
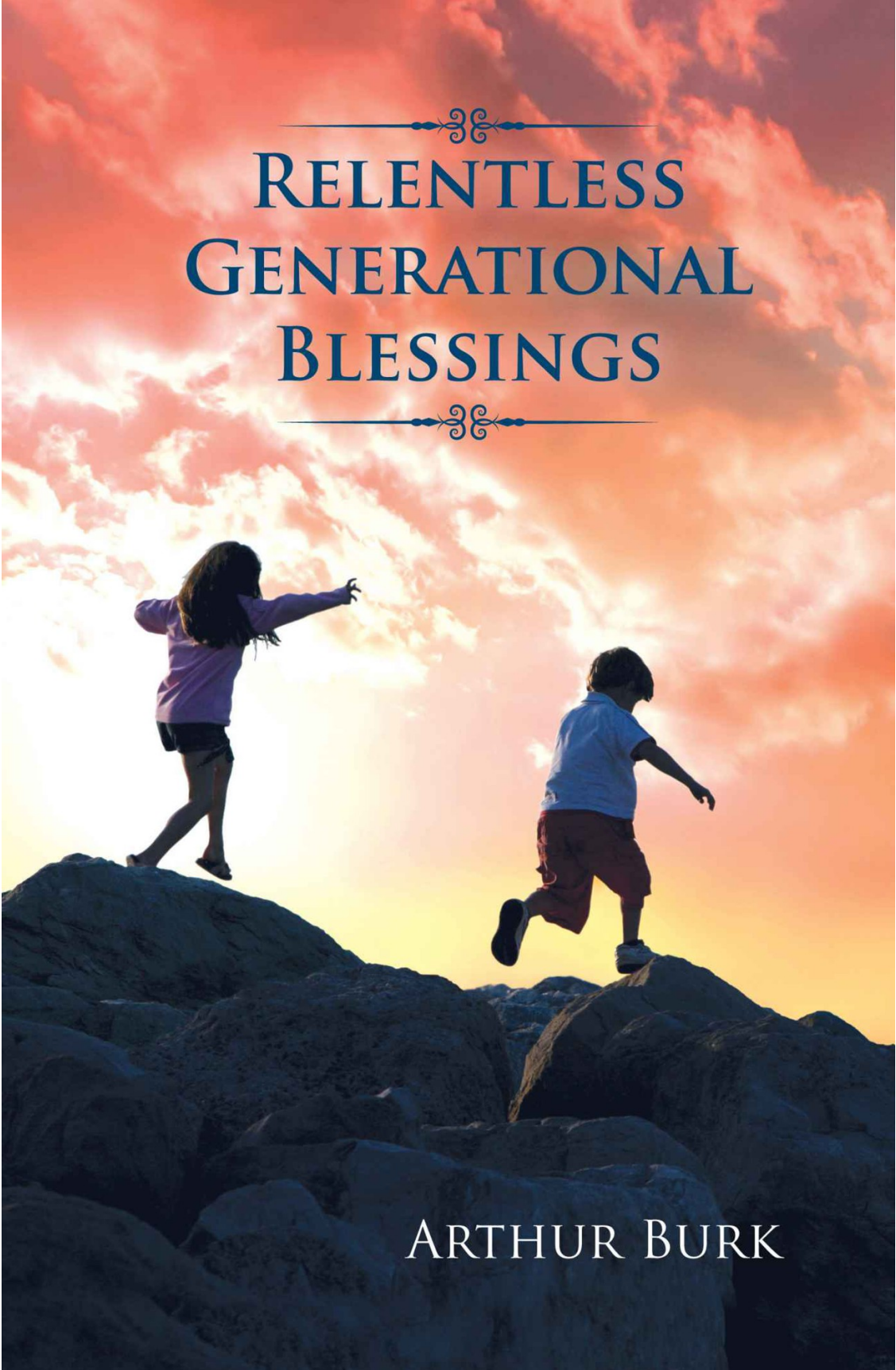


RELENTLESS
GENERATIONAL
BLESSINGS



ARTHUR BURK



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DEDICATION

To my parents,

Bill and Imogene,

who have bequeathed

vast riches to me.

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Chapter 1

A GENERATIONAL VIEW OF LIFE

A HIGH PRICE

The scruffy young man reached for his binoculars and started up the hill one more time, picking his way through the brush with the help of the full moon. He stopped short of the ridge and studied the shadows to be sure that he would not be silhouetted when he looked down on the freeway below. He moved to a little different spot than the one he had used at 11:00 p.m.

His first glance over the hill showed that the flashing red lights had been turned off and traffic was flowing freely through the INS checkpoint on Interstate 15. He turned the binoculars onto the Border Patrol parking lot and studied the cars: four impounded cars that had not yet been picked up, half a dozen empty patrol cars, three other cars—which was one too many for the skeleton crew that stayed there between active shifts. He studied the compound for additional clues. Were they truly done for the night, or was it a trap—just a temporary closure to lure people back to the highway?

He scanned the area repeatedly without finding any more evidence, then decided to trust his instincts. Without setting the binoculars down, he reached for his cell phone and punched a programmed number. When a sleepy voice answered on the other end, he simply said, “¡Listo!” Ready!

For the next hour, a loaded car rolled out of San Ysidro every ten minutes or so. The first vehicle was an old painting van. Twelve men were seated on the floor in the back. Alfredo was one of them. His extended family had worked hard and scrimped for years to save the \$2,000 necessary for him to be smuggled across the border. He had come legally from Guatemala to Tijuana. Crossing the border from Mexico to America with the “coyote”

had been simple. Now he just had to get past the last highway checkpoint before Los Angeles.

On one hand, he resented that someone was making \$24,000 in two nights for something that seemed so easy. On the other hand, if you had never been to California before, there was no way to know how to beat the system. What else could he do but pay?

The recon man on the hill was right. The checkpoint was unmanned when they drove through and they arrived in the slums of East Los Angeles without an incident. There Alfredo met his neighbor's second cousin's godfather who had offered him a spot to sleep in the garage with other men in similar circumstances. The next day he began a whole new life, one that in many ways was more brutal than the life he left in Central America.

A HIGHER PRICE

As an illegal alien, there was little work he could get and what he found paid poorly. He learned to ride the bus long hours to a miserable job as he struggled to make his way in a foreign land. In time, he acquired some phony documents which helped the job situation a little, but he still faced the twin barriers of no job skills and no English.

Within ten years he had saved enough money to bring his wife and two daughters over the border to live in the ghetto with him. Eventually he bought an old car, but since he had no driver's license or insurance he was at risk of being apprehended every time he drove it,. Being stopped for a single traffic violation could get him sent back across the border. He wept bitterly when his mother died and he was not able to go home for the funeral.

When he was in his fifties, the American government offered one of their periodic amnesty programs and he managed to obtain legal residency for his

whole family. Alfredo promptly used all his savings plus borrowed money for the family to return to Guatemala for two months to see his relatives for the first time in decades.

Alfredo never learned to speak good English. He never progressed beyond menial labor for poor wages. He never had a car that wasn't a worn out clunker. The best housing they ever had was a two bedroom upstairs apartment that sizzled in the summer. When he retired, he moved back to Guatemala, living on his \$287 monthly Social Security check.

THE PRIZE

What makes Alfredo and hundreds of thousands more like him pay the terrible price to come to the U.S. illegally? What causes a man to trade his freedom and dignity for a lifestyle of dishonor, of being abused and of hiding from the law? What is the prize that would cause a man to spend the best years of his life far from the land of his birth, but never far from his heart? What is there in the squalor, crime and brokenness of an American slum that is so superior to life in a small, quiet village in Central America?

For many, admittedly, it is the hope of making money. There are some illegal immigrants who manage to parlay their hard work and opportunism into a legal, middle-class lifestyle. Those who dream of coming to America choose to focus on the stories of the few who find comfort and security here instead of weighing the statistical probability that they won't be one of them.

My experience has been, however, that the most universal driving force behind illegal immigration is a desire for their children to have a better life. The parents come, pay a high price, grow old and die without ever having tasted the good life. Their gratification comes primarily from knowing that their children, who are born here, are U.S. citizens. Their children will learn

the language from the cradle. Their children will have a fighting chance to get a decent education. Their children may have more possessions at age 25 than the parents will have after a lifetime of toil.

A GENERATIONAL WORLD VIEW

I do not endorse or justify lawlessness in any context. The end does not justify the means. However, in a world stained deeply by selfishness and immediacy, there is something elegant, profound and compelling about any generational view of life, regardless of the package it comes in.

Hispanic immigrants are not the only expression in our world of one generation living for the next one. I stood on a bridge over the Feather River recently and watched the salmon swim upstream. There was no self-gratification in the long swim in from the ocean. After days of hard work, these once-strong fish would spawn, then die. There was no thought for themselves. God did not wire them to think about their “rights” or to seek a way of birthing the next generation that was not so costly for them. They were compelled by divine design to sacrifice their comfort so the next generation could have the best possible chance of survival.

Wherever you see a generational view of life, you are seeing the fingerprints of God. It may be violent and ugly like a mother cat fighting a pack of dogs to protect her kittens. It may be involuntary such as a retired couple raising a second batch of children in an attempt to salvage their latchkey grandchildren. It may be politically incorrect and socially complex such as Latinos coming to the U.S. for the sake of their children’s future, but wherever you see that mindset you are seeing a reflection of God’s heart.

God first revealed this facet of His heart in the Garden. Although the Garden was flawless, it was not at maximum potential either in size or

quality. He placed Adam and Eve in a very enjoyable, pleasant, life-giving context. Many Americans dream of retiring in a place like that so they can close out their lives with focused, intentional self-absorption.

God, however, did not give the first parents instructions on how to achieve maximum personal pleasure in the Garden. Rather, He told them to live generationally. They were to have children and extend the Garden to the non-Garden part of the world. Their focal point in life was to be building into the future, not extracting value from what was there before them.

Adam and Eve dismally failed to incarnate God's heart. They lived for themselves at the expense of all future generations. Their son went a step further by overtly cutting off Abel's life with his own hands in order to gain a few seconds of pleasurable revenge.

GOD'S PROVISION

Fortunately, all man's iniquity does not change the heart of God. He is still seeking to partner with us to cause each generation to surpass the one before it. To this end, He offers many tools. This book is about one of those tools: generational blessings.

In the same way that the children of immigrants often receive much "free money" from the sacrifices of their parents, so God has arranged a fascinating system whereby our children can benefit because of the generational blessings we accrue for them. In addition to the blessings they reap from a good seed they have sown, they can also receive substantial blessings from the way we live our lives.

The first half of this book is a look back. We will examine the nature of generational blessings and see how we can appropriate what has already been stored up for us. The second part of the book looks forward to see

what we can do in our lifetime to widen and deepen the stream of generational blessings flowing from our lives so that our children have more to draw from than we had.

Obedience alone does not necessarily enlarge the stream. We will study some marginally obedient people in Scripture who were highly effective in accruing generational blessings that relentlessly pursued their children.

They did this by using the secret tool. There is one choice above all other choices that determines whether your children will receive more generational blessings than you did. It is a choice that you and I are making day after day, whether we realize it or not.

But first, let us look at the nature of this powerful, yet invisible force called generational blessings.

Chapter 2

GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS DEFINED

My definition of generational blessings is God bestowing tangible benefits on a person or group of people as the result of a righteous act done by someone in a prior generation.

JEREMIAH'S STYLE

My favorite illustration of generational blessings comes from the story of Jaazaniah as recorded in Jeremiah 35. Jaazaniah was the patriarch of the Recabites during the reign of King Jehoiakim.¹ Although this people group was not part of the Israelites, they had lived in Israel as nomadic herders for centuries. They were relatives of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and joined Israel at Moses' request when they left Mount Sinai.² That means they were descendants of Abraham, but not of Isaac.³ Although they were not children of the promise, they worshipped Yahweh as righteous Gentiles.

The story begins with God telling Jeremiah the prophet to ask for a meeting with all the Recabite men. By this time in Jeremiah's ministry he was well known in Israel. Perhaps the more accurate word would be "notorious." Of all the prophets, he was the most unpredictable—almost eccentric at times. He had a flair for the dramatic and you could never tell where he would show up.

While he occasionally delivered a monologue like a "proper" prophet, he much preferred to use an unusual object lesson. Once he made a yoke which he wore around his neck until the day he got into a prophetic hoedown with the prophet Hananiah who took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it.⁴

Another time Jeremiah bought a clay pot, rounded up many of the civil and religious power brokers of the community and marched them out to the city dump—of all places—where he smashed the clay pot and preached a sermon to them.⁵

Even when he was put in prison, it didn't slow him down appreciably. From his cell he managed to open escrow on an unwanted piece of property and fire off another sermon that was delivered through the community grapevine.⁶

While Jeremiah had never actually killed anyone (unlike Elijah, for example) he was notorious for delivering scathing public denunciations of people's sin,⁷ so having him show up on your doorstep unexpectedly was not cause for celebration.

A COMMAND PERFORMANCE

This was the emotional and cultural context when Jeremiah arrived at the Recabite campsite unexpectedly. With no preamble he “invited” (like anyone was going to refuse the prophet) ALL the men from the clan to go to Jerusalem with him into the Temple. It took a prophet of God to violate the God-ordained protocol of no-Gentiles-in-the-Temple.

As the men marched up to Jerusalem behind the taciturn prophet, they had to be searching their minds trying to determine which malfeasance could possibly have attracted the attention of Jeremiah. Their wives and children who were left behind must have been asking the same question as well, wondering when, or if, they would see their men again.

Jeremiah was predictably impassive. They knew he had a keen sense of timing and had little reason to believe he would tip his hand prematurely. What they did not know was that Jeremiah himself had no idea how this scenario was going to play out. God had only given him instructions to

bring the men in and to serve them wine. He was obeying God, waiting to hear what the next set of instructions would be.

Jaazaniah and the other men meekly followed Jeremiah into one of the meeting rooms adjoining the Temple. While the whole procedure was very strange, Jeremiah did not seem to be exuding hostility, but then you never knew about him. Suddenly, everyone in the group tensed up. After Jeremiah had seated them in a comfortable, honorable setting he went to a side table and began to pour wine into bowls. It was normal Jewish protocol to serve guests a cup of wine upon arrival, but the Recabites had a different protocol. The silence deepened as their fear became oppressive. The sounds of Jeremiah's sandals seemed extraordinarily loud against the voiceless panic that absorbed all other sounds.

THE CRISIS

After personally setting out the bowls of wine and some cups, Jeremiah drew himself up and stepped into full prophetic authority as he delivered the command from God to the Recabite men: **“Drink the wine.”**

Each man waited to see if anyone would obey, but not one man reached for a bowl. Voiceless looks around the room shared their anguish and then their triumph. They were utterly trapped. There was nothing even remotely ambiguous about that command. There was absolutely no graceful, socially acceptable way out of the situation. The prophet had not offered them wine. He had stood in the place of God and **commanded** them to drink. The last possible door had slammed shut, leaving them with a lose/lose situation from which there seemed to be no escape.

Their meager triumph lay in the fact that at least no one had broken ranks. They were all standing true to their family code of honor in the face of crisis.

With adrenaline pumping and no good options before them, one of the Recabite men desperately explained to the prophet why they were collectively disobeying the direct command of God.

Several generations earlier, he said, one of their forefathers, Jonadab, issued a perpetual edict that none of his family who was living then, nor any future descendants, should ever build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard or drink wine.⁸ The entire clan had held to that standard. The men, their wives, their sons and daughters all embraced these unusual restrictions laid down by a long-dead ancestor. Therefore, even in the face of a direct command by a prophet from God, they would not drink the wine that Jeremiah had served them.

