. It protects relationships and future generations. When we are after God's heart, we gladly stay within the parameters the fear of the Lord sets for us. They keep us holy and deepen our friendship with him. When we are after God's heart, we inherit a heart for lineage. It's no longer about us but about him and his body from every tongue, tribe, nation, and era. Lineage is the center of God's heart because it prepares a bride for his son, Jesus. It maintains a dwelling place for him for eternity. God's intention from the beginning, from

before the beginning, has been to be with us forever. Leaders after God's heart share this desire and joy with him.

The days ahead and this hour of the church may be different, even hard, but more than that, they are bright and hopeful. I can see a beautiful, glorious bride being made ready for the bridegroom king, Jesus! I can see the church locking arms in unity. I can see nations, tribes, and tongues learning from one another as we huddle and walk together. I can see people without titles, without recognition, without fame declaring the kingdom of God to everyone they see and harvesting ripe fields. And I can see generations coming together to declare the wonders of our God and to praise the name of the LORD forever.

Friends, pursue the heart of God like the treasure it is, and lead others to do the same! This is the highest calling and the greatest honor of our lives.

*The LORD seeks for a man after his own heart
—For the LORD sees not as man sees;
man looks on the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks on the heart.*

1 Samuel 13:14 & 16:7

SPECIAL THANKS

To patrons and supporters of Brave Sparrow Publishing, you make it possible to create resources like this book, and I couldn't be more grateful.

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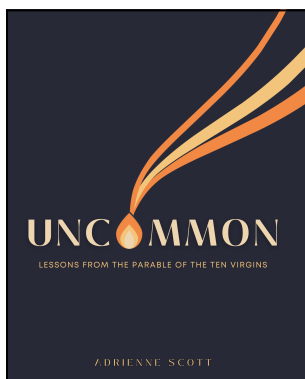


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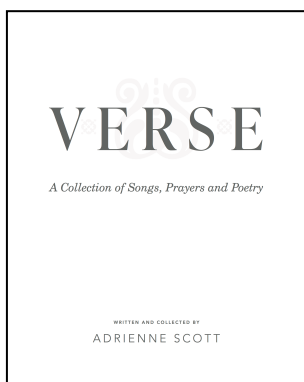
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