

The background of the cover is a photograph of a person walking away from the viewer on a path that leads towards a bright sunset. The path is marked with footprints, and the sky is filled with a warm, golden light. The overall mood is one of a journey or pilgrimage.

MASTERING THE WALK OF  
**SIGNIFICANCE**

JOURNYING INTO YOUR KINGDOM  
PURPOSE WITH CHRIST

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## Chapter 1

### PURPOSE IN PROMOTION

#### God's True Treasures

Promotion is how we advance in position, rank, and influence. And while titles don't always reflect our significance in the kingdom of God, they can be measurements by which we see our role to the world around us. But what must be maintained as a value of the kingdom is the only promotion worth pursuing is the one that comes from God. All other promotions are ultimately setbacks in our personal development and potential. Self-promotion undermines the process that God has assigned for each of our lives. Whatever I *obtain* through self-promotion I'll have to *sustain* through self-promotion. It's like a beach ball with a leak. The only way to keep it full is to continue pumping it full of air. It's a lot of work. And it takes away from the purpose of the beach ball, which illustrates the plan and promotion that God had in place for us.

Instead of spending our time and effort on our purpose in life, we pour it out for things that bear no lasting fruit. And there's a day coming when we will each stand before the Lord to give an account for how we lived our lives. On that day the *fruit that remains* is all that will matter to us.

It probably needs to be said at this point that promotion for the believer is not always about title, money, or power. While it may include any number of external things, it really is about being more like Jesus in our inner world. More specifically, this has to do with our thought life, our emotional health, and our overall bent toward the will of God. Representing (read *re-presenting*) Jesus on earth is the goal. From that place of personal victory, we can demonstrate the reality of His presence and kingdom to the world around us, which automatically brings an increase in responsibilities and potential impact.

There's no question that His promotion sometimes includes title, position, power, and resource. But those things make for terrible goals in our journey. *Seeking first the kingdom of God* is the challenge we face. Seeking first the kingdom is basically to pursue the reality of the King's dominion to be released over the broken, diseased, and inferior situations in life. The promise He gave us is that all the other stuff needed to fulfill our purpose would be added to us. Becoming more like Jesus positions us to be effective in bringing lasting change to the world around us.

We become a danger to ourselves when our focus or objective becomes the things that are supposed to be added to our lives as the fruit of our God-given priorities. When that happens, our pursuit of the kingdom becomes a smoke screen for our real ambition of personal gain. Our place of significance is to seek the full expression of the lordship/kingship of Jesus into needful situations we run into throughout our lives. If we choose to seek the reward instead of His rule, we cut short our development and restrict our ability to experience and manifest the reality of His kingdom through our surrendered lives.

To “seek first the kingdom” is the process; “all these things will be added” is the outcome. *We* love outcomes. *He* treasures the process or journey. To grow in this kingdom, we must learn to treasure what He treasures and give attention to the things that have captured His heart. When we become kingdom-minded people and truly make that the priority of our pursuits in life, we place ourselves in the position that He celebrates most. When we get those priorities mixed up, He cuts back our rewards to the measure we can faithfully steward without losing our heart for His kingdom.

*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.—Matthew 13:44, NIV*

*Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.—Psalm 128:1-2, NIV*

*The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with his justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.—Isaiah 33:5-6, NIV*

### Rest and Godly Identity

It is so easy to draw our identity from inferior things. Possessions, jobs, education, and titles are a small part of this infinite list. But busyness is perhaps the surprise entry and is probably at the top of the list for many. It can make one feel important. But neither identity nor significance should be defined by our schedules.

Busyness is artificial significance. Many believers clutter their lives with Christian activities, thinking that demonstrates their heart for the will of God in their lives. As a result, they tragically never have to learn how to reign in life amid the chaos of the worldly systems that surround us. Schedules often take us out of the necessary interactions with unbelievers that keep us aware of what we do well and what we don't. Busyness also tends to insulate us from the divine reasoning that enables us to rise to our potential in areas that are not overtly spiritual.

Reigning in life is not reigning over people. We are called to reign in life in the sense that we manage the issues of our own lives under the direct leadership of God. (See Romans 5:17.) For example, money doesn't control me. I control money in a way that glorifies God. Relationships don't control me, whether they are good or bad. I manage my relationships God's way that He might receive honor and that I might find healthy community. Reigning in life as citizens of His kingdom gives us a position of favor that makes our service effective.