Having offered this simple, honest explanation that could be well documented in the community, the Recabites braced themselves for the consequences. Jeremiah was not known for accepting anyone's excuses. He was rather ruthless with people who defied him and his God.

THE SURPRISE

Right on cue, the Word of the Lord thundered in Jeremiah's spirit. With predictable passion in voice and body he spewed a river of God's fury: "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says"⁹ As the meaning of Jeremiah's words slowly distilled from the emotional storm raging in the room, they somehow grasped the fact that the sermon was addressed to the leadership of Judah, not to the Recabites. Furthermore, to their shock, they were the heroes of the sermon, not the villains.

As they recovered from their emotional whiplash enough to follow the logic, they realized that the whole charade had been rigged by God to give Jeremiah another opportunity to lambaste the Jews for their disobedience. This time God highlighted the fact that generations of Gentiles (the

Recabites) had meticulously obeyed a mere human command, while God's people did not and would not obey commands from God Almighty Himself.

The prophet wrapped up his sermon with the predictable dire threats of impending judgment. Just about the time the Recabites' collective blood pressure began to drop back to normal, Jeremiah turned back to them with eyes blazing and said,

“This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘You have obeyed the command of your forefather Jonadab and have followed all his instructions and have done everything he ordered.’ Therefore, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: **‘Jonadab, son of Recab, will never fail to have a man to serve me.’**”¹⁰

What happened next?

Was there stunned silence in the room as the shell-shocked men tried to wrap their arms around the enormity of what had just happened? Or did the pent-up emotions of the previous hour suddenly erupt into wild cheers of joy and relief? We don't know what happened then, but we do know that a blessing that took a mere 15 seconds to express has had a life expectancy of 2,600 years and counting. That blessing took!

A RELENTLESS BLESSING

It was a threefold blessing. First, the family line would never die out. Today the Recabites live in Yemen, primarily around the capital city of Sana'a. They are still nomadic. While many pastoral and commercial people groups from Jeremiah's day are now extinct (Canaanites, Sidonians, Philistines, etc.), the Recabite clan has been meticulously sustained by God to the present.

Second, God promised that there would always be some God-fearing Recabites. Every single generation of Recabites since Jeremiah's pronouncement has had godly people. Yemen came under sustained Islamic rule in the seventh century A.D., yet the worshippers of Yahweh managed not only to survive, but to thrive in Yemen.

This was important to the Recabites. It seems that Jonadab gave the rather extreme command that his descendants were not to build houses, sow seed, plant trees or drink wine in order to keep them from being contaminated by the culture around them.

Jonadab himself was apparently one of those 7,000 secret worshippers of Yahweh whom Elijah did not know about.¹¹ Although Jonadab served as King Jehu's most trusted aide in the extirpation of the Baal worshippers from Israel, when they first met Jehu was not sure whose side Jonadab was on.¹²

Having seen firsthand Israel's propensity to vile, wholesale idolatry, Jonadab wanted his migrant family to remain free to move away from Israel during seasons of spiritual decline. He did not want them held by economic concerns (houses in the cities or crops in the fields) or by relationships (established by sharing in the social customs of the day). He wanted the Recabites to resist economic and social integration so that they would not be carried along by the majority into religious error.

God knew Jonadab's heart and He posthumously gave him his heart's desire of a righteous family line through this great blessing.

The third part of the blessing was that there would always be men in positions of spiritual leadership. The phrase translated as "stand before me" or "serve me" is used throughout Scripture of a wide variety of leadership positions. Obviously these Gentile worshippers of Yahweh could not serve as official temple priests, but spiritual leadership transcends race and office.

The Recabites were no strangers to leadership. Moses recognized the leadership anointing on Hobab and begged him to leave his home and help lead Israel through the desert into Canaan.¹³ It was one of their people who won the battle for Deborah and Barak, showing again innate leadership skills, albeit without a title.¹⁴ Now God promised Jaazaniah that the civil leadership anointing that had been evident for centuries would become spiritual leadership as well for millennia to come.

THE INVASIVE FORCE

Here is the key issue: the godly Recabites who live today are mighty in spirit, not solely because of their own spiritual disciplines, but because God called them to Himself and then thrust them forth into ministry and leadership. He sovereignly intervened in their lives because of the promise He made to Jaazaniah in the days of Jeremiah. **Their spiritual dynamic is disproportionate to their own investment in spiritual growth because a generational blessing is pursuing them.**

This is a classic generational blessing. It has been active for centuries. The fruit of the blessing is played out in time and space, not just in heavenly rewards. God has been invasively active in this family line for 26 centuries because of what a handful of men once did in a side room of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Deuteronomy 28 talks about blessings and curses for the covenant nation of Israel. Verse 15 says, “However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” A loose, graphic translation would be, *these curses are going to chase you down, jump on your back, wrestle you to the ground and force themselves on you and there is nothing you can do to stop them.*

Many of us have seen curses like that. We have seen people struggle valiantly to avoid the implacably devouring power of an evil spiritual force.

It is important to realize that the same wording is used in verse two where the Lord talks about blessings. In other words, if Israel fulfilled the covenant terms, the blessings listed would *chase them down, jump on their back, wrestle them to the ground and force themselves on Israel and there would be nothing they could do to stop them.*

What God expressed in the context of a single generation in Deuteronomy 28, He has incarnated in multiple generations with the Recabites. Because of Jaazaniah's generation, God's triple blessing has pursued every generation of Recabites, effectively intruding in their lives, invading their will, triumphing over their sin nature, transcending the vicissitudes of world history, relentlessly producing spiritual giants in positions of leadership among the Recabites.

OUR CHILDREN

These are generational blessings. They can be of immense benefit to our children. In the business world, we speak of someone having a "level playing field." I ask, why settle for merely a fair, even opportunity in life? Why not impart to our children and our grandchildren these relentless blessing so that the next generation has a profound spiritual advantage in life?

God is utterly just. Many of our children have suffered spiritually, emotionally or physically because of generational bondage. They entered life at a **disadvantage** because of something that one or more of their ancestors had done. God allows us to set them free from those things through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. Then He

offers us the remarkable privilege of imparting to our children an equally drastic and equally unearned **advantage** in life.

Think of the Recabite blessing again. This is a parent's dream: God relentlessly pursuing our children, drawing them into relationship with Him and then thrusting them into positions of spiritual leadership. Reread the biographies of the spiritual movers and shakers of the Church. Many, many of them were oblivious to God during part of their life, or even opposed to Him. Their stories illustrate how God pursued them relentlessly, bringing them to salvation and to maturity in ministry.

Historically we have glibly attributed that to the sovereignty of God, as though He is random and capricious. While God is answerable to no one (ask Job!), I believe many of those gutter-to-glory stories are not random at all, but are the result of relentless generational blessings pursuing sinners who are hopelessly inadequate to resist them.

Jaazaniah fell into his generational blessing by accident when he did some things right. We have the option of being fiercely intentional about storing up relentless blessings for the generations that follow us.

Chapter 3

RECESSIVE & DIVERTED BLESSINGS

God promised the Recabites that there would be blessed people in **every** generation of their family. Not all generational blessings include that clause. At times a blessing does not manifest for several generations, only to reappear later on.

RECESSIVE BLESSINGS

I have a nephew and a niece who have bright red hair. Neither their father nor their mother has red hair, but there is a red-headed grandparent in the family line. In genetic parlance, the gene that causes red hair is a recessive gene. Their father carried this gene in his DNA but it did not visibly manifest as red hair. It was there all along, faithfully carried in the DNA of the father who did not have red hair, and it surfaced again in the next generation.

There are some generational blessings that function the same way. They are clearly visible in one or more generations. Subsequent generations may be quite godless, yet carry that blessing in their spiritual DNA though it does them absolutely no good and they may be unaware of it. Eventually the blessing manifests again. These are recessive generational blessings.

HEMAN THE MUSICIAN

Heman is a remarkable figure in Scripture even though he didn't make the top ten most familiar Sunday school stories. His life illustrates a powerful yet recessive generational blessing.

He came into prominence when King David was planning his second attempt to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. David ordered the Levites to conduct a talent search in Israel to find skilled musicians because he had decided to have organized, formal worship for the processional.¹ This was the first recorded incident of planned, choreographed musical worship. He liked his daring experiment so much that he retained the musicians in Jerusalem as adjuncts to the full-time priestly staff at the Tabernacle.²

Of the many musicians who were identified, the Levites selected Heman to be head of the sacred music department for all of Israel. He was assisted by Asaph and Ethan who was also known as Jeduthun.³

In addition to being an accomplished musician, Heman was also a prophet.⁴ Even though David appointed him as head musician in Israel with Asaph as his assistant, Asaph was put in charge of the day-to-day praise music at the Tabernacle in Jerusalem because Heman had other more pressing duties. He became King David's personal priest and seer.⁵ Apparently, when David's devotional life went dry or he needed inspiration for a new song, he turned to Heman to strike the spiritual spark again.

Clearly, one had to be anointed, not just talented, to be Israel's worship leader and King David's "pastor," but anointing in one generation does not necessarily mean that there was a generational blessing. In Heman's case, however, we can see that the anointing was passed on to succeeding generations.

God gave him 14 sons in order to exalt him. All of them were prophets of sufficient magnitude that they are memorialized in Scripture by name.⁶ The whole family line was so spiritually dynamic that they were included as a group in the special choir assembled for the dedication of Solomon's Temple. When they and the rest of the musicians lifted their voices in

worship, the glory of God filled the Temple with an overwhelming intensity.⁷

Three hundred years after David appointed Heman as chief worship leader in Israel, his descendants were still among the most anointed musicians of Judah.⁸ During Hezekiah's reign he ordered the reinstatement of Levitical worship at the Temple as part of his major preparations for revival, so they again searched for anointed, talented musicians. Heman's descendants were part of the godly remnant who had maintained their faith in Yahweh during the godless reign of Ahaz, the king of Judah who actually closed the Temple.⁹ Heman's generational blessing was so strong that it flowed down his family line for at least three centuries.

THE FAMILY LINE

When I discovered the story of Heman I immediately wondered where the generational blessings came from. The Recabites had been living a righteous life for a long time, but there was a specific incident which caused Jeremiah to speak a blessing into their family line. I wondered what Heman's forefathers had done that resulted in something of this magnitude in his life and succeeding generations.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered that his father was a scoundrel, not a saint! In fact, he was so reprobate that he caused a monumental change in world history. It was because of the depravity of Heman's father that Israel rejected the institution of judgeship and demanded a king.

In the context of modern history, this would be equivalent to America having a president who was so evil that we not only turned against the man himself but also decided to throw out the entire republican form of government and revert to a monarchy. Or imagine England having a king so

vile they decided to abandon their hereditary monarchy and make the entire British Empire a republic.

Those are drastic and hugely improbable scenarios, yet that is what happened in Israel. Heman's father and uncle were Joel and Abijah. They were morally bankrupt and their wholesale perversion of justice caused the nation to demand that Samuel give them a king before he died.¹⁰ Israel had lived with some pretty poor judges without rejecting the government of God in their midst, but the public sin of these two men was so great as to cause a national revolt of unparalleled scope.

How could someone as anointed as Heman come from such a debauched family? It actually happens all the time. The answer is that there were generational blessings which began further back in the line. The blessings skipped his parents' generation but manifested again in Heman and his children.

The genealogies reveal that Heman's grandfather was none other than Samuel the prophet. His great-grandmother was Hannah, the woman of faith, and his ancestors included Kohath, Levi, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham.¹¹

Joel committed great iniquity, but he still carried the generational blessing that had been passed down from Hannah and Samuel as a recessive generational blessing in his life. He despised his birthright, so the spiritual potential was not released to him. It profited him nothing, but since he carried the blessing in his spiritual DNA, it surfaced again in the life of his son, Heman, and in his grandsons.

RECESSIVE BLESSINGS TODAY

I know many people who were the "first" Christians in their extended family. Many of them report that as a child they had a heart that sought after

God, even though they were in a totally non-religious home and received no outward support from anyone for their very private spiritual walk.

We also see men and women who get saved, experience dramatic spiritual growth, and move quickly into positions of spiritual authority with a wisdom beyond their years that transcends any meager mentoring they had.

These people are probably the recipients of recessive generational blessings. They may be the first Christians in their family lines in the recent past, but somewhere further back in their family line were spiritual giants who received from God's hand a significant blessing. The very brokenness of the recent family line is mute testimony to the judgment of God on people who refused to embrace their spiritual birthright. Although a family line walks away from God for so long that even the memory of their spiritual heritage is lost, the blessings are not. Blessings imparted by God can only remain suppressed for so long before a devout life unexpectedly bursts out of a toxic family line.

DIVERTED BLESSINGS

God was gracious to Samuel, Joel and Hannah by allowing the blessing to merely become recessive. Joel could have lost the blessing entirely because, in God's legal system, personal sin sometimes permanently diverts the blessing to a different part of the family line. This happened in Jacob's family.

Jacob received the Abrahamic blessing from Isaac and in turn expected to pass it on to his children. The question of which child would receive the blessing had been a sore spot for the previous two generations and his generation was no different. Jacob had four wives and children by all of them. It was possible that for the first time the rich, multifaceted blessing would be divided among many sons instead of being given to just one.

The greatest emotional focus was on the mantle of leadership. There were two options. Reuben was the firstborn and the cultural norm was that he should receive the leadership blessing. However, Joseph had been his father's favorite from the beginning and now was also prime minister of Egypt. No one knew what Jacob would do, but everyone wondered whether the new patriarch of the clan would be Reuben or Joseph.

This was the question hanging in the air as Joseph arrived at Jacob's deathbed. It was unspoken at the moment, but had been thoroughly discussed (in private) for years. Jacob reached deep for the last reserves of strength as he greeted Joseph. His first act was quite unexpected. He abruptly adopted Joseph's two sons as his own, allowing them to immediately share in the imparted blessings with their uncles instead of having to wait another generation for the blessings to come to them. He also blessed the younger grandson over the older, in full-blown defiance of Joseph's wishes and the cultural norms.¹²

The eleven brothers must have watched Jacob's arbitrary, highhanded actions with dismay, feeling that this slammed the door on any chance for Reuben to receive the blessing. It looked as though the golden boy was going to trump them all one more time.

After he had adopted his grandsons, Jacob indicated that he was ready for the final act. The brothers were all present, waiting. Jacob called Reuben forward and publicly acknowledged him as the firstborn son, raising a flicker of hope in him and the others that he might receive the leadership blessing.

That hope died a brutal death when without warning Jacob fiercely cursed Reuben for the sin of incest committed many years before. In a single sentence Reuben was stripped of his right to receive the leadership anointing.¹³

This unexpected turn of events must have thrown the brothers into shock. The discussions had always been between Reuben and Joseph. Now that Reuben was out of the running, Simeon was unexpectedly the center of attention.

Things moved swiftly. Jacob did not allow them time to process his words or their emotions, but immediately called for both Simeon and Levi together. He swiftly cursed these sons as well for the sin of covenant breaking and the genocide committed in defense of Dinah, their sister. Because of that curse, they were also disqualified from being the dominant tribe in Israel.¹⁴

I wonder if at this point any of the sons entertained the idea that Jacob might curse each one in turn to justify giving the blessing to his beloved Joseph. If that thought was in Judah's mind, he must have cringed to hear his name called next. He was far from being sinless and may have shrunk back in fear and shame when his name was called immediately after hearing his three older brothers cursed in rapid-fire sequence. To everyone's surprise, Jacob blessed Judah, his fourth-born son, with the leadership anointing for Israel, and the blessing was guaranteed to that tribe for all of human history.¹⁵

This is what we call a diverted generational blessing. The iniquity of the three older brothers caused the blessing to be permanently lost to their descendants and go laterally to their next younger brother and his sons forever.

This happened again when David's older brothers, who were from the ruling tribe of Judah, were found unfit to be king and the generational blessing was given instead to the youngest member of the family. Not one of the older sons was ever able to recover the blessing for their children. It was forever transferred to David's line.¹⁶

MERCY AND JUSTICE

In summary, God's mercy sometimes allows generational blessings to flow through defiled people to their children or grandchildren. This is a recessive generational blessing.

At other times, however, God's justice takes the generational blessing completely away from a defiled man and sends it laterally to a sibling or to a relative who is deemed worthy. This is a diverted generational blessing.

Chapter 4

GOD'S INITIATIVE & CONTROL

While scoundrels in our family lines may cause God to delay or divert generational blessings, the more pressing issue is to determine what causes Him to release them.

In the case of the Recabites, a single act produced a blessing that operated in every subsequent generation. This is unusual. The more common pattern is a release—or restriction—of the accrued blessings in selected generations.

God's reasons for releasing a measure of stored blessings in a given generation are quite complex, but I have observed that at least one of His criteria is the flow of world history. God released blessings to Eliakim so he could strategically influence Israel in a time of crisis. In addition to shaping Israel's future, his work contributed to the downfall of the Assyrian Empire. God drastically changed the balance of power in the entire region due to the blessings bestowed on one man.¹

On the flip side, God made a huge deposit into Abraham's trust fund of blessings, but told him that his family could not make withdrawals for over 400 years because God first had certain international issues to deal with.²

FATHERING A NATION

Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, was the palace administrator for King Hezekiah during the latter part of his reign. In our culture we might call him chief of staff to the president. He was the senior advisor who oversaw day-to-day access to the king as well as being heavily involved in all major decisions for the kingdom.

A man named Shebna held the post during the early years of King Hezekiah's reign. It was a heady time to be in power as Hezekiah slowly turned the nation from the worship of Baal to reestablishing the covenant with Yahweh.³ By contrast, when Eliakim replaced Shebna, he oversaw a sustained crisis as the king of Assyria invaded the Mediterranean region and threatened Judah's survival.⁴

Try to put yourself into the story in order to feel the emotions in the street as the citizens of Judah listened to reports of the advancing menace from the East. Assyria was delayed from time to time as it took a few months or perhaps even a couple of years to subjugate one enemy or another, but overall their progress seemed to be inexorable. You could always hope one of the foreign nations that lay between Judah and the advancing army would be effective in stopping them, but so far it had been a vain hope.

After several years of watching the Assyrian military machine come closer and closer it was now time for hard decisions. You were merely weeks away from having enemy soldiers inside your national boundaries. War had come and hope at this juncture was merely denial of a grim reality.

Pretend you are a parent in Judah at this time. How did parents who lived in the outlying towns prepare their families emotionally as the enemy approached? What did they tell the children? Did some parents help their children say goodbye to the entire neighborhood in case it was torn down and the family never returned? Did others put on a smiley face and merely tell the kids they were moving in with Uncle Joseph in Jerusalem "for awhile"?

The Assyrians did arrive and systematically began conquering all the lesser cities in the nation. In the meantime, King Hezekiah was feverishly preparing for a final stand in Jerusalem. He reinforced the walls,

manufactured more weapons and diverted water away from the incoming army to make their logistical problems greater.⁵

However, as the army got closer, the king unexpectedly reversed his position and decided to sue for peace. He sent a delegation to the King of Assyria to ask for terms so they could pay tribute instead of fighting.⁶

Imagine the mixed reactions in the community when King Hezekiah announced that he was going to offer tribute to negotiate peace instead of going to war. How long was it from the time he made that decision until the emissaries returned from their negotiations with the news that the price of peace was a full ten tons of gold? Was there jubilation over being able to stay in the land or were they aghast at the price of freedom? Were the negotiators national heroes or villains? Were those whose cities had already been destroyed enraged by the fact that Hezekiah had not done this earlier?

The national treasury did not have enough gold to pay the tribute and the king announced that it would take a nationwide sacrifice to amass ten tons of gold. The appeal went out for everyone to bring all their gold to a central staging area.

How would you feel if you had a solid gold goblet that had been in your family for ten generations and was a wedding present to you from your father? Would you voluntarily yield it, or would you hide it knowing the community would despise you if they found out later that you held back when others were sacrificing? If you initially decided to keep it, would you feel shame when there was not enough gold in the community to meet the payment and they began to strip the gold off the Temple?

BETRAYAL

Now imagine the emotional whiplash of the next chapter of the story. First the nation hoped against hope that the Assyrians would not get that far.

Nevertheless, they did arrive. Then the nation braced for war. Then they decided to pay tribute. Then the price was overwhelming, but due to heroic sacrifice they managed to accomplish the impossible ten tons of gold. There had to be national relief bordering on euphoria as the shipment of gold left the city. Finally this ten-year nightmare would be over and they could go back to their homes and resume their lives.

A few days after the gold was delivered, however, sentinels reported a large column of Assyrians breaking camp in the north and moving toward Jerusalem. They tried to believe it meant they were going to go by Jerusalem on their way south to take on Egypt, but very soon it became apparent that the troops were headed for Jerusalem.

Scripture says there were citizens on the walls listening to the communication between the Assyrian general and the leaders of Jerusalem, so the whole city knew immediately of Sennacherib's duplicity and his ultimatum. Imagine the rage and despair in the city that night. They had sacrificed deeply to pay a monumental tribute in order to secure peace. Now there was no more treasure with which to bargain and the treacherous king was demanding unconditional surrender and exile to another country.⁷

Were the young firebrands trying to inflame the people for war that night? Did the sound of mourning fill the city as the women lifted their anguish into the blackness of the night? Were some people trying to figure out how to surrender their families to the Assyrians against the king's wishes, believing it would be the least dangerous course to pursue?

And what about the religious sector? What were the priests and prophets thinking? King Hezekiah had carried out the finest reforms of any king in Judah. The nation had collectively celebrated Passover at a higher level than they ever had before, even when David was king. Where were the blessings of God that Hezekiah should have had as a result of his righteous,

courageous choices? How did the spiritual elders explain this travesty in the face of Hezekiah's righteous acts? Or did they even try?

What about the prior idolaters? Were they whispering or maybe shouting, "This is what King Hezekiah gets for tearing down the altars of Baal and Ashtoreth." Or did they go so far as to produce their hidden idols and attempt to gain the favor of these gods? On every front, emotions were at full tide as fear and anger warred for ascendancy.

GOD'S PROVISION

All of this God knew.

While Judah felt abandoned by God, He had actually prepared for this crisis years before. Early in Hezekiah's reign, God sent the prophet Isaiah to rebuke the first palace administrator, Shebna, for his sins and to announce that he would be demoted. Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, would take his position.⁸

In addition to his new palace duties, God said that Eliakim would be "a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah." I believe that being a father to Jerusalem and Judah refers to his role during the times of crisis with Assyria.

It was Eliakim the king assigned to head the delegation that met with the Assyrian general at the aqueduct. It was he who heard firsthand the news of the betrayal of trust and the demand for unconditional surrender with deportation. It was he who heard the Assyrians mock the God of Hezekiah. It was he who took the news back to King Hezekiah. It was he who was sent by the king to Isaiah the prophet to tell him of their plight. It was Eliakim who received from Isaiah the strong prophetic word of victory. He believed it, took it back to Hezekiah and strengthened the king's heart.

Eventually God sent His angel and killed 185,000 Assyrians. They never entered the city, and Judah never had to fight. The prophetic word was fulfilled precisely in God's time, but Eliakim, the palace administrator, had to be a father to Judah and Jerusalem during that interim when God appeared to be silent and disinterested. Eliakim not only carried out his official duties, but also extended emotional strength to the king, the rest of the administration, and the people at large during their time of deepest crisis.

Winston Churchill did this during World War II. When he took office there was absolutely no good news. He did not try to downplay the crisis or artificially pump up optimism. By sheer depth of conviction and force of personality he gave strength to an entire nation in their darkest hour. He was a father to England in that season.

It is a monumental call for any one man. Those who have been in ministry know how depleting it is to deal with people's pain. It is a daunting task to be a father to even a congregation of people in ordinary times, let alone attempt to father a nation in a time of crisis.

God never expected Eliakim to accomplish this in his own strength. He did not promote him because he was a highly talented powerhouse. In order for Eliakim to carry out that massive call on his life, God imparted to him **all** of the generational blessings in his family's spiritual trust fund. The prophet Isaiah said, "**all** the glory of his family will hang on him."⁹ God completely emptied out the spiritual trust fund of the family line in one generation.

While Eliakim personally benefited from the impartation, it appears that God's primary motive in releasing this blessing to this man **at this time** was to shape international affairs. We do not know what caused Hezekiah to weaken and crumble. He started strong, seeking God and cleansing Judah

and Israel on a massive scale. Somehow his faith failed, and he turned to war preparations and finally to the power of money in his futile attempt to deal with the Assyrians.

While the devil certainly must have had a hand in Hezekiah's weakness, God was already prepared for the catastrophe. His release of generational blessings to one man some years prior was all it took to keep world history on course.

LIMITED RELEASE

In stark contrast to Eliakim's story where God was extravagant in His release of blessings, we have Him limiting the generational blessings that were released to Abraham and Isaac. They each had a huge trust fund of generational blessings, yet they only received a tiny percentage of those blessings in their own lifetime.

As a result of his walk of faith, Abraham received a generational promise from God that he would be the progenitor of a covenant nation.¹⁰ He had at least eight sons from his wife and two concubines, and that would have made a decent foundation for a good nation. God precluded that when He decreed that only one son, Isaac, would receive the generational blessing.¹¹ That was just enough to keep the family line alive and pass on the promise, but it did not allow him to make any measurable progress toward turning the family line into a nation.

Similarly, Isaac had two sons but only one son, Jacob, received that blessing.¹² God reiterated the promises and reassured him that the blessings were there, secure in the family line, but He did not allow Isaac to birth a nation either. He limited their access to the blessing. This was due to the sovereignty of God, not their sin. The blessing was not decreased, merely held in trust for later generations.

It was not until Jacob's generation that the blessing was dispersed to an entire family.¹³ In one generation it widened from one person to over seventy and they quickly became a nation as the blessings were released on a wholesale basis.¹⁴

Abraham and Isaac had the blessing and they passed it on, but neither one could invoke it for all their children although each man tried.¹⁵

Not only did God limit the size of the covenant family, but He also delayed releasing the land to them. God promised Abraham that the land of Canaan belonged to him and his descendants. However, He told them up front that the blessing would be held in trust for 400 years before it could be accessed.¹⁶ No matter how righteous Abraham's descendants might be, they could not possess their birthright until the iniquity of the Amorites reached its full measure.¹⁷

God had issues with the Amorites and planned to decree judgment on them eventually. When He determined that their time was up and the earth needed to be rid of their presence, then and only then would He release the land blessings to Abraham's descendants. Their generational blessings were restricted while they waited for a whole group of nations to become sufficiently evil.

THE PATTERN

World affairs affected the timing of God's release of massive blessings to Eliakim. World affairs also affected His restricting the flow of blessings to Abraham's seed for hundreds of years.

Abraham's situation was not an isolated incident. God frequently places a blessing in a family line long before anyone is allowed to fully access it. He gave Adam and Eve a promise that one of their descendants would defeat the devil.¹⁸ Judging from the name given, they expected Cain to receive that

generational blessing.¹⁹ In actuality, it was thousands of years and hundreds of generations later before, “in the fullness of time,” Christ tapped into the trust fund, appropriating the grace to die without sin and thus defeat the devil.²⁰

David also received a generational promise from God regarding his dynasty.²¹ Although it affected many kings of Judah after David, the trust fund will never be fully accessed until Jesus Christ reigns in Jerusalem as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all the nations of the earth.

PERSPECTIVE

We who were raised with a western worldview can easily become absorbed in a perspective that is only slightly larger than our own lives. We must not think of generational blessings primarily in terms of the benefit to our children. God blessed Abraham, but in the same breath He commanded Abraham to be a blessing.²² The larger the blessings, the greater the sphere God desires to touch through “our” blessings.

Although the next chapter discusses human initiative in appropriating the blessings, we must remember that God is the God of the entire universe and He deals with us in the context of His plan for the ages, even though we may not be able to see beyond our small corner of the world.

Chapter 5

MAN'S INITIATIVE & RESPONSIBILITY

Few of us walk in the elevated spheres of Abraham or Eliakim, whose lives were transformed by a sovereign intervention of God. In most cases He allows us, even expects us, to assume some personal responsibility for the release of the blessings. Scripture shows at least two different scenarios where we can be the catalysts for the accrued blessings to be released.

DEATHBED IMPARTATIONS

The most common way generational blessings were transferred in biblical times was through a deathbed proclamation. Isaac, Jacob and David blessed their offspring with generational blessings prior to death.¹ Moses gave a prophet's blessing to the twelve tribes on the day he died.² All of these blessings were generational in scope, not merely to benefit the people who were alive at the time. They still apply to those families and tribes today even though many Israelites don't know their lineage.

I believe there are two reasons for the power of deathbed impartations. First, there is accumulated virtue. Consider Abraham. I don't think God capriciously made him wait until he was 100 years old to have Isaac. I believe it took that long for Abraham's spiritual life to become sufficiently dynamic for him to father a nation. He had to develop virtue and accrue blessings to lay the spiritual foundation for a nation that would be world-changers for several millennia. I don't think his stream of generational blessings was sufficiently wide or deep when he was 40 or 60 or 80 years old. Therefore, God waited while Abraham grew.

Even after Isaac's birth, Abraham continued to grow in his relationship with God and to receive more promises.³ He lived to be 175 years old, presumably imparting his blessing to Isaac near the end of his life. Thus the blessing was well aged, rich, diverse and dynamic.

In this same vein, the blessings Jesus received were from Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, all of whom had lived long enough to develop great virtue. They were not dying, but they were elderly and their spiritual walk was extremely deep, suggesting great authority.⁴

A second reason deathbed blessings are powerful is that the person giving the blessing no longer needs those spiritual resources. In our culture, parents tend to keep their money until they die because they might need it. No one knows how long he will live or what emergencies could arise after retirement, so most people keep their money until death. After their death, the funds are surplus and are distributed to the next generation.

There are some interesting passages suggesting parallels between temporal and spiritual inheritances. Elijah made it very clear that he would not part with his spiritual authority until the very end. If Elisha was there at the final moment, then he could have the double portion he desired.⁵ Was this because Elijah would no longer need his anointing at that time?

Or consider Simeon. God had promised that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Was this just to comfort Simeon or was there power in his blessing Jesus when he knew he had run the final lap of his race and could give away all of his earned authority?⁶

Scripture is quite clear about that in the case of Abraham and Isaac. It is likely that Abraham blessed Isaac verbally before dying although there is no record. Assuming it did happen in a formal way while he was alive, there was still no immediate benefit to Isaac from that impartation. His entire generational blessing stayed in the trust fund for a while longer. Genesis

25:11 says, “**After** Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.” God only activated the blessing upon Abraham’s death although the verbal impartation probably occurred some time earlier. I believe Abraham was growing up spiritually the day he died, and God was saving up every last drop of his righteousness before passing it on to Isaac.