### **The Rested Lifestyle**

Avoiding rest is a violation of our design. Not even God worked seven days, and yet many today praise the hard workers who give themselves to their assignment without rest. Even the church celebrates devoted pastors who pour out their lives for the sake of the flock, never taking a day off. We then exalt them as heroes instead of exposing them for their foolishness. We often do the same for the missionary who gives it all for the sake of the gospel on that foreign field. A person without rest is a person without wisdom. Overworking sounds right to our achievement-oriented culture, but God is unimpressed.

Many pastors lose years off of their lives by giving themselves to a busyness that violates how God made them. More times than not, it's a person searching for significance by being needed. The same can be said of business owners, educators, and the like. Many employees applaud their business owners who burn the candle at both ends; stockholders who see CEOs pour themselves out for the company's success are satisfied because it makes for quick financial gains. But it works against longevity, which is at the heart of a life of excellence. It'll cost us in the long run.

I realize this is often done sincerely. But drinking poison is harmful—even if you sincerely think it isn't. God has a way to do life. We are foolish to ignore it.

Excellence is the true life of significance. Anyone can have a high impact for a season. We see it in sports, politics, entertainment, and ministry. But only those who take care of themselves in a biblical fashion can leave a righteous momentum enjoyed by multiple generations. The idea of living for a generation we'll never see is what keeps us the most honest in our approach to life.

### **Divine Perception**

Such busyness hinders our perception of the things that are most important to God. Jesus taught us that our eye should be single. (See Matthew 6:22, KJV). The word *single* in this verse comes from two words: the number *one* and the word *voyage*. When the focus of our hearts has been refined to the one journey we're called to, everything about us comes under the influence of the light of God's presence/face. This is the life of significance, the life of ever-increasing favor, both from God and from man.

Favor is one of the most precious gifts that God gives to people, believer and nonbeliever alike. Each person has a measure. Acts 14:17 attests to that: "Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (NKJV). This is such a beautiful description of a perfect Father who woos people to Himself through His kindness and favor. I believe this process is still God's plan A for how to build His family, as it is still His "kindness that leads people to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

*Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.—Hebrews 4:1, NIV*

### Favor and Influence

Each of us was born for significance. We were born for promotion, and stewarding favor well is at the core of the process of promotion. God has more significant designs for us than would naturally enter our hearts or minds. His plan really is beyond all we could ask or think. But there's a catch. Ill-used favor works against the very purpose for which it was given. Blessings add to our lives; misused blessings subtract.

Herein lies my favorite insight into the proper use of the gift called favor. The Queen of Sheba prophesied over Solomon with these words: "Blessed be the Lord your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness" (1 Kings 10:9). This is one of the most important insights about promotion and favor. God had unusual favor on Solomon and gave him one of the ultimate promotions in position

and personal experience of anyone ever to live. The reason for this unprecedented level of God's favor was that God loved Israel. This is stunning! God gives favor to individuals because of His love for those under their influence. The implication of this truth is significant: the favor upon our lives must be used to benefit those around us, or it is misused favor.

### **Kings Matter to God**

We live at a time when people of means or position are the target of much malice, criticism, and suspicion. It's deserving in part. But only in a small part. Not everyone rises to high places of society and culture because of sin, manipulation, and robbery. Many people have started with humble means, but they obeyed God and have risen to positions of rule, authority, and influence. God didn't promote them so they would fail. He did so because He entrusted them with the resources to lead and serve well.

God promoted them according to the promise of His Word. They deserve our respect and honor, if for no other reason than they were made in the image of God. It's interesting to note that many of them didn't even know they were obeying God when they made courageous decisions. They just responded to the wisdom that God had put in their hearts for their promotion. The gift came with the position.

The "kings of the earth"—the people of extraordinary influence—are the hardest to influence. And yet God cares for them as much as He does for the most broken among us. In fact, many of the richest in the world are the poorest inside—and they know it. But they also know that countless numbers of people would like to be their friends because they want something from them.

This challenge is recorded well in Proverbs 19.

Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend . . . Many entreat the favor of the nobility, and every man is a friend to one who gives gifts. All the brothers of the poor hate him; How much more do his friends go far from him! He may pursue them with words, yet they abandon him.