There is no reason deathbed impartations could not be done today, except that our religious culture does not model or teach it in most cases. Many people know when their time is coming. The family openly discusses funeral arrangements. Children and grandchildren congregate at the bedside for the last few hours or days simply because it is the culturally proper way to show respect. Tragically, no thought is given to a patriarch dispensing to the next generation riches that are infinitely more valuable than those covered in his will.

PERSONAL PURSUIT

A second way generational blessings are received is to earnestly pursue them. Jacob knew there was a huge trust fund in his family line⁷ and he became obsessed with receiving it. He opportunistically bartered for the birthright when his brother was vulnerable⁸ and fraudulently stole the blessing when Isaac was old and blind.⁹ The high point of his life was at the Jabbok River where, regardless of the cost, he would not let the Angel of the Lord go until his generational blessings had been activated and released to him.¹⁰

The wrestling match came when matters were at a crisis point for Jacob’s family. Esau was coming, and the last time Jacob had contact with him, 20 years before, he was in a murderous mood. Jacob finished all possible

human arrangements, sending his family across the Jabbok at a ford, and stayed behind alone where God met him in his hour of fear.

I imagine his family knew that he had stayed behind and expected him to rejoin them soon. As the evening wore on and he did not appear, there must have been some concern. By daybreak anxiety would have been high since Esau was coming and Jacob was not there to lead or protect his family.

Think of the reaction in the camp if one of the little boys suddenly shrieked, “There he comes!” People would have tumbled out of their tents to see if it was Esau or Jacob. They must have been shocked to see their wealthy, honored leader looking so unkempt. He had been wrestling on the ground, there was mud and dirt everywhere, his hair and beard were disheveled and his clothes were torn and twisted. Worse yet, the once strong, valiant man stumbled, barely able to limp across the river.

Silence may have descended over the camp as worst-case scenarios about Esau flashed through each mind. They were aghast at the terrible thing that obviously had happened to Jacob. As he reached the near bank and hobbled up to his terrified, paralyzed family, one of the kids may have asked in a tremulous voice, “Daddy, Daddy, what happened to you?”

I suspect a radiant smile filled his bruised and dirty face as he replied, “Son, I’ve finally been blessed!”

This is what he had pursued for years. It was prophesied over him in the womb and his mother obviously bred it into the very fiber of his soul from his earliest moments of comprehension. He waited, manipulated, schemed, lied, fled, occasionally obeyed and eventually fought in order to get the blessing that he wanted so badly. The price he paid for it didn’t matter in his eyes. He had to have it regardless of the cost.

God rejoiced at his attitude. Jacob valued his spiritual birthright more than all the wealth at his disposal. God did not validate his dishonesty, but

He drew a clear contrast between Esau who despised his birthright and Jacob who desperately wanted it.¹¹ Jacob received it because he sought it with passion and persistence.

A LEGAL APPEAL

We savor the stories of Abraham, Hannah and Hezekiah who sought and received from God specific answers to prayer. Would not God be equally pleased if people passionately sought Him for the release of generational blessings that were in their family line?

We have focused on some high-profile generational blessings recorded in Scripture and are able to see them played out over hundreds or even thousands of years. But what are **we** doing about our families' spiritual trust funds? What about the blessings that are credited to **our** accounts because of the righteousness of our ancestors that have not yet been released to us?

Few of us know the spiritual caliber of all our relatives for more than a few generations back, but God does. He keeps track of His promises and of our accrued blessings even when we don't know what they are. You may have a spiritual giant in your ancestry and know nothing about him or her, but God knows. He remembers all the blessings He imparted to that man or woman. He knows which of those blessings were released in their lifetime, which have been released to succeeding generations and which are still being held in trust for you and your offspring.

This casts a whole new light on the parable of "The Importunate Widow."¹² I used to be very uncomfortable with this passage because I couldn't see much difference between this widow's insistent demands and a two-year-old throwing a temper tantrum. God finally opened my eyes to the fact that in a mere six verses He refers to "justice" four times.

The point is that the widow had a legal right to receive what she was asking for. She was not asking just because she wanted something badly. She was not asking frivolously. She was not asking for mercy or favors. She wanted what was legally hers. The judge only had to acknowledge her claim for it to become reality for her.

The conclusion to the parable is quite remarkable. Jesus asked, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”¹³ There are two implications to this rhetorical question.

First, **Christ equates faith with knowing what our legal rights are and pressing in through prayer until those rights are granted.** There is a huge difference between trying to force an agenda on God and trying to appropriate generational blessings to which we have a legal right.

Esau was passionate and insistent as he tried to possess the generational blessing that had already gone to Jacob. No amount of insistence could change the legal realities. God gave the blessing to Jacob. Period. There was no generational blessing for Esau to appropriate regardless of his intense, persistent appeal.¹⁴ He was trying to secure a blessing that simply was not available to him. This story of the importunate widow is not teaching us that we can coerce God if we are persistent enough. It is about legal rights.

On the other hand, each of the evil kings of Judah had access to great generational blessings that were available to them due to the Davidic Covenant. The blessings were in their family line, yet many of them neglected to appropriate the blessings. God continued to hold the blessings in trust until a righteous king came who valued the blessings and sought to receive his portion of the great trust fund.

THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF TIME

Second, Jesus implied that it was critical for the last generation before His return to know their legal rights and have a passion to possess their birthright.

We who live near the end of history have the best of both worlds in terms of generational curses and blessings. We can nullify most of the generational curses that have come down through our ancestors. Many have done that. We also have the enviable privilege of tapping into the heavenly trust fund of blessings that has been built up by our forefathers. Few have done that.

By sheer force of numbers and our position in history, our generation has more accrued blessings than any previous generation. We could theoretically benefit from the righteous deeds of the community of faith that began with Seth and extends all the way to us.

Even though we stand in this unique place, today's community of faith is infinitely more skilled at using their natural talents to become comfortable in life than they are at tapping the heavenly trust fund to expand the dominance of the Kingdom of God. We are specialists in passing the offering plate instead of possessing our birthright. We routinely seek power through dollars rather than seeking authority through anointing.

No wonder the Lord grieves at our self-deception and blasts us for shunning our birthright while we complain about our lot in life.

As sons and daughters, we should be vigorously pursuing the blessings we have a legal right to receive. As parents, we should be meticulously preparing to pass on our spiritual treasures to the next generation.

Chapter 6

THE STEWARDSHIP FACTOR

While Paul's letters to the church at Corinth contain much teaching about spiritual gifts, I find it quite significant that there is no mention of that church having a vision or outreach beyond itself. Paul affirms their spiritual wealth when he says, "... you have been enriched in every way ... you do not lack any spiritual gift ...,"¹ but there is little indication that they were using that spiritual wealth to expand the Kingdom of God. In fact, they had to be prodded to contribute to the famine relief effort in Jerusalem.²

Since they were an inwardly-focused church, it comes as no surprise that they used their spiritual gifts as status symbols rather than resources for doing Kingdom work. This syndrome is not limited to New Testament times. People today still seek spiritual blessings and authority for selfish purposes. To counter that I find it best to do an impartation of generational blessings in the context of stewardship.

Impartations vary immensely. The impartation at our daughter's eighteenth birthday was planned for months and took an entire evening. The deathbed impartation that resulted in this book took mere minutes. Even though one was complex and the other simple, both included four steps that were anchored in the principle of stewardship.

PAST FAITHFULNESS

The first step is to validate that the person in question has used the anointing they already have in a responsible way. In the parable of the talents, when the king returned he gave each of his good servants authority over cities.³ Before he gave them new authority, however, he ascertained

how productive they had been with the resources he had previously given them. The amount of new authority was directly proportional to the skill with which they had used their previous resources.

This to me is the beginning place for an impartation. Each of us has already been given responsibilities from the Lord and spiritual resources with which to carry them out. An individual must first demonstrate that he has good character and has diligently used the anointing God previously gave him. This becomes the basis for further impartation.

Paul used this stewardship logic with the church at Rome. In his greeting to this church that he had never visited he said, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world."⁴ Three verses later he added, "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift"⁵ Because they had been faithful with what they had, he was eager to give them more.

In the parable of the talents, people expressed surprise when the king took the talent away from the wicked servant and gave it to the one who already had the most. He replied, "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given"⁶ To paraphrase, those who are active and effective in their stewardship are prime candidates for receiving more anointing.

THEIR NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

The second step is to demonstrate that their situation has changed and there is an identifiable need for more anointing in order to carry out their God-given assignments. This runs counter to our contemporary Christian culture.

People generally pursue more anointing in the same way women buy clothes and men buy tools or music or software. Most of the time there is not a pressing need for either the clothes or the tools. They caught the eye

of the customer who could easily visualize how they would come in handy at some time in the future, so they were acquired and stored.

Similarly, many Christians are eager to have every spiritual leader who comes through town lay hands on them to impart something—anything—just to have, not because there is a known, pending need for a particular anointing.

Even though someone has been a good steward in the past, that alone does not qualify him for an increase in spiritual authority. My belief is that authority should be commensurate with responsibility. When an individual has been called by God to enter into a higher level of ministry with responsibilities that are either new or more complex, it is then appropriate for him to ask God for greater resources.

This was God's logic in releasing the generational blessings to Eliakim. He knew that Eliakim would need them to be a father to Judah and Jerusalem during the coming crisis. It is possible that he could have been a competent palace administrator in his own strength, but he needed something more for the national crisis he would soon be facing. In light of the overwhelming new responsibilities, he would need massive new resources. God drew those resources out of his family's spiritual trust fund.

I always attempt to identify why a person needs more spiritual resources than he has before asking God to release the accrued blessings. At times we only see the general job description. At other times we can pinpoint specific spiritual resources that will be needed to effectively carry out the task to which God has called him. Regardless, I believe there should be clear reason to ask God for more.

THE AUTHORITY FOR ASKING

The third step is to identify the authority an individual has to impart the blessings. When Christ died, the veil in the Temple was ripped in two from top to bottom. This was symbolic of the believer's new access into the presence of God. Each Christian is now a priest after the order of Melchizedek and we have personal direct access to the Father through the name of Jesus.

While not detracting from that equal, individual access, God still chooses to do some of His work through the human authority structures He implemented. Thus the power of God is frequently imparted to someone through a leader who is in a specific position of authority.

The most common Biblical scenario is of a father imparting spiritual blessings to his children. This is a God-ordained authority structure. As an extension of that, when Paul ministered to the believers in the church at Corinth, he claimed his position as their spiritual father.⁷ Within a church certain spiritual leaders have an anointing that goes with their position of authority. This transcends and is in addition to their personal anointing and integrity.⁸

Whatever righteous authority a man may have in the spiritual realm is given to him as a steward to be used to advance the Kingdom of God. Therefore, in the impartation the leader needs to articulate his position as a steward of God with the right and duty to disperse God's assets to His people for Kingdom work.

THE PETITION

Then, based on an individual's past faithfulness, the new call of God on their life and the leadership authority that is present, we ask God for specific impartations if that is His will for this person at this time. That is the fourth step.

DISCLAIMER

Let me be quick to say that I do not see this pattern followed every time generational blessings were released in Scripture. In the case of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Eliakim the role of stewardship was central in their generational blessings and readily obvious. In the case of the Recabites, the blessing was ostensibly released to reward them for a wise, obedient lifestyle. Yet stewardship is indirectly seen there in the fact that Jonadab originally gave his unusual command as a part of his strategy to fulfill his personal stewardship, which was to keep the family holy after his death.

I intentionally frame generational blessings in the context of stewardship primarily as a reaction to the self-absorption of our culture. I have taught this material in many contexts over the last few years, and there are invariably people who want me to pray for them so they can receive their blessings. When I teach I always put more emphasis on how to widen and deepen the stream of generational blessings for our children than on how to receive personal blessings; however, I rarely have parents come to me for coaching on how they can invest in their children's future.

The thing American Christians hear best is that there might be something good for them. They can resonate to that. Most of them want all the blessings they can possibly receive. Accruing spiritual riches as an act of stewardship on behalf of our children is largely foreign to our culture.

Therefore, I stress it.

Chapter 7

TWO MODELS FOR IMPARTATION

The stewardship theme was central and clearly expressed when we did an impartation for our daughter. When she turned 18, we used impartation of generational blessings as the focus of a customized rite of passage instead of having a traditional birthday party.

THE CONTEXT

The effort we invest in something is usually an indicator of how much we value it. Therefore, because I believe deeply in generational blessings, the impartation service was quite elaborate, expensive and complex. Our home church agreed to allow our family celebration to pre-empt the normal evening service.

We made plans for weeks in advance. While this was not a wedding, it had some of the same pomp and circumstance. Elegant printed invitations were sent to dozens of friends and family members who came from long distances just for the event. The church was decorated with flowers and candles. Desiree had an elegant new dress. The ushers dressed formally and people signed a guest book as they came in. There was a reception and gifts afterward. The whole event was videotaped.

PAST FAITHFULNESS

For the look at her past stewardship we used letters of reference. Her mother and I, her pastor, her principal and her boss each wrote a letter articulating specific godly character qualities that she had evidenced in the past. These were not only statements of what her character strengths were at

the moment, but they also stressed the evidence of her being intentional about character growth. We are all born with some character qualities that come easily. The good character we have to work hard for is more significant. Both the process and the product were highlighted in the letters.

Our pastor read each of these letters aloud to the audience, then stated that the testimonies of her past stewardship were more than satisfactory. She had used well the grace God had given her in the past; therefore, as her pastor, he was pleased to recommend her to God for more blessings to be imparted.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

As her father, I stepped to the podium to look at the next five years of her life. While I didn't know the details of what would be happening, I was confident that the choices she made between ages 18 and 23 would significantly mark the rest of her life. She had not graduated from high school yet. In the next five years she would be making choices about higher education, her role in the work force and possibly her spouse. She would also have the freedom (actually the responsibility) to establish her own spiritual disciplines, select her own church family and form a larger circle of friends.

I articulated some of the resources I thought she would need in the next five years to wisely use that time as the hinge between her childhood and having her own children.

NEW RESOURCES

First she needed to be accepted for who she is. Desiree is a strong personality with a great deal of drive. She has a keen mind, quick tongue and some rough edges. When God packages intensity in imperfection, our

culture tends to attack the intensity instead of enriching the vehicle so the intensity can be expressed in a life-giving way.

As her father who home-schooled her, I validated, affirmed and fanned the flame of her intensity. I knew that humanly speaking the world at large would not be as supportive of who she was, so I shared with her and the witnesses that she would need a special grace to be accepted as the strong woman God made her to be.

Second, she would need mentors. Her mother and I had poured much into her and were now releasing her, but the job was far from finished. Because we are finite, our parenting was imperfect and inadequate. She would need new mentors to continue the work of growing her into the fullness of womanhood.

Third, she needed protection. Predators abound in this fallen world and many young men and women are irrevocably damaged during this season of their life.

Fourth, she needed a deep hunger for the Word of God. The spiritual disciplines I had imposed as part of her schooling were no longer mandatory. Now she was on her own and there would be more competition for her time than ever before. She would also be facing more difficult choices than she had in the past, so if the Word was not alive for her, mere discipline would rapidly fade.

AUTHORITY TO ASK

There was a threefold authority to request these and many other gifts on her behalf. First was the positional authority represented by her parents. Second was the authority of her pastor.

I took the authority issue one step farther and talked about how each of the assets we requested was already in the family line. We happen to know a

lot about certain branches of our family. I shared with the guests numerous vignettes from our history, showing that those specific virtues were already well established in the family line. The assets listed above were already in the trust fund and therefore it was reasonable for us to request a withdrawal from the account.

THE PETITION

Finally, our pastor and I laid hands on her and I asked God to impart from the family's spiritual trust fund the specific resources I felt she needed. We closed by inviting Father to open the books of our family's generational lines all the way back to Seth and give her everything He knew she needed that we had not articulated.

THE FRUIT

Nine months after the ceremony, I reviewed the video of that evening to see if there were measurable changes in her life. Like Jacob, we had brought to the table our intense commitment to possess the family birthright. We were fiercely intentional in seeking the release of generational blessings into her life. At the same time, we recognized not only the sovereignty of God but also His infinitely greater perspective on her life. We knew that what He did and did not release to her was based on His superior wisdom and love.

Not everything I asked for has been incarnated, but the four things mentioned above changed measurably in the nine months since the impartation.

A STRONG, ACCEPTED WOMAN

Desiree is bright, articulate, well read, decisive, aggressive and has leadership written all over her. (That really is true. It is not just a proud father's bias.) The downside is that strong women tend to intimidate people and small people in leadership often lash out at big people under them.

In the years before the impartation people frequently reacted to Desiree's strengths and initiative. When she was part of a team in either a secular or religious context, she could often see ways to improve the project. However, if she made suggestions, they were commonly seen as criticism of authority so both she and her suggestions were rejected. She had learned to keep her ideas to herself lest she intimidate those around her.

I shared with the guests that her family line is filled with strong, pioneer-type women who consistently outperformed the cultural norm, yet did not alienate people. The women were valued for their strengths, especially by their husbands and people in spiritual leadership. Strong leaders have sought out her female ancestors in previous generations, trusted them and gladly delegated authority to them.

In the prayers for impartation I asked for that unusual, valuable anointing which I knew was already running strongly in the family line to be passed on to her.

It has been.

Since that time her ideas are valued. Shortly after the impartation she changed jobs and went to work for a multinational company in a job for which she was acutely underqualified. She worked hard and mastered the job. Within three months she was training new people even though there were employees that had been there for 20 years who should have been doing the training.

She was so highly respected that after less than a year on the job, her immediate supervisor sought her out and asked what ideas she had to

improve a project the company had been doing well for decades. She shared many ideas that were welcomed. She was affirmed and changes were made.

She was not only respected, but liked. Three levels of management over her would seek her out just to talk because they enjoyed her company. She became the confidant of a dozen adults twice her age and had the freedom to speak into their lives, saying things with grace no one else could say. At times she complained that she was not able to get her work done because her bosses were taking her time to visit with her.

When she left the company to go back to college, she was honored and feted at an unparalleled level. She had seen many people leave in the course of the two years she worked there. Some were fired, some laid off, some left for better jobs and some retired. Most other employees were discarded with as little emotion as you feel toward your old brake shoes. They served you well, but when they wore out you exchanged them for new ones with no sentimentality.

Desiree knew that what she was experiencing was not the normal culture for the company. It was the favor of God resting on her in the hard-bitten, callous, cynical, secular marketplace.

A few months after she left, a vice president of the company personally called to see if he could persuade her to return to work for them.

The same dynamic can be seen in her church and personal relationships. Before, she was always on the fringe because people were intimidated by her or she was afraid to speak out for fear of being misunderstood and rejected. Not so now.

There are still a few individuals who cannot accept input from anyone, especially a woman, because of their personal woundedness, but overall there has been a dramatic shift in how people respond to my daughter.

The family's generational blessing for her to be a strong, competent, high-profile woman without being intimidating or offensive has definitely been released to her by the Lord.

It was not there before. It is there now.

GODLY MENTORS

A second blessing I asked for was the blessing of being mentored by people who are mighty in spirit. This blessing is readily evident in my own life. It is simply amazing how often God has arranged for me to be ministered to one-on-one by those who are part of the spiritual eldership of America. Time after time, my life has been changed by one of those brief, intense encounters. I was not wise enough to seek this blessing, but God sovereignly placed it in my life because He knew how much nurture I would need to do the broad cross section of things He has called me to do.

This blessing, too, God has imparted to my daughter. Before the impartation she was "Arthur's daughter." Spiritual leaders who met her were polite and kind because she was my daughter, but it was as though there was a mantle of invisibility over her. That is rather typical of children of leaders. Compared to their peers, they may be exceptional. Compared to their super-high-achieving parent, they look rather ordinary.

There was no malice on the part of the spiritual giants who greeted, then ignored her. This is the normal course of events. Humanly speaking, it takes a lot of effort for the child of a leader to individuate and become known as a person in their own right.

Fortunately, we are not limited in the realm of "humanly speaking." The first sign of change came when I was discussing some armor bearers with her shortly after the impartation. She was getting into some ministry

situations and I strongly urged her to recruit a couple of spiritually mature women to walk alongside her and watch her back.

Her response was the same as most people's when I challenge them on this issue. She could not imagine anyone with that solid a skill set having discretionary time, let alone wanting to invest it in her by serving her with prayer and counsel.

I suggested a couple of people I knew who were older than she and had walked with the Lord through many tough situations. She contacted them with a measure of trepidation and both were delighted to serve her.

Since then, various leaders in different walks of life have sought her out and offered to pour into her. God is sovereignly connecting her with people who can pour their riches into her, and He is giving her great grace in their eyes without her having to pay her dues to earn their respect.

That blessing was not there before. It is there now.

PROTECTION

The third blessing I requested on her behalf was Abraham's blessing. Here we had to go outside the recent family line, but because she is part of Abraham's seed she has access to the blessings he had.¹

When Abraham was living in Canaan, God placed the fear of the Lord on the Philistines. They had walled cities, civil jurisdiction and armies. Abraham had none of those means of protection. He was a Bedouin with a handful of servants and herdsmen around him, but his vulnerability in the natural was offset by the protection of God.

The Philistines were so in awe of Abraham's God that the king and the commander of the Philistine army came to him and requested a peace treaty.² They feared that they might somehow offend Abraham. They knew

if his God took up an offense for him, the Philistine nation would be in deep trouble.

This is an astounding portion of Scripture as the warring, dominant, self-assured Philistines took out an insurance policy with God for self-preservation. It would be analogous to the United States being so intimidated by the favor of God on a family of Vietnamese refugees that the federal government asked for a peace treaty between the United States and this one overtly blessed family. Can you imagine our confident, militant government seeking guarantees that one immigrant family would not unleash their God to punish this nation if some ignorant American citizen offended them with a racist comment? That is the fear of the Lord.

As her father, I had done myriad things to protect Desiree while she was a child. Now she was going to be out and about, going places where I could not protect her. Therefore, I asked for the fear of God to fall on the “Philistines” among whom she walks and works so they would dread the possibility of retaliation from her God if they did her wrong.

There was no opportunity to know if she was vulnerable before the impartation because I physically protected her. I do know that she has walked in great protection since then.

HUNGER FOR THE WORD

A fourth blessing was for her to have a hunger for God’s Word and eyes to see truth that will heal brokenness and set prisoners free. This anointing runs deep in her family line. Most of the guests at her impartation service knew about my passion for the Word which came from my father who is a church-planting missionary and very much a man of the Book.

I also shared the story of Mrs. Mary Allen King, Desiree’s great-great-great-grandmother. Mary was a Proverbs 31 woman in her Ohio farming

community. She was legendary for setting the standard of life-giving in the entire region. Her skills were simply the fruit of her hunger for the Word. When she was nine years old, Mary memorized the entire book of Matthew (except for the genealogy in chapter one) and quoted it on two successive Sundays for the Methodist Sunday School she attended.

I reminded God of that and asked that He release to my daughter the same hunger and thirst for the Word that drove several of her ancestors to spend hours of their discretionary time in the Book.

Since the impartation, it is not unusual for me to come home in the middle of the day unannounced, and find her curled up on the couch reading her Bible. Her mirrors and bulletin boards are decorated with Bible passages that she is voluntarily memorizing. What she faithfully did before out of duty, she now does out of desire.

That, too, is a blessing that God released from the family trust fund.

THE NATURE OF THE CHANGES

Some of the blessings I requested have not yet materialized. God may have denied our requests or those blessings could still be in the pipeline. The point is, things did change in her life as a result of the impartation. One of the changes was internal. Her spiritual appetite increased. She was well grounded in Biblical truth before the impartation, had good self-discipline and was mature beyond her years. Even so, there was a sudden new hunger for the Word that did not result from any spiritual exercises. God did a quick supernatural work within her as a result of our request for that to be imparted. He blessed her.

The majority of the changes were external. Simply put, God has made sweeping changes in how people interact with her. Saints and sinners, friends and strangers alike respond to her differently now. This is

particularly significant because spiritual disciplines are primarily designed to change us—not the world around us. It is a gift from God, a blessing, when the world around us is changed for our benefit. He saw fit to significantly bless and thereby change my daughter's environment.

In short, each family can live under a curse where it takes more than the average amount of effort to merely survive and do the basics. Or, they can clear the curses off their family line and have a level playing field where there is a reasonable return on investment of labor. A level playing field is certainly preferable to being cursed, but it is less than our birthright. Ideally a family will live under God's blessings where He changes them internally and changes the world around them to facilitate their life, their work and their ministry.

We chose blessings for our daughter. She was faithful in the past, she had needs for the present and the future, and I had authority as her father. Therefore, we asked God to give her some of the riches that our righteous ancestors had stored up. God agreed with us and imparted them to her. Her life has been beautifully changed.

A DEATHBED IMPARTATION

The impartation ceremony for my daughter was carefully choreographed and the theological framework of stewardship was meticulously explained throughout. The deathbed impartation that resulted in this book had all four elements of stewardship in it, but they were not articulated and the whole process was done hurriedly under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Here is the background. As a teenager, I had a terrible problem completing things. Whether I started a hobby or a class or a spiritual discipline, I would begin with a bang and fizzle out with a whimper about a

quarter of the way through the project. This was primarily because of my character problems.

When I left home, God addressed my bad character through pressures on the job. He made the consequences of my sluggardliness so painful that endurance and thoroughness have become very strong character qualities. Now I have such a strong drive to complete a project before stopping that it frequently becomes a source of irritation to those around me.

There was one flagrant exception to my acquired taste for closure: writing books. My shelves are littered with major writing projects that were outlined, begun and left incomplete. I have partial books circulating among Plumline intercessors since people begged to read my incomplete musings on various subjects. The archives on my hard drive are filled with unfinished projects. Nothing I did, no change of subject, schedule, technique, circumstances, prayer cover, accountability or self-discipline changed my inability to finish a book. I had not yet produced a single complete book in all my years of extremely prolific writing.

Elsie Nokes was a remarkable woman. She retired several times, but it never took. Her passion to be a life giver always drew her back into work. When she was in her eighties, less than a month before she died of cancer, she was still working fulltime, teaching in the Christian day school at our church.

She was strong where I was weak. Her vision and commitment were matched by endurance and thorough, painstaking work, especially in writing special curricula for slower students.

I had never before sought a blessing from a dying person, but God placed within me a deep urgency to see her before she died and I knew I was to request a blessing. I didn't know how it would work or what I was requesting. I simply obeyed.

She had no formal position of authority in the church but she was a mighty woman of God with sterling character. She knew nothing about this teaching on blessings nor did she know my motive in coming. She did know she was dying and that I had come to say goodbye.

Although we did not go through the formality of evaluating my past performance, I know that if we had, she would have given me a clean bill of health. She thought highly of me.

She knew I was in transition. While we did not discuss it, the church we both attended was vigorously committed to building a platform under me for success, and she was keenly aware of and interested in the various open doors I was on the verge of walking through.

She had the spiritual authority of an aged, godly woman who knew she was about to go home. She was not fighting death and was so very ready to go. She had never married so there were no human children to release her blessings to. She therefore was free to give the earned authority of her life to anyone she chose. We discussed none of this, and I doubt she understood the dynamics of earned authority. Her understanding was not important. God and I both knew she had authority to impart.

After we chatted a few moments, I asked her point blank, with no explanation, if she would bless me. She never hesitated. Taking one of my hands in both of hers, she cried out fervently for God to enable me to complete my work. She said it several times, in several different ways, without ever clarifying what needed to be completed. That was all.

I received the blessing and left. Miss Elsie died within days.

I did not understand it at the time, but I did receive it. It never occurred to me that she had blessed my writing. A few months later, I understood what God had done in that brief moment.

Her tenacity in life had built up significant personal virtue. God spoke through her to release me from whatever held me back from completing books. She effectively equipped me to write whole books as part of Plumblin Ministries. Writing is now flowing smoothly and in great volume.

The circumstances surrounding my writing are as poor as before, but God always gives me the grace to use available scraps of time. I rarely get writer's block. During the night watches, He consistently illumines new passages of Scripture for me. I have written complete books since then that have been life-giving to thousands.

THE POWER OF A LIFE

I am convinced that this book you are holding in your hands is the direct result of Elsie's life and death. In her life she accrued great virtue. In her death, God directed her to give me a portion of her virtue at a time she no longer needed it.

There was nothing elegant or dramatic about the impartation. I frequently feel the presence of the Spirit when there is a heavy anointing flowing. I felt nothing during that brief prayer. However, there was apparently a huge transaction recorded in the heavenlies as great blessings were transferred from her ledger to mine. It has resulted in measurable benefits in my life and will enable me to fulfill some responsibilities I have in the Kingdom.

This book could touch a few thousand lives. Many of those people will appropriate a greater measure of their accrued generational blessings. In addition, many other parents may invest more deeply in building up a stream of blessings for their children and their grandchildren.

All of this will significantly advance the Kingdom of God because a self-effacing lady in an obscure town lived righteously, earned authority in the

heavenlies and imparted some of her spiritual riches to me shortly before she passed into glory.

Great and growing is her reward in heaven.

Chapter 8

LIMITATIONS

While I passionately believe that we should be fiercely intentional about obtaining our generational blessings, there are some people I refuse to help even though they want their generational blessings released to them.

LEVI'S BLESSINGS

I strongly prefer to do a generational impartation after an individual has been through cleansing and deliverance. Cleansing involves thorough confession of personal sin with the expulsion of any demons that were empowered by those sins. Then deliverance effectively deals with generational iniquities and the resulting demons or curses.

Levi's story establishes the principle that we can be under blessings and curses simultaneously. The tribe of Levi came under a curse when Simeon and Levi committed genocide, violating a covenant to defend their sister, Dinah.¹ Just before Jacob died, he imparted generational blessings to nine of his sons and spoke generational curses over the other three. He cursed Levi with his descendants being scattered in Israel because of the sin at Shechem years earlier.²

Four hundred years after they were cursed, the Levites responded to Moses' call for support in the incident of the gold calf at Mount Sinai. As a result of that radical, courageous choice on their part, the tribe of Levi was blessed with the privilege of being the priestly tribe in Israel.³ I don't think this was God's original intent. I believe His plan was for Israel as a whole to be priests to the nations of the world. Of the 13 tribes, 12 forfeited that original calling by failing to respond to Moses' call for repentance at Sinai.

What is significant for our story is to see that even though God blessed the tribe of Levi at Mount Sinai, the earlier curse spoken by Jacob was not lifted. In the distribution of land 40 years later, the Levitical cities were scattered throughout the nation.⁴ They did not receive a contiguous territory like the other tribes because Jacob's generational curse on them was still binding.

The blessing essentially neutralized the curse since they were given the prime real estate of Israel, and the stigma of the curse was basically wiped away. The fact remained that they were under a curse and a blessing simultaneously for centuries.