—Proverbs 19:4, 6–7, NKJV

Proverbs, the book that equips us to reign in life, addresses the problem of touching royalty in ways that illustrate integrity. The phrase that stands out to me is that you might "stand before kings" (Prov. 22:29). There it is, God's desire. God has a method to promote the average person into a place of influence with those outside our typical circle of influence. This should capture the attention of us all, as this reveals a purpose for promotion: influence beyond reason.

*May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD, when they hear what you have decreed. May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great—Psalm 138:4, NIV*

## Chapter 2

### REIGNING IN ROYALTY

#### Royal Priesthood

We are called to royalty. But it is royalty from God's perspective. Priests are those who minister to God and to man. A royal priesthood is made up of those who use their place of favor before God to help and assist people.

Anyone who thinks reigning in life means ruling over people just needs to picture the King of all kings washing the disciples' feet. Here we see the highest One doing the lowest deed. The point is, we are to use whatever means God has given us to benefit others. All positions of rule need to be embraced with humility.

Our power is for others. But there are times when it is also with great firmness. This is when our responsibility is to bring protection. I remember once when my son Eric was small, he was outside playing in our yard. A strange man made his way onto our property, accompanied by a mutual friend. From the man's crazed behavior, I immediately sensed that he was under heavy demonic influence. He displayed some aggressive behavior toward Eric, which I intercepted immediately. Obviously, my first responsibility was the protection of my son. I positioned myself between Eric and this man in case anything would go haywire. There was no timidity on my part. Neither was there any need to appear humble. My role of ruling, in this case, was to protect.

We must remember in life that we are to take our positions of rule out of our God-given responsibility and make sure it is not for position or title but is for the benefit of others. This can and must be done with kindness wherever possible—even toward the demonized man. It was.

To serve with the heart of a king automatically implies vast resources and noble intentions. This is the joy of serving in the kingdom of God. We do so with the unlimited resources of the King of all kings. Carrying this into our place of service brings great joy and honor to those being served. You never want to make others feel your act of service is wearisome. The heart of a king, the place of rich identity in God, will help keep us from that error.

Every assignment in life is an invitation to excellence, creativity, and integrity. These are the hallmarks of achievement for the believer; they truly express the wisdom of God. The external parts of life are only window dressing. To live wisely is to reign in life.

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.—1 Peter 2:9, NIV*

*Remember me, LORD, when you show favor to your people, come to my aid when you save them, that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may share in the joy of your nation and join your inheritance in giving praise.—Psalm 106:4-5, NIV*

*For many are invited, but few are chosen.—Matthew 22:14, NIV*

### Wisdom and Gold

Wisdom is the basis for promotion in the kingdom. God looks for occasion to promote and give honor to His children. He loves everyone unconditionally, but it would be foolish to think we all have the same measure of favor. In a very real sense, the favor on our lives is determined by what we have done with the love we have received. And regardless of what we started with, favor increases through faithful use.

Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. For whoever finds me finds life, and *obtains favor* from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.

—Proverbs 8:33, 35–36, NKJV

Wisdom is said to be more valuable than gold and silver. I only know I believe that *if my pursuit of wisdom actually cost me something*. It's more than an inspirational statement; it is a value that shapes life. And when wisdom is valued the way God intended, He extends His scepter of favor over that life. Wisdom attracts divine favor, which is more valuable than all riches.

By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

—Proverbs 11:11, NKJV

When those who live righteously are blessed enough to be a blessing, a city receives its promotion. God still thinks in terms of cities and nations. And the well-being of those who follow Jesus can mark a city for blessing and eternal purpose. Conversely, the mouths of the wicked will rob a city of its potential promotion by the damage done through the ideas, ambitions, and values revealed in their speech. Truly, life and death are in the power of the tongue. The righteous must make godly decrees over our cities in order for them to reach their God-given potential.

The *generous* soul will be made *rich*, and he who waters will also be watered himself. The people will curse him who withholds grain, but *blessing* will be on the head of him *who sells it*.

—Proverbs 11:25–26, NKJV

This verse is a personal favorite because Solomon doesn't do what we'd expect. The subject is generosity, a highly valued kingdom virtue. But while he honors the generous, we expect him to say the one who grows grain should give it away. And while there is a place for that, Solomon declares the blessing and favor of God comes upon the one who sells it to the citizens of his community. This is astonishing! Generosity is likened to working hard in our assignment in life, making a product that benefits people around us, and then selling it. Using our skills, gifts, and resources to benefit others is honored by God. If I grow a crop and you buy it and have food, God calls me generous. I have become a contributor to your life and, in a broader sense, to society. Making a profit for my family's benefit is not evil. In fact, this process is honored by the Lord. It's what makes for healthy communities.