Clearly this curse was not God's ideal for them. In the Millennial Kingdom it will be revoked and the Levites will be given land in the very center of Israel, where they can all live together clustered around the Temple in Jerusalem.⁵

In addition to Jacob's curse and Moses' blessing, later on in history the Levites again offended God, this time with their unmotivated worship. God was so angry at their dishonoring Him that He said, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me."⁶

Earlier, when Moses blessed them, God did not remove Jacob's curse. Now that He had cursed them, He did not take away Moses' blessings. He merely added some more negatives to the equation, significantly diluting the effect of the blessings they still had. They functioned in ministry with curses and blessings operating at the same time.

SPIRITUAL LIABILITIES TODAY

This principle continues to this day. We are each born with a toxic waste dump (our generational curses) and a gold mine (our generational

blessings). The first seven chapters of this book have been an appeal for people to value the gold mine, not just break curses off their lives. This chapter looks at the other side. There are people who seek the blessings of God while vigorously denying that there could possibly be any bondage from the past that is holding them back.

As the case of Levi illustrates, it is possible to function and even prosper under a mixed load of blessings and curses. However, it is generally not necessary, or wise.

There are some curses that we cannot get out from under. We can never completely avoid the effect of the curse on the earth or the curses on mankind that resulted from Adam's sin. No matter how sanctified we are, there are basic issues of pain in childbirth, the sweat of our brow and physical death that may be mitigated by our spiritual walk, but never completely removed.

Having acknowledged those limited exceptions, I hasten to say that the vast majority of generational curses, generational demonic attachments and generational soul wounds can be eliminated from the believer's life because of the death of Christ on the cross. They also should be removed, because the presence of generational curses or demons in our lives will dilute the benefit we receive from the blessings and anointings God has imparted to us for ministry purposes.

THE SEDUCTION OF SUCCESS

Popular wisdom says, "Nothing succeeds like success." In the realm of Christian ministry, I would paraphrase that to say, "Nothing seduces like success." I know people who are mightily used of God, yet are carrying a load of unresolved issues. Because they are functioning at a higher level than the average spiritual leader, they generally assume that God is fully

pleased with them and they do not have any spiritual liabilities. This is utterly false reasoning. Although God is powerfully blessing them, they could function at an even higher level if they got rid of the generational baggage they are carrying.

When a person is in denial about the impact of his forefathers' iniquity, or when there is woundedness that has not been addressed, it would be a great disservice to add additional blessings to his already profitable ministry. This just makes it easier for the enemy to keep him complacent, in denial.

Sometimes God uses pain to cause us to seek complete freedom and wholeness.

JONATHAN EDWARDS' BLESSINGS

Consider the way Jonathan Edwards' story has been spun over the years. His family history is one of the most celebrated examples of generational blessings among America's spiritual eldership. Two hundred years after his birth, someone did a study of his descendants. Among the 400 who could be identified at that time there were college presidents, deans of schools, professors, judges, lawyers, physicians, missionaries, authors, government officials and captains of industry. In fact, when you add up all the people in each category, it comes to well over 400 names, indicating that many of his descendants excelled in more than one area. History resoundingly affirms their productive involvement in every significant facet of American society.

The strength of generational blessings did not start with Jonathan Edwards. During his life, he widened and deepened the stream considerably, but it was already a mighty river coming from his mother. Esther Stoddard Edwards came from a spiritually dynamic family that included Governor Winthrop, the leader of the great Puritan migration in America.

While his mother's line was blessed, his father's family line was full of iniquity and woundedness. There were murders, mental illness, adultery and various other blatant problems in multiple generations. Clearly he was not dealing with just one or two socially maladaptive people. There were vicious generational curses running through his father's line and those curses attached themselves to Jonathan Edwards with the same relentless force as the blessings.

Jonathan Edwards' life, therefore, had a large dose of hard moments. In spite of his anointing and his historic role in the First Great Awakening, he was fired from the church he had pastored for 23 years. His inability to obtain justice points to his being in acute bondage to the Aramean Curse.⁷ His descendants also experienced this kind of unusual difficulty from time to time.

I say this not to criticize him but to raise these questions. Were the blessings from his mother's side unnecessarily diluted by the defilement from his father's side? What was the full breadth and depth of the ministry God desired him to have? What would his life and history have been like had he been freed from the curses so he could walk in the fullness of the blessings? Was his ministry less than it could have been because the curses neutralized much of the power of the generational blessings? Was the impact of his descendants on the American culture less than it could have been because of the power of generational devouring?

I don't know the answers to those questions for sure, but both his life and the lives of his descendants suggest that there were massive blessings and powerful curses at work simultaneously.

DENIAL

The presence and the power of God do not mean that there is complete purity or complete wholeness in a person or a group. Israel as a nation experienced the unparalleled presence of God during their 40 years in the wilderness. They experienced His stunning power when they won battles on the east side of the Jordan and then crossed the Jordan River on dry ground at flood tide.

It must have come as a shock when God abruptly blasted their denial at Gilgal. He demanded immediate, complete adherence to the circumcision laws they had been systematically ignoring.⁸ His temporary endurance of their sin for the previous 40 years was exactly that: temporary.

He had never been pleased with their willful sin. The fact that He did not withdraw the blessing of His presence for one entire generation in no way means that He accepted their sin as a new norm. The human propensity for denial and self-justification is so great that God's silence about our sin, and His provision of blessing in the midst of it, is usually wrongly translated as tolerance.

In the same way that God blessed an uncircumcised Israel for 40 years, He will occasionally bless a man for a season even when there are unresolved generational issues in his life. But, each higher level of authority brings with it a greater demand for purity. Denial of personal sin or of generational iniquity becomes more dangerous each time God promotes a man.

Hence, I am very hesitant to do a generational impartation for someone who has not been through cleansing and deliverance, especially if they are in overt denial. Helping them access more blessings and more authority will probably just increase their condemnation. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."⁹

In a best-case scenario, we do an impartation of generational blessings at the end of a deliverance-and-inner-healing ministry time. After freeing a person from those evil things that will pursue them relentlessly with destruction and reduce the power of the blessings, the impartation helps to fill a person's freshly emptied "house," thereby reducing the danger of reinfestation.¹⁰

CHARACTER

There is a second danger in releasing the generational trust fund to someone who is not ready. The issue is character. We are warned in Scripture against giving honor to a fool.¹¹ If someone does not have the character to care for what has already been entrusted to him, it is unwise to give him more.¹²

As I shared in the last chapter, my childhood inability to complete projects was primarily due to my bad character. God specifically and forcefully addressed my character issues many years before He imparted the anointing to write this book. Anointing is never a substitute for godly character, nor was it designed to cure bad character.

Scripture records several cases where God opted to give great spiritual anointing to men who lacked character. The anointing did not counteract their bad character or automatically cure it. Rather the blessings positioned them to do much more harm with their bad character because they had a far larger playing field.

JEPHTHAH

Consider Jephthah to whom God gave a great anointing for military conquest. He also had a deep soul wound that became infected with bitterness. Because of his bad character, he started a civil war. But because

he was so anointed in battle, he killed two-thirds as many Ephraimites in a single day as America lost in the whole Vietnam War.¹³

If he had not had this warfare anointing, he would not have been in a position to polarize the nation over a trivial offense. Since he had both anointing and bad character, he accomplished a great deal of damage in a very short period of time.

SAUL

King Saul began his reign with a life-changing anointing as a prophet. Samuel told him,

“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.”¹⁴

In addition to spiritual authority, he received a fresh impartation of the Spirit for warfare and leadership during the incident with Jabesh Gilead.¹⁵ His warfare anointing was so great that no two Ammonite soldiers were left together by the time Saul completed his rout of them.

Yet because of his bad character, he made a fool of himself by chasing David, lost the dynasty, caused Israel to be defeated by the Philistines and lost his own life in the process.¹⁶ Petty jealousy abounds, but if Saul had been a small businessman in a little town, his character problems would have affected only a few people. Since he was king, his character problems caused international turmoil. The blessings built a larger platform for the inevitable failure generated by his character issues, and he hurt an entire nation in the process.

OTHER LEADERS

King Solomon squandered his anointing on women and idolatry, bringing a curse on the whole office of Israel's kingship and causing the nation to be reduced in size by 80 percent.¹⁷

Judas had an anointing to cast out demons and do miracles, yet his character issues caused him to die a demonized suicide after participating in the betrayal of the King of Life and Loyalty.¹⁸

Add to these Cain, Miriam, Nadab, Abihu, Korah, Samson, David, Rehoboam and many others. Each of them was anointed for service. Each permanently damaged their potential ministry because of character issues. Because they were anointed, their inevitable failures played out on a larger scale, on a more public platform, and hurt more people than if they had no call of God or anointing on their lives.

MY PERSONAL VALUES

If I had the power to give a man godly character or a spiritual impartation, I would choose character every time. Since I don't have the power to transfer character, I have deliberately withheld impartation from people who refuse to make their personal growth a priority. Generational blessings are no substitute for sweat equity in your personal pilgrimage.

Part 2
Looking
Forward



Chapter 9

INIQUITY VS. FAVOR

So far we have defined generational blessings and seen how the blessings that have accrued in our family trust funds can be accessed in our generation. The bigger challenge is to define what we can do during our lifetime to intentionally widen and deepen the stream of generational blessings so that our children have more to draw from than we did.

SIN, REBELLION AND INIQUITY

There is no single verse that overtly defines the process. However, many principles of spiritual life can be understood by looking at their opposite. Scripture is quite clear as to what creates the legal ground for a generational curse to attach to a family line. By looking at that, we can derive the specific righteous actions that will accrue generational blessings.

In Exodus 34:7 God classified our wrong behavior as sin, rebellion or iniquity. Each of these comes from a distinctly different Hebrew word and each has different implications for us.

Sin is generally defined as missing the mark. It is being out of bounds, over the line, not measuring up.

Rebellion is quite a bit stronger than sin. It involves willful, knowing defiance of God's rules. A person in rebellion knows full well that the proposed action is sin and deliberately goes over the line, willing to risk the consequences. Some people walk in rebellion because they think they are smart enough to avoid the consequences of their sin. Others believe the pleasure derived from their sin will be greater than the price they have to pay for their disobedience.

Iniquity is a considerable step beyond rebellion. The root meaning of the Hebrew word translated iniquity is to bend, twist or warp. When a person seeks to bend, twist or warp God's absolutes, that is iniquity. Whereas an act of rebellion acknowledges God's rules but defies them, an act of iniquity denies that the absolutes exist or that they apply to the specific situation.

Thus, an act of iniquity contests either God's ability or His right to establish absolutes. It represents an attack on the essence of God.

ABORTION

Abortion, for example, is an act of rebellion. Poll after poll shows that a very high percentage of people know the baby in the womb is alive and believe abortion is wrong. Because of the perceived cost of obedience, many mothers opt for abortion even when they know it is wrong in the eyes of God. They believe the price of obedience (keeping the baby) is greater than the supposedly minor cost of an abortion. On this level, abortion is both sin and rebellion.

However, those who drive the "freedom of choice" movement are in a very different camp. When they claim it is just tissue, not a baby, they are guilty of iniquity. When they say abortion is not murder, they are guilty of iniquity. When they state that the mother's personal convenience supersedes all other considerations, they are guilty of iniquity.

Every one of those concepts is diametrically opposed to the clear teaching of the Word of God. They are attempting to rewrite God's absolutes, which is infinitely more evil than persuading people to disobey them. This is iniquity.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexuality is generally a wrong response to pain. According to the homosexual community's statistics, 90 percent of lesbians have been molested. A high percentage of homosexual men had a dysfunctional or non-existent relationship with their fathers. Even though sodomy is typically rooted in pain, it is always sin and rebellion, but the homosexual community becomes guilty of iniquity when they attempt to normalize their sin.

When the "gay rights" movement claims that homosexuals are genetically wired that way and their behavior is beyond their control, they are guilty of iniquity. When they teach that there are no spiritual consequences to sexual behavior, they are guilty of iniquity. When they reason that a person should not be held morally or legally responsible for their sexual drive, they are guilty of iniquity. The term "gay lifestyle" is iniquitous.

Each of these concepts overtly contradicts God's established absolutes.

WITCHCRAFT

Witchcraft is iniquity because it attributes to Satan or to his minions the power to overcome the inevitable consequences of man's rebellion against the Most High God.

In short, any attempt to redefine God's absolutes or to deny their existence is iniquity. God summed it up in Isaiah 5:20: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." This defines iniquity.

CAIN'S INIQUITY

In the story of Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, there is a very enlightening use of the Hebrew word for iniquity. God punished Cain with

three judgments for his lifetime, as well as sentencing him to the eternal consequences of his fratricide. First, He placed a curse on Cain's relationship with the ground. In the Adamic judgment, God had already cursed all the ground. When He cursed Cain's personal ability to farm, He added another layer of difficulty to making a living off the land.¹

The second judgment was on his relationship with people. Cain would be a wanderer for the rest of his life, never able to put down roots in a community. His story would be known to all and the stigma would follow him, interfering with every attempt to form lasting relationships.²

Third, God cursed Cain's relationship with his own body. He placed a mark on him that was so flagrant and obvious that everyone would know he was Cain. The mark reminded him and those around him every day that he was the object of God's wrath.³

Against that backdrop, Cain responded to God, "My punishment is more than I can bear."⁴ The word translated "punishment" is the same word translated in hundreds of other places as "iniquity." Cain literally said, "My warping is more than I can bear."

Notice the cause-and-effect sequence here. He attempted to bend, warp or twist God's absolutes when he denied that he had any responsibility for his brother. He denied God's absolutes applied to him. That was iniquity. As punishment, God warped him in his relationship with the land, with society and with his own body.

INIQUITY IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

With this in mind, let us go back to Exodus 20:5. The correct translation of this verse is "... punishing children for the iniquities of their fathers" It is very misleading to say God punishes children for the sins of their fathers. Everyone sins in many different ways. We have all fallen short of

the glory of God.⁵ Sin, however wrong it may be, does not bring generational strongholds into a family line. Iniquity does.

Scripture is clear on the difference between the two in the case of Cain. When Cain became angry over the rejected sacrifice, God spoke to him. He said, "... sin is crouching at your door"⁶ Cain's wrong sacrifice was not iniquity. His anger was not iniquity. Repudiating his responsibility for his brother Abel was iniquity. Sin did not warp Cain's life. Iniquity did. There is a monumental difference.

When anyone attempts to warp God's absolutes, the net result is that their family line is warped instead. The absolutes remain absolutes, undamaged by man's willful, futile attempts to make evil good by calling it a different name or denying that the absolutes apply to them. However, our fragile spiritual DNA becomes bent, twisted or warped by the holy God we attempted to dishonor with our futile action.

INIQUITY VS. HONOR

Having seen the negative side of the equation, let's look at the positive. Exodus 20:4-6 sets up a clear contrast between behavior that produces generational curses and behavior that results in generational blessings.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin (iniquity) of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments."

On one hand is the act of idolatry which is willful defiance of God's right to be God and to define the scope and nature of worship. This is iniquity

and it warps the family line, bringing curses into it for a minimum of three or four generations.

On the other hand is loving submission to God that is presented as the opposite of the iniquitous behavior. This brings blessings into the family line for a thousand generations.

THE ROOT ISSUE

At first glance, to love God and to keep His commandments seems to be a terrible burden. This encompasses the whole of Scripture and is what we have been trying to do all along. While we try to love God, self-love is a pernicious root, always intruding in our lives. Although we may not practice iniquity, we do sin. We can never love God perfectly. We can never stop sinning completely. How much do we have to love God in order for our children to be blessed? And how much do we have to obey Him for it to be enough to bring blessings into our family line? And how is that any different than what we are already doing?

I believe the issue is not legalistic behavior. The root of both the curses and the blessings is an attitude. In a word, it is honor. Iniquity is a willful attempt to dishonor God at the very root of His deity. Can He or can't He establish the absolutes that govern the universe?

By contrast, those who love God desire to keep His commandments as a means of honoring Him. I studied every situation in Scripture where generational blessings were bestowed. While the social settings were incredibly varied, the common denominator was an act that honored God. The passion to honor God brings blessings into family lines. Just as God responds with generational warping to every overt attempt to dishonor Him, so He swiftly responds with generational blessings to an attitude of wanting to honor Him.

HONORING VS. OBEDIENCE

David serves as an interesting case study of the tension between obeying God and honoring Him. When it came to obedience, David got mixed grades at best.

His use of an ox cart to bring the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath Jearim was the result of abject ignorance concerning God's law.⁷ In another incident, he knew God's commandments about marriage and morality but utterly violated them in the situation with Bathsheba.⁸ In terms of his parenting style, he showed a wholesale failure to follow much of the Law. As a king, many of his administrative decisions were debatable at best.

Yet in spite of his spotty record regarding obedience, David received a huge generational blessing because he was fiercely focused on honoring God. This was the core value of his life.

For example, when he heard Goliath boasting, he was offended at the fact that God was dishonored. Notice the actual words said by Goliath and the widely differing perceptions of the people who heard them.

Goliath said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel."⁹

The Israelite army heard the words, but they focused on a slightly larger issue. They understood that he could not insult the army without also insulting all of Israel. They said to each other, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel."¹⁰

David had an even keener sensitivity. He asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the Living God?"¹¹ Fundamentally, David fought Goliath because he wanted to restore honor to God.

Years later, when David had opportunities to kill King Saul in the wilderness, he refused to touch him because Saul was God's anointed.¹²

Although Saul was dishonorable, David would not dishonor God who had placed Saul in that position.

DAVID AND THE ARK

When David became king, he had a larger platform from which to honor God. He began by taking the initiative to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. So far as we can see, no prophet told him to do that. No priest nudged him. None of his wise counselors put a bug in his ear. The Ark had been absent from the Tabernacle for more than 50 years and God never said anything because He was waiting for someone to care about His honor. David noticed the problem and corrected it because his core value was to honor God.

After he failed in his first attempt,¹³ he checked with the Levites to ascertain the correct methodology. He discovered that the only thing God required of him was that the Levites carry the Ark. This he did out of obedience and fear.¹⁴

He could have stopped there. All he had to do as king was give an order for the Levites to bring the Ark up to Jerusalem. That would have been more than anyone had done for half a century and would have fully complied with the Biblical requirements. No one could have faulted him for doing that, since it was, after all, the priests' job and they should have handled it years ago without being told.

Instead, David personally organized a massive extravaganza, not because of obedience, but because he had a passion for honoring God.

He prepared enough sacrifices that every time the Levites carrying the Ark took six steps, the priests sacrificed a bull and a calf.¹⁵ Think of the administrative headache that must have been. Every 15 feet (equivalent in modern measures to six steps) there had to be a large enough pile of stones

to make an altar that would hold a bull and a calf. (They had no dump trucks or skip loaders in those days. Every single rock was moved by hand or by ox cart.)

Every 15 feet there had to be a significant pile of firewood. Every 15 feet there had to be kindling and the means to set it on fire. Every 15 feet there had to be a substantial amount of pure water for washing the sacrifice before it was put on the altar. Every 15 feet there had to be a complete set of knives to do all the dismemberment necessary for these sacrifices. Every 15 feet there had to be a team of priests skilled and qualified to offer a sacrifice. Oh, yes! Every 15 feet there had to be a bull and a calf tied and waiting.

There was more. David ordered a talent search in Israel so he could have a huge number of musicians and singers to accompany the Ark.¹⁶ He personally wrote a special song for the day.¹⁷

When he had done everything he could personally, he assembled a huge military escort for the Ark and had all the civil leaders present for the procession.¹⁸ The general populace was invited, and came to swell the crowd to massive proportions.

On top of everything else, David danced with intense passion in honor of his God.¹⁹

God did not require any of that. David did it because he loved honoring the Lord. He didn't have to work at it. These ideas just tumbled out of his mind endlessly.

THE TABERNACLE SERVICE

When the hundreds of people on the worship team, the huge military escort, all of the civil leaders and multitudes of citizens arrived in

Jerusalem, God had been immensely honored. But David was far from done.

The musicians became part of a permanent ministry of music.²⁰ This made history. In the Law, God did not institute music for the Tabernacle aside from blowing the silver trumpets or rams' horns on rare occasions. For the first 500 years of worship after Mount Sinai, there was nothing like the full-blown daily music ministry that David instituted in Jerusalem in order to honor God.

God was not opposed to having music as a form of worship. He just did not want to have to spell out every little detail of how we were to honor Him. He had been waiting for centuries for someone, anyone, to make the obvious connection and to enlarge the playing field available in worship. The fact that the largest book of the Bible is devoted to the songs that arose from this season of Israel's history is proof positive that God felt honored by David's trail-blazing idea.

David appointed gatekeepers for the Tabernacle not to protect the Ark from marauding gangs of graffiti artists, but because the office of gatekeeper was another cultural symbol he embraced as a means of extending honor to God.²¹ He also organized the priests as they had never been organized before so they could honor God more fully.²²

He did all of these things that Israel had never done before. God did not require them. They were not acts of obedience to long-forgotten commandments. He didn't honor God just because it was politically correct for the king to do some religious good works or engage in a community service project. He honored God because in his innermost being he yearned to honor God. This was the essence of David.

THE TEMPLE

When he got all done with that, he was still dissatisfied. He had honored God in more ways and at greater expense than any other spiritual or civil leader of Israel heretofore, but he relentlessly sought additional ways to honor God.

Consequently, one day a daring new idea surfaced. He could honor God by building Him a Temple. It was somewhat audacious to consider abandoning the Tabernacle that had been designed and ordained by God Himself on Mount Sinai, so David asked the prophet Nathan if it was permissible.²³ Initially Nathan said it was fine, but that night God gave him a different message for the king so he returned to the palace and requested another audience.

Try to put yourself in King David's place. If the entire dialog is recorded, it took less than two minutes to deliver the word from the Lord. The prophet began with information about the potential Temple. That was what David expected. But Nathan the prophet carried a far greater message. He spoke for God, saying in rapid-fire format that David could not build the Temple but that his son would; that God appreciated David's initiative in seeking to honor Him; that God was therefore going to make David one of the most famous men in history; that God was going to give David an eternal dynasty; and that David's son, the next king, would be personally nurtured by God in an extraordinary way.²⁴

David was stunned. He had not been seeking anything from God. He had not asked for anything. He was trying to unilaterally do something for God, not get something from Him. His motives were utterly one-dimensional. He simply, genuinely wanted to give honor to God. When God gave him these unsolicited blessings, especially an eternal dynasty, he was utterly blindsided.

He walked out of the palace and went across town to the house of God where he sat before the Lord alone in a state of shock. When he could finally articulate his emotions, he asked poignantly, “Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign Lord?”²⁵

To which I would answer, “Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!” All God is looking for is people who have a passionate desire to honor Him. When we give God the honor due Him, He gives back to us extravagantly in this life, through our posterity and in eternity.

Honoring God in our generation widens and deepens the stream of generational blessings for our descendants.

It is that basic.

Chapter 10

ATTITUDES BEHIND OBEDIENCE

A cursory look at David's life could lead us to believe that obeying God is secondary as long as we systematically honor Him throughout our lives. That is simply not correct. Rather, obedience becomes yet another platform from which we can extravagantly honor God.

HONOR AND DISOBEDIENCE

Compare two vignettes from David's life. Once when he fled from King Saul, he stopped at the Tabernacle, lied to the High Priest about his agenda and took some of the week-old consecrated bread that only priests were permitted to eat.¹ On that occasion, David knowingly disobeyed God, but God accepted the fact that he was fleeing for his life and was not overtly trying to be sacrilegious. Not only did God not judge David for his violation of the Law, but Jesus Christ used that incident as an illustration of proper liberty when He confronted the legalism of the Pharisees.²

By contrast, the first time David attempted to bring the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem, God judged him harshly. David placed the Ark on a new cart in violation of God's clear command.³ He and all Israel did this only because they were ignorant of God's law. Their intentions were fully and completely to honor God. They had 30,000 chosen men escorting the Ark with lavish music and celebration in order to honor Him.

God would not accept their attempt to honor Him when they disobeyed a command, even though they were ignorant. Uzzah died when he touched

the Ark, and David was irate over God's anger because his intentions were noble.⁴

THE HONOR OF DEFERENCE

There are two lessons here. The first is that we can best honor God by finding out how He wants things done. This is a fundamental part of courtship and marriage. As a man and woman get acquainted, they discover each other's tastes in food, clothing, entertainment, music and many other facets of life. Once a preference is discovered, the quality of the relationship can be evaluated by how they respond. An uncouth individual demonstrates total disregard for the other person's preferences and makes his own tastes the standard for the relationship. A person who is in love delights in showing honor by remembering each facet of the other person's tastes and graciously showing deference.

This process of discovery and giving honor applies to all our relationships. When I was seven, we lived on an island where our sole means of transportation was Dad's motorboat. At the end of a day of ministry, he would come home and take his shoes off so he could wade in the water as he cared for the boat. He then came up to the house with wet, sandy feet and he liked to have water, a towel and his house shoes ready for him at the top of the steps.

I cannot remember Dad ever ordering me to have a towel and shoes ready for him when he came home. I did it because I had figured out that it brought him pleasure. Since it took at least half an hour for him to care for the boat after he arrived home, I had plenty of time to set everything in place between the time we first heard the outboard motor and the time he actually arrived at the front door.

However, my older sister also wanted to honor him and, since we had few other ideas at that time, we vied for the privilege of putting his shoes out. In order to beat the competition, each of us tried to put the towel and shoes out earlier than the other.

Some days there was a fresh towel and Dad's shoes at the top of the stairs shortly after noon. It was quite a nuisance for the whole family to carefully step over them all afternoon until he came home at 5:30. We did it because we wanted to bring him pleasure. It was a child's way of extending honor to him.

DEFERENCE IN WORSHIP

This issue is as old as Cain and Abel. We don't know exactly what went on with their sacrifices. I suspect God had not clearly spelled out each small detail of how He wanted to be worshiped as He did centuries later at Mount Sinai. It does appear that he had at least given them some general guidelines. All we know for sure is that Abel's sacrifice brought pleasure to God and Cain's did not. Somehow, Abel found out what would please God and chose to honor Him by giving Him what He wanted in worship.

God drew Israel's attention to a high motive for obedience with His comment at the end of a list of regulations designed to keep them from polluting the land.

“Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the Lord, dwell among the Israelites.”⁵

In other words, the rules and regulations He gave were not designed primarily to be a burden to the people. God was telling them that He lived in the land with them, and clean land would bring Him pleasure.

The Israelites could obey Him primarily as an act of self-preservation, trying to avoid punishment. This kind of obedience would be good since the

wrath of God should be avoided at all costs. Or they could obey him as an act of love, making their homes and towns a source of delight for the Lord who dwelt among them.

Obedience done with a desire to bring pleasure to God is of much higher quality than something done of necessity to placate a stern, demanding God.

TRUSTING GOD'S MOTIVES

The second lesson is that our perspective of God's wisdom will determine whether or not our acts of obedience bring honor to Him. When we assume that the way He wants things done is also in our best interest, it gives Him honor. Let me illustrate this with the story of two apprentices I once had.

I am a plumber by trade. A number of years ago the company I was working for hired a young man we will call Jim. He knew nothing about plumbing, so I was told to train him. At first I was a bit irritated because I had never seen anyone so ignorant of everything related to the building trades. However, I learned to appreciate him because he learned very quickly and soon decided I was the most brilliant plumber to ever grace the trades.

There was another fellow working for me we will call Sam. He was a third-year apprentice who was sure he knew it all. He was also sure I was the dumbest journeyman to ever fall off the back of a turnip truck. He felt that working under me was penal servitude and everything I told him to do was poorly thought out and sure to make his life harder.

My plumbing is as original as my theology. Whenever I started to do something in an unconventional way and asked Sam to help me, he would immediately tell me why my approach was a bad idea. Then he tried to teach me how I could do it correctly. Jim, on the other hand, would cheerfully do what I told him to even if he did not understand where it was

leading. He was convinced sight unseen that my unconventional approach meant I was on the verge of revealing to him yet another brilliant plumbing technique that would make him money in the future.

His blind obedience hinged on one factor: he had utmost confidence in my commitment to do every job in the most efficient, effective way possible for all the people involved.

OBEDIENCE VS. LEGALISM

I view God the same way Jim saw me. My presupposition is that God is not exploitive. In the long run, everything He tells me to do is beneficial for me as well as for His Kingdom. When I am convinced of God's competence and His goodness, it keeps my obedience from being legalism. I obey not because I have to, but because it is just plain smart.

That does not mean obedience is always fun. As a parent, I required my children to go through the pain of being home-schooled. They did not have as much confidence in my good judgment as Jim did. Along the way, they vigorously protested that there could be no possible benefit to them personally from learning how to identify the prime factors of a quadratic equation.

I disagreed. I felt that the reasoning skills they developed while mastering algebraic equations would, in the long run, benefit them individually and personally. So I made them study for their benefit. I certainly did NOT teach them algebra because the process made me any happier or more spiritual. Quite the contrary!

God likewise gives us commands that may cause immediate, measurable, sustained pain, but they are always for our benefit, as well as for the advancement of His Kingdom.

The issue is whether or not we believe that.

HONOR AND FAITH

This conviction that obedience is good for us is called faith.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”⁶

The fundamental question is whether or not God “rewards” us for obedience. Is our obedience for His benefit or for ours? Our attitude toward obedience hinges on our convictions about the nature of God.

When we obey Him grudgingly, seeing a specific command as a liability, not as something carefully crafted to benefit us, we dishonor God. When we obey Him reluctantly, seeking only to avoid the punishment that could come from our disobedience, we dishonor God.

When we sacrificially obey a command that makes no sense whatsoever from our limited perspective, but do it because we believe God designed it for our best interest, that kind of obedience honors Him and accrues generational blessings.

THE REMNANT REBUKED

It was in this context that God confronted the remnant that returned from Babylon. While their investment in restoring the nation was noble, He was angry with them over the attitude with which they offered sacrifices at the Temple.

“But you profane it by saying of the Lord’s table, ‘It is defiled,’ and of its food, ‘It is contemptible.’ And you say, ‘What a burden!’ and you sniff contemptuously,” says the Lord Almighty.”⁷

They acted as though they had to offer the sacrifices because God was petulant and insisted on them for His benefit. By calling the sacrifices a

burden, they proclaimed that there was no benefit to them. In so doing, they dishonored God even while obediently offering the required sacrifices.

God specifically challenged them on the issue of immediate cost versus long-term benefits in Malachi 3:13-18.

“You have said harsh things against me,” says the Lord. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’

“You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper and even those who challenge God escape.’”

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

“They will be mine,” says the Lord Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you shall again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

God conceded that in the short run it is often impossible to see any benefit to obedience. He conceded that in the short run there are often genuine costs to obedience and measurable, identifiable benefits to disobedience, even to those who overtly defy Him. However, He guarantees that in the long run there is an immense benefit to us for honoring Him by obeying first and understanding later.

Notice that, again, the Lord is most concerned about the attitude of honoring Him. When those who feared Him simply discussed the issue among themselves, He noticed from heaven, listened to their value system,

approved of it and recorded their names. They had not yet done anything. There was no specific act of obedience that they carried out. It was clearly their attitude that set them apart. God committed Himself to reward them in the long run because they “feared the Lord and honored his name.”⁸

HONOR AND GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS

The book of Malachi is saturated with the twin issues of those who honored or dishonored God and consequently received generational blessings or curses. The people as a whole devalued obedience and dishonored God because that was the attitude their spiritual leadership modeled for them. Therefore God confronted the leadership:

““And now this admonition is for you, O priests. If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me. Because of you I will rebuke your descendants”⁹

Notice that there is no specific external sin mentioned. Their crime, twice repeated, was “... you do not set your heart to honor my name ...” and “... you have not set your heart to honor me.”¹⁰

There were two consequences to this attitude. God rejected their generation and He cursed their descendants. The NIV reads, “Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will spread on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it.”¹¹ The KJV says, “Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.”

CREATIVITY VS. TECHNICAL OBEDIENCE

What a terrible curse! For the sin of plodding through the worship routine, doing all the right things in an uninspired, mechanical way, the very priesthood of God received a generational curse. There is a clear contrast between them and David, who set his heart to honor God. His core value was to invest all his creativity in devising fresh, new ways to honor Him. He was not just committed to personally honoring God. He also wanted to spur the entire nation on to worship God in new ways. David set his heart to honor God and God blessed him with a mighty generational blessing.

The post-exilic priests carried out worship mechanically, obeying God's regulations with no new infusion of passion. Because they did not set their hearts to honor Him, He cursed them. He cursed their previous generational blessings and He spoke a generational curse over their descendants even though they were outwardly obedient.

Obedience is not the primary issue. Honor is. Obedience is a playing field. You can obey God out of duty and still receive a generational curse. Or, like my apprentice Jim, you can obey with a spirit of anticipation, waiting to discover how God will reward you because of your obedience. This honors Him.

HONOR AND OUR CHILDREN

The tribe of Levi and the clan of the Recabites each received huge generational blessings because of a single act of obedience that demonstrated honor. Those opportunities come very rarely so we may go through our entire life without God setting us up with a monumental history-making choice.

This does not prevent us from accruing generational blessings for our children, because we have the opportunity to obey or disobey God in big and little ways on a daily basis. To the degree that we believe, sight unseen,

that God is so very good that there has to be logic, utter kindness and benefit to us woven into every one of His commands, to that degree we honor Him. As we honor Him with faith in His motives, blessings accrue in our generational trust fund.

Grudging obedience may save us from the natural consequences of sin, but it does nothing to widen and deepen the stream of blessings for our offspring.

It may even bring a curse on our children.

Chapter 11

LIFE & DEATH CHOICES

Yesterday I received a troubled e-mail from one of our intercessors. As I sat down to respond today, God reached back to a really ugly situation in my life about eight years ago to remind me of a key piece of data which I could use to help my friend. I marveled at how He planned eight years ago to equip me to handle today's crisis and how He could effortlessly put such good things in place during a really bad time.

This happens constantly in my life. God is the master of orchestrating good results out of scripts that I certainly would not have written for myself. These consistent surprise endings to hurtful stories grow my faith and enable me to obey God with alacrity when He sends me into costly obedience. I emphatically believe that He has planned good things for me, regardless of the short-term evidence.

This logic is challenged at the very core, however, when we are facing death. Abraham managed to embrace the pain of impending death by believing that God would raise Isaac from the dead, and thereby make the very bad scene have a good ending. He was wrong, but his idea made the pain emotionally palatable. David, Esther and Daniel flirted with death, knowing there was the possibility that God would rescue them, and He did. Stephen, the saints at Smyrna and many others have faced death over the centuries knowing God could rescue them, but they died unrescued.

Where is the benefit to us in going to our death out of obedience to God? How will that benefit us "in the long run?"

A TOUGH PREGNANCY

A few months ago a friend called requesting prayer for her pastor's wife. This lady, who we will call Sandra, was having a difficult pregnancy. When Sandra went to the doctor to find out why she was feeling so miserable he informed her that she had a tubal pregnancy. During the medical exams they also discovered that she had colon cancer.

The doctor gave her the "facts." Ectopic pregnancies are difficult at best. The baby probably would not live and if it did, it would likely be handicapped. She could not have surgery, radiation or chemotherapy while pregnant. If she waited for cancer treatment until after the birth, it could be too late to save her own life.

Given those facts, his conclusion was predictable: abort the baby since it probably would not be a perfect baby or a viable pregnancy anyway. Then they could start cancer treatment immediately and hopefully save her life since they had discovered it early. She could try for another child in a few years.

Sandra and her husband graciously explained that they were people of faith and abortion was not one of their options. The doctor was very understanding and expressed respect for their convictions, but explained again that this was a special situation that qualified for a loophole in their religious convictions. The hormones from the pregnancy would cause the cancer to grow rapidly, thereby killing the mother. It was not a question of merely having a fighting chance to save the baby, or of decreasing the odds for her recovery from cancer if they waited.

If she did not have the abortion, she and the baby would both die. If she did have the abortion, she would probably live and she could have another baby. A heroic attempt to save the baby was meaningless and doomed from the start because the baby would die if she died. So there was really no choice in the matter. They would schedule the abortion.

The parents acknowledged the accuracy of all the data, and again shared that abortion was still not an option for them.

MEANING IN CRISIS

It was a lonely situation for Sandra and her husband because some of the people in her web of Christian relationships advised trying to save her own life at the expense of the baby. These Christians were not “in favor” of abortion, but they too saw this as a special circumstance. Since Sandra was a young mother with another child at home they felt she should protect her own life so she could raise her first child.

While Christians are generally sensitive to the Biblical prohibition of murder,¹ some people could not see the point of losing both lives when theoretically one life could be saved at the expense of the other. They saw her stance as heroic, noble but pointless.

There is a very real point, however. Obedience in life and death crises extends great honor to God. The price in situations like this is very high. Sandra’s choices were so very far removed from our daily obedience to small things. The conviction that we cannot obey God without His benefiting us honors God, but we still can choose to appropriate or forgo those benefits on a daily basis.

By contrast, Sandra’s crisis was forced upon her. Furthermore, it was not a case of receiving or forgoing benefits. She could lose her own life as well as the baby’s life if she refused an abortion. It challenged her faith at the highest level. God pitted a mother’s love for her child and her natural self-preservation instinct against her relationship with the Almighty. It doesn’t get much tougher than that.

So why did God do this to her? In part, because a test of faith at this level gave her an opportunity to honor Him that she would not otherwise have

had. It therefore gave her far greater opportunity to accrue generational blessings than she would have had in her normal life.

A DEFINITION OF FAITH

So consider with me the inner workings of faith. My definition of Biblical faith is “knowledge of God’s will, plus belief in His ability to provide, plus personal risk.” The components of the definition must fit together for there to be faith. Belief is merely a settled confidence that God is able to do something (or everything). We can have a profound level of belief and still not have faith. That confidence, no matter how deep, is merely belief, not faith, until there is some knowledge of God’s will and a measure of personal risk added to the mixture.

BELIEF VS. FAITH

For example, the majority of American Christians have heard stories of God miraculously providing funds for His people. Most of us have a deep conviction that He can meet our financial needs.² However, most of us take care of our own finances without regular miracles. We work, earn money, buy things and pay bills.

While in reality we are completely dependent on God for our very existence,³ there is very little sense of supernatural provision in the way our needs are met. Hence we only believe God can provide for our needs. We will not have faith until there is a situation where we cannot meet our own needs and we face serious consequences if God does not supernaturally provide a certain amount of money by a certain time.

It is not wrong to have only belief and not faith. This is the normal state of affairs. We should each have dozens or hundreds of areas, all neatly cataloged in our mental files, where we have an absolute confidence in

God's abilities. From time to time, using that pool of belief, God will create situations where we are put at risk. At that point, an area of belief is tested by experience and can become living faith.

I assume that Sandra and her husband believed for years that abortion is wrong and that God could do medical miracles. So long as they never had to decide not to have an abortion, it was only belief. It may have been a deeply held belief, but without risk it was still just profound cognitive assent to the truth of Scripture. Her husband may have preached many sermons about how wrong abortion is. Still, it was merely belief.

Now, through no fault of their own, they faced a high-risk situation. Without the crisis, there could be no faith on these issues. Now the belief came face to face with an extraordinary degree of risk. If God did not come through with a miracle, she and the baby would both die. It is the personal risk factor that distinguishes faith from belief.

Their long-standing belief unquestionably became faith at this point.

FAITH VS. PRESUMPTION

It is the knowledge of God's will that distinguishes faith from presumption. A college girl I knew received money from her parents to fly home for Christmas. She was homesick so she used the money to fly home for Thanksgiving instead, even though it was a very short holiday. She then announced that she had faith that God would provide additional money for her to be able to fly home again for Christmas break four weeks later.

Obviously she had a strong belief that God could provide the funds miraculously.

She clearly understood the substantial risk factor. If God did not provide, she would be spending a very lonely Christmas break on an empty campus far from home while looking quite foolish in the eyes of her friends.

When I asked her whether God told her to come home at Thanksgiving, she became very defensive and would not answer the question. From that, I assumed He had not spoken. She merely wanted to come. She called it faith to put herself at risk financially when God had not directed her to. I felt it was presumption.

If God had not spoken, if indeed it was presumption, then He had no obligation to provide the money for her to come home again at Christmas even though she believed He could and she very badly wanted Him to. God does not have a responsibility to bail us out when we put ourselves at risk without His permission.

In an identical situation where God did direct the girl to put herself at financial risk, it would be faith. Risk we assume without knowledge of God's will is presumption, not faith. The fact that God is able, and that we believe He is able, does not mean He is under any obligation to do what we want Him to do in any given situation.

BIBLICAL REVELATION

Knowledge of God's will is central to any faith issue. There are two ways to determine His will: Biblical revelation and extra-Biblical revelation. We begin with the commands of Scripture because there are so many areas where God's will is already clearly spelled out.

Sandra based her decision on God's emphatic prohibition of murder. He made no prophetic announcement to her above and beyond Scripture. He did not send an angel to tell her not to have an abortion. No one had a dream or vision to help her chart her path. All that extra-Biblical revelation was unnecessary because God's Word was clear.

As we embrace God-ordained risk, we must accept the fact that God does not necessarily intend to protect us from all harm. Shadrach, Meshach and

Abednego clearly articulated that to King Nebuchadnezzar. They knew they were not to worship idols even though refusing to bow would put them at risk. They did not know how God would resolve the crisis. Hence they said,

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from your hand, O king. **But even if he does not**, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”⁴

They understood that their obedience was no less an act of faith even if they died.

This was Sandra’s position. Scripture is clear that she should not have an abortion. She had a strong belief that God could cause the baby to be born healthy and full-term, **but she had no promise that He would**. She had a strong belief that God could heal her of cancer, **but she had no promise that He would**. Based on clear Biblical revelation, she refused the abortion.

Whether or not she or the baby lived, she had honored God through high-risk obedience.

EXTRA-BIBLICAL REVELATION

Some friends of mine who delivered Bibles behind the Iron Curtain 20 years ago gave me a splendid example of extra-Biblical revelation of God’s will that put them in a high-risk situation.

They had a large load of Bibles to deliver in East Germany. The transfer was carefully choreographed. They were to meet their contact at a specific rest stop on a major highway at a specific time and transfer the Bibles from one vehicle to the other.

They arrived at the rest stop at the appointed time only to find that a convoy of Communist soldiers had pulled in just ahead of them.

My American friends had a camper full of Bibles and there were dozens of soldiers milling around them keenly interested in this American vehicle with all of its gadgetry. They immediately asked God for the details of Plan B since Plan A was obviously useless. He told each of them individually to go ahead with Plan A.

Obedience to that piece of extra-Biblical revelation of God's will thrust them into a high-risk situation.

As with Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Sandra, there is no guarantee from God that any Bible courier will live happily ever after. Couriers know they could be arrested, imprisoned and tortured. As Brother Andrew has said, the Biblical command is to go. God does not require us to return alive from any missionary endeavor.

These couriers knew that obedience to this extra-Biblical command could eventually cost them their lives. All God said was to go ahead with Plan A. He said nothing about a safety net for them or for the German believer who was at even higher risk by partnering with American Bible smugglers. They extended great honor to God by implicitly trusting His wisdom and His motives as they prepared to lay their entire future on the line.

While they were processing this, their local contact was also sitting in the rest stop, looking at the soldiers, going through the same process. He also heard from God that they were to proceed with Plan A, so he pulled his car alongside the camper.

They exchanged identifying signals. Then with dozens of Communist soldiers walking by them, they passed hundreds of Bibles from one vehicle to the other. No soldier said a single word. When the Bible exchange was complete, both parties drove away unscathed and with a greater measure of faith than before. They had honored God more beautifully through their

obedience to a higher risk command than they would have with the original plan.

TESTING GOD

Faith and presumption collide at this point: the revealed will of God. Satan tempted Christ to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple to demonstrate His faith in God's ability to protect Him.⁵ Christ declined to walk in presumption as He responded, "It is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"⁶

Yet in Malachi 3:20 we read,

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

How do we reconcile the clear statement that we are not to test God and the equally clear statement that we are to test God?

In the case of Satan tempting Christ, there was no direction from God for Christ to jump from the Temple. Therefore, putting Himself at risk in a way that required God's intervention would have been presumption. In the case of the tithe, there is a standing command in Scripture to tithe. God is willing for anyone to put himself at risk at any time on this issue.

This becomes a pattern for us. It is faith, not presumption, to obey God's written commands without any further clarification, even when that obedience puts us at risk. God is willing to assume the responsibility to solve the problems created by our obedience to His written commands. He may not write a pain-free script, but He will "own" the problem and write a perfect ending even if that includes martyrdom.

However, when there is a unique situation not addressed by a clear Biblical precept, we need a word from the Lord before embracing a position of risk that requires His intervention and calling it faith.

FAITH AND HONOR

Now come back to the crux of the matter. Why does God put us at risk through His written Word and through special revelation? Because "... without faith it is impossible to please God."⁷ Our being at risk provides several scenarios through which God can be honored. In the case of the three Hebrews who would not bow down to the idol, it gave God an opportunity to show His power by rescuing them.

As a result, Nebuchadnezzar made a decree that from that time on, anyone in his empire who spoke against the God of the Hebrews would be killed.⁸ Talk about a minority people having religious liberty: that was staggering!

Freedom of speech for all the citizens in the greatest empire of world history was limited as the result of three men who were willing to die out of obedience. No one was allowed to speak a word against the God of the Hebrews. Now that is one way to stamp out racial discrimination.

But God does not always intervene. He did not rescue Christ from the cross even though Christ begged Him to.⁹ He received great honor by the Son remaining obedient through the very last degree of suffering.¹⁰ God was honored in yet another way by demonstrating His power in raising Christ from the dead three days later and subsequently exalting Him.¹¹

In the case of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, God was honored by Abraham's demonstrating that he loved God more than his own son.¹² Once that point was established, God stopped the sacrifice.

In Sandra's case, God wanted to know whether she loved Him more than her life, more than her family and more than the approval of her Christian friends who did not support her in her decision. He wanted to know if she would stand alone on this issue supported only by her husband and a few outside intercessors. If she refused the abortion and she and the baby both died, many people would mock her decision saying her faith was nonsense since God did not intervene.

I say it was majestic