He who earnestly seeks good finds favor, but trouble will come to him who seeks evil.

—Proverbs 11:27, NKJV

The pursuit of our lives in thought, ambition, and plans determines the measure of favor we will enjoy in life. The word *good* here means pleasant and agreeable. Those who prioritize their role in benefiting others socially will find favor throughout their lives.

He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage.

—Proverbs 11:28, NKJV

It's very interesting that those who trust in riches fall, but those who live righteously flourish. The implication is that they're righteous because of their trust in God. While *to flourish* is not limited to money, it certainly includes it.

A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn.

—Proverbs 12:2, NKJV

This is such a beautiful verse as it deals with the simpler parts of a person's makeup and personality. Here the word *good* means pleasant, friendly, kind, and joyful. If you own a restaurant and you're looking to hire or even promote someone, the person who is kind and friendly will probably be your choice. We instinctively know the answer to that one. But this verse is saying that the promotion you, the owner, give to that person, the employee, is actually from the Lord. God is the One who highlighted and honored the one who chose to live in such a way that they were a social benefit to those around them. They bring an emotional wealth to others.

Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard.

—Proverbs 13:15, NKJV

### Reigning in God-given Significance

Our journey to discovering our God-given significance has revealed that all promotion, favor, and blessing are to enable us to succeed in this one overarching assignment: reigning in life.

God designed us to reign in life. Think of it, the master planner, the designer of all, wrote into our DNA that we should reign. Many react to that kind of statement because it seems to say that we are to seek to be exalted. Self-exaltation is a poor counterfeit for reigning in life, which ultimately is living according to the plan, purpose, and design of God. He is exalted when all He made functions according to His will, design, and purpose. And we were made to live in His glory, illustrating His likeness in all we do.

Our understanding of royalty is skewed and is what makes the idea of *reigning* sound offensive. And yet I remind you, Jesus is a King—the King of all kings, in fact. Royalty isn't a bad concept; it's just been poorly represented in the earth. We have the chance to set the record straight by how the church is blessed, giving all for the benefit of others.

Much of what we are to learn on this subject comes from Proverbs, the book known for wisdom. The word *proverb* has as its root meaning to rule or reign.

And lest anyone think *reigning in life* to be an Old Testament concept only, it is repeated in what is often considered the ultimate theological book of the Bible, Romans.



For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will *reign in life* through the One, Jesus Christ. — Romans 5:17, NKJV

The Passion Translation puts Romans 5:17 this way:

Death once held us in its grip, and by the blunder of one man, death reigned as king over humanity. But now, how much more are we held in the grip of grace and continue *reigning as kings in life*, enjoying our regal freedom through the gift of perfect righteousness in the one and only Jesus, the Messiah!

The King James Version of the Bible uses the word *promotion* in Psalm 75:6–7, saying, “Promotion comes from the Lord.” It is probably the most well-known scripture on the subject. A high percentage of the other translations use the word *exalted* or *exaltation* or something similar.

For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: *He puts down one, and exalts another.*

—Psalm 75:6–7, NKJV

The point is, thinking of people being exalted is offensive to some who think only of God being exalted. But promotion, or exaltation, is connected to God's sovereignty and His justice. This passage introduces Him as the judge, who has complete liberty to put one down and exalt another. Another way to put this is promotion is an expression of God's justice. To deny it in efforts of false humility is to deny His justice.

It is vital that we accept His promotions as well as His delays. He is God, and He is exalted by His choices. Yielding to them is wisdom.

Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find *favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.*

—Proverbs 3:3–4, NKJV

## Chapter 3

### THE HEART OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### Faith for God's Purpose

Prayers anointed by the Holy Spirit are very similar in nature to prophecies. They reveal God's intent and purpose. One of my favorites in the whole Bible is the prayer found in 3 John 2: "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

It is quite interesting that this anointed prayer reveals the heart of God for each of us. He has not only willed for us to be in good health and to prosper, but He also instructs how. It begs the questions:

*Why does God give us instructions on how to have a healthy family?* Because He wants us to have a healthy family: spirit, soul, and body.

*Why does God give us instructions on how to have a healthy thought life?* Because He wants us to have a healthy thought life.

*So then, why does He give instruction on how to prosper?* The answer is obvious but not religiously acceptable, in part because of abuses. But truth is truth, and it must not be rendered powerless because of another person's abuse. Instead of ignoring truth because of the risks involved, we must return to humility, thankfulness, and accountability in our relationships so we can discover God's heart in a matter.

I've studied 3 John 2 for so many years, and yet it still amazes me. Our inner world has an effect on our health. I guess we've known that for decades. Doctors have told us that our emotional health, when infected with bitterness, anger, jealousy, and fear, affects our bodies in very destructive ways. So then, that's not new. But what still adds the wow factor to my thinking is that the measure in which my soul prospers affects my finances.

Managing our inner world is central to all matters of faith. Our heart is the seat of affection and the place from which flow the issues that affect our lives. Faith comes from the heart as well, not the mind. Faith is not an idea or a concept. It is not a doctrine to be believed in. Faith is an inward expression of confidence in God being who He says He is and doing what He says He will do.

The most trustworthy One in the universe values being trusted. Faith is the most well-deserved expression we could ever give to God, the perfectly faithful One. It is obviously not to satisfy His ego, as He is the person of love, which never seeks its own. (See 1 Corinthians 13:5.) Our trust in God is an act of justice. Consider this: For the most trustworthy One in the universe to be trusted is an act of justice. Faith is not the result of striving. It is the result of surrender. It is also an expression of holiness. Because we are separated unto Him, we discover His absolute reliability in all things, resulting in great faith. The more we are separated unto Him, the easier the issue of faith becomes.

The Scripture says that without faith it is impossible to please Him. It's not that He is hard to please, in some finicky or angry way. It is simply unjust to do otherwise. Not to believe Him is to deny all that is right with the world, building our lives on the inferior. Anything outside of faith wars against the purposes of God in the earth. To be true to who He is and all that He has purposed to do with those made in His image, it is vital that we believe. It is vital that we are people of great faith, for He is the God of great people.

*And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for he is a God of justice.—Psalm 50:6, NIV*

### Matters of the Heart

Jesus always addressed the matters of the heart. That's the place from which our lives are lived. It's the basic reason that material things are a poor thermometer for measuring our spirituality.

Biblical management is not restriction in the sense of killing dreams or creativity. It's quite the opposite. True management of the heart is an invitation for purpose and liberty. The laws of God don't restrict us from freedom or from our own unique expression. Each of God's commandments is an invitation to life. He who designed us knows exactly what is needed for us to become all that He intended. His commandments are just that: invitations. Every word invites us further into this relational journey where we know Him more and behold Him more clearly. Perhaps you've read that "when we see Him, we will become like Him" (1 John 3:2). It's true. But it can also be said that "as we see Him, we will become like Him."

To fail at managing our inner world but instead work at managing our outward behavior only is an invitation for disaster. All the issues of life flow from our inner man. Seeing this clearly is what helps us to prioritize what's important to Him. Jesus warns of the kinds of things that come from the heart of a person, and it is sobering indeed.

But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

—Matthew 15:18–20

Many of the things we dislike about our lives were first put into place through carelessness in our speech. And while you may be able to find abuses to this principle on the power of our words through confession, the fact remains the same: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." That is the Bible—Proverbs 18:21, to be exact. Many who attack the issues of confession and faith have undermined their own invitation to know and become like the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whose words were spirit and life. (See John 6:63.)

We are disciples of Jesus. He said what the Father was saying. We have access to that same reality and can say what is in the heart of our heavenly Father at any given moment. But when our speech contradicts what He is saying, regardless of how spiritual it sounds to our friends, it is foolish. And there's not one of us who enjoys harvesting from the seeds planted in those times. The mind focused on the flesh brings death and is incapable of obeying what God is saying. Such harmful speech reveals

where the mind has set its focus. (See Romans 8:6–8.) And whether you care to accept it or not, that carnal focus is at war with God.

I find it alarming that so many speak negatively and think God is OK with it. Just because some abuse this principle for selfish gain doesn't legitimize the neglect of truth. The abuse of a principle never legitimizes the neglect of that principle.

Each word Jesus speaks becomes spirit and life. Think of it: Words become spirit; they become presence. And that presence gives life. That's the nature of His voice to us. It breathes life into the soul of the listener. When we partner with the Father as Jesus exemplified, we too bring life into dead situations.

### Inside Out

Our internal reality becomes our external reality. That is the nature of life for the believer. Inside first, which means the thoughts, ambitions, and desires that are shaped by His heart will eventually influence and help design the nature of the world we will live in.

Jesus slept in a storm, which shows He had great peace. But when He stood to confront the storm by rebuking it and then declaring peace, the storm stopped. It was no match for the peace that was in Him. His internal reality became His external reality.

Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

—Mark 4:39, NKJV

These stories are more than entertainment. They are patterns for life. They illustrate what the renewed mind looks like in a practical sense.

The Bible is the anchor of the heart and mind—the plumb line. The standard set in the Scriptures is what introduces us to the grace that makes living like Jesus, inside and out, even possible. The more our inner world reflects His heart, the more we can be trusted to influence the world around us.

The pure in heart will see God. Purity in our inner man enables us to see what otherwise would be missed: God Himself. He can be found by those whose hearts are pure. Grace empowers us to perform His will. Law requires; grace enables.

Favor usually manifests outwardly. It's recognized by title, resource, authority, and anointing. But what He releases to our outer man is according to what He's found on the inside. We are designed to mirror outwardly what's happening behind the scenes in our private life. Proverbs 4:23 states: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the issues of life." Jesus said in Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you" (NKJV), which to me means all kingdom issues are matters of the heart. And while I may not understand all the implications of these statements, I know for certain that my priority is to manage my inner world well.

### **Living Unoffended**

One of the biggest challenges in ministry is to give yourself to a people group, to an assignment, without picking up the offenses of the people you're serving. Can you minister to children without being

offended at the adults who don't prioritize children? Can you minister to adults without being offended at young people who show no respect to adults? Can you serve the poor without being offended at the rich? Can you serve the rich without being offended at those who won't work? Can you minister to one race without being offended at another race? Can you serve prisoners without becoming angry at those who seek justice? These are very real and challenging situations.

I've watched this for years and have watched people give themselves in ministry to their assignment. The mistake is made when we feel the need to prove our solidarity with that group, and we ignorantly pick up their offenses. It masquerades as a partnership of sorts. It is possible to feel someone's pain without picking up their spiritual disease.

I'm sure many would call that offense bitterness. Bitterness in any measure is contaminating in nature. A warning given in Hebrews 12:15 is that bitterness causes trouble, defiling many. I think one of the main things that keeps us from having the cultural impact that God has assigned for us is the challenge of wading deep into the dark places of life and serving well without getting contaminated by the sins people carry. James put it this way:

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. *This wisdom* does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

—James 3:14–16, NKJV

Staying clean in attitude is everything. *Everything*. Maintaining humility of heart and mind is essential to the overall health of the individual. This is being healthy on the inside first. It is worth all efforts.

## Chapter 4

### ADVANCEMENT & HONOR

What does honor and advancement have to do with God? How should you feel about these topics? When the honor is for Him, it can mean everything. Allowing Him to become the One that your life is centered upon brings great reward that allows you to better know yourself and the One who created you. True honor and promotion will follow you when you understand the significance God has made you with and what He wants to do with your life.

#### Honor to the Highest

We don't always find our significance by receiving, as though we were the focus of the world around us. So much of life in this kingdom is obtained by giving. The fullness of our lives is not measured in what we have. It's measured in what we've given away. And one of the greatest gifts any of us could give is honor. It recognizes God's grace upon a life that people often can't see in themselves. It brings their attention to God, the designer, and to His work of wonder in them—His design.

Giving honor is a transaction of sorts, as it releases the mental, emotional, and spiritual nutrients needed by another human being. It is life. Giving honor to another is one of the most important expressions of God's economy.

Honor is a necessary supplement to our diet for the inner man. But it's not the meal. The meal comes from the Lord Himself through what He says about us in His Word. Yet the effect of this transaction of honor from people gives a context for our relationship with God to be measured through human connection.

God said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18, NKJV). And while He is talking about marriage, the backdrop is our need for people. We were designed for human connection—not instead of a relationship with God but as a way of measuring the true effect of knowing Him.

Jesus drew our attention to the commandment "Honor your father and your mother." Paul added the reminder that it comes with a promise.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on earth.

—Ephesians 6:1–3

There it is. Honor releases life. It's one of the ways God extends favor and life to the believer. Not only does honor release life, but often the measure of honor given is also used to determine the amount of blessing or favor given back.

But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.” And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

—Matthew 13:57–58

The absence of honor costs dearly. As we read in Matthew 13, the miracles that were designed for people in Jesus’ hometown never happened, as the absence of honor determined what they were able to receive. The Bible goes on to teach that honoring a prophet as a prophet gives us access to the prophet’s reward, which basically means it gives us access to the benefit of their ministry. The honor given determines the benefit received. Jesus used this principle in His discourse with His hometown of Nazareth in Luke 4:24–27:

And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

The absence of honor in their culture was the reason they could live within reach of the prophet Elijah, who brought about supernatural supply to the widow at Zarephath, and yet remain in financial need themselves. God took His prophet outside His covenant community to display His heart as a provider. He truly is the perfect Father who delights in being the God of abundance for us all. But Israel missed out entirely.

It wasn’t because God wasn’t concerned or hadn’t made preparations for His people to be cared for. The opposite was true. Provision had been made, but their hands were filled with their own pride, which left no room for God’s supply. Pride repels the culture of honor. And honor in the kingdom gives access to the resources of His kingdom.

*Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.—Romans 12:10*

### Honor and Evangelism

Evangelism has been around for two thousand years. It is vital, as we are facing what will be the greatest harvest of souls the world has ever seen. The harvest is upon us now. But the only reason I mention this subject in the context of honor and promotion is that we are often blind to the tools Jesus used. The proper use of these tools often sets us up for the kind of promotion that He longs for us to receive.

#### **1. The bold preaching of the gospel**

I will admit, this is my favorite of all. I love hearing the bold declarations of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The transformation of my life came in large part through the bold preaching of Mario Murillo. He presented a no-compromise gospel: either you’re all in or all out. I loved it, and I needed it. If I’m going to select one method to use for the rest of my life, it will be this one. God has honored this method for two thousand years. All the great revivalists were known for this gift. I pray this generation embraces the privilege of being bold in our proclamation of truth.

#### **2. The blessings of God upon His people**

This will probably seem like the strangest of all evangelistic tools. And I guess it should be, as we've not always known how to carry favor and blessing the way it was designed. And yet the principle remains: blessings upon us reveal Him. Psalm 67:1–2 addresses this profoundly: "God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations" (NKJV). Look at it carefully. God's mercy and blessings displayed upon our lives reveal His nature—"that your way may be known on earth." The next statement is the most astonishing of them all—"Your salvation among the nations." The blessing upon us, carried well, is what reveals the nature of our perfect Father in a way that impacts entire nations. With that outcome hanging in the balance, we might want to give more deliberate attention to this vital tool. I owe the world around me a blessed life because it is that life that reveals His nature in a way that makes His grace irresistible.

### **3. Giving honor where it's due**

I doubt this will come as a surprise, but God uses a different standard for seeing where honor is due than we do. In this case, it's not that our perspective is wrong. We know how to recognize nobility and reward accordingly. We also know a bit about recognizing bravery and courage. We rightfully honor our first responders as they face considerable challenges in carrying out their duties. There are many other such things that we are able to recognize and honor.

But Jesus raised the bar on how, when, and to whom we are to give honor. The honor He gave was not according to externals. He honors according to the heart, but also to the potential. Jesus sat next to the offering plate in the synagogue and noticed how some people gave considerable sums of money. But He honored the widow who put in all she had even though her gift was the least. He honored the centurion for his unique understanding of the kingdom in his demonstration of great faith.

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.—Matthew 28:19-20a*

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"—Revelation 5:12*

#### Kindness, Repentance, and Honor

Peter (also called Simon) is a favorite character in Scripture for many of us. Perhaps it's because we can so easily identify with his blunders. Toward the beginning of his journey with Jesus, he had an unusual experience while fishing.

When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;



and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”

—Luke 5:4–10

Jesus gave direction on where to fish. Peter obeyed and caught more than he could handle, forcing him to call for help from other boats. This miracle caused Peter to drop to his knees in repentance. I remind you that Peter was a fisherman. Catching and selling fish was his business. Jesus gave him such an abundance of fish to sell in his business that he had to share with other businessmen. It was the honor of abundance that brought Peter to repentance. There’s no record of Jesus preaching to Peter at this moment. He didn’t point out what needed to change. Jesus simply introduced Peter to a kingdom beyond anything he had ever seen or experienced before. And he was willing to forsake all to embrace it.

The final thought for this story is that the extreme abundance of fish would forever be etched into Peter’s mind as the standard for the harvest of souls. First is the natural, then the spiritual. (See 1 Corinthians 15:46.) Jesus taught him about abundance in the natural to give him faith and an example of the spiritual fulfillment for which he was born. Natural lessons are extremely important, but it’s crucial they don’t end there. They are pathways to true spiritual realities and breakthroughs.

*“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.—Matthew 4:19-20*

*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”*

*“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”*

*Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”—John 21:25*

## Chapter 5

### YOUR JOURNEY OVER VICTORY

#### Revelation for Transformation

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.*

—John 14:16–17, NLT

When it comes to how we should live, there is only so much we can extract from God's Word without the Holy Spirit making it clear in the context of our connection with Him. And it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to do what we read. We can certainly learn about kindness, generosity, courage, and the like as we, through human reasoning, try to extract the principles for life from the pages of Scripture. But the power for personal transformation is found in a relationship with the One who is both the author and revealer of truth. My need for His input is more than daily. It is moment by moment. He lives in me, in part, for that reason. What are some of the things the Holy Spirit has been teaching you recently through Scripture? In what ways can you see transformation evident in your own life?

*But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.*

—John 15:26, NLT

*Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

— John 20:21-23, NLT

#### **Point to Ponder**

I am dependent on God to bring His transformation into my life through His holy Word.

#### Christ in Me

*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. —Galatians 2:20, NLT*

Many who have caught glimpses of the victorious Christian life have, through the arm of flesh, built up their self-confidence, which is a poor copy of faith and triumph. Self-confidence is no greater than self. Real faith is as great as God and has its foundation in His nature and person. Such confidence in God then is superior to every other expression in life because it is founded in the person of God Himself. It is not built through striving. It comes entirely through surrender. It dwells in real humility, which is a far cry from self-criticism and condemnation. Real faith moves mountains and is the yielded partnership with His nature. I find significance and confidence when I discover that as a born-again believer, I am in Christ. Therein lies my significance. As a result, my significance is more substantial than I ever could have wished for myself before my surrender to this perfect Father. Where can you see true confidence—at rest in His nature—operating in your life?

*But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.*

—Jeremiah 17:7-8, NLT

*So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you!*

—Hebrews 10:35, NLT

### **Point to Ponder**

My confidence is in God's faithfulness, and because Christ lives in me, I will be victorious.

### Walking with Jesus

*And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. —1 John 4:17, NLT*

Our lives are patterned after the One who is raised from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and forever glorified. It almost sounds blasphemous to say, but our walk with Jesus is not patterned after His pre-glorified state. It is firmly established in the victorious Christ! Jesus taught us the ways of the kingdom in His earthly life. His humility, boldness, passion, and love are all eternal. These traits never change, whether before the cross or after. This is who the Son of God has always been and always will be. They remain true, no matter the season of our lives. But His resurrection, ascension, and glorification are to change much of what we expect of our lives in that we live from the absolute victory of Christ. The Christian life is one of conflict between the issue of blessing and the issue of the cross. Where would you like to see Christ's victory invade in your life and in the lives of those around you?

*Jesus said, "I AM. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

—Mark 14:62, NLT

*God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.*

—Ephesians 1:22, NLT

### **Point to Ponder**

My life is modeled after Christ, resurrected and seated on the throne.

### Living Out of Victory

*But we thank God for giving us the victory as conquerors through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. —1 Corinthians 15:57*

Without the cross of Jesus, we have nothing in this life. Denying ourselves for the sake of Christ is the only reasonable way to live. Yet the life of a believer is the life of resurrection. The cross must lead us to something, and this something is the place of triumph. Victory over sin, torment, disease, and the like is a manifestation of the resurrection power of Jesus. Jesus didn't stay on the cross, nor did He stay in the grave. He rose from the dead to give us new life. It's much more challenging to live in response to what the Father is saying and doing in the areas of our lives that are waiting for breakthrough. Reaction gives me a conclusion; response connects me to a process. And this process takes me somewhere that is beyond all we have the intelligence or faith to ask for ourselves. What would your life look like with the fullness of Christ's resurrection touching your health, your finances, or your place in society?

*He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying.*

—Matthew 28:6, NLT

*For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory.*

—2 Corinthians 1:20, NLT

### **Point to Ponder**

The grave is empty, Christ is risen, and my life reveals His victory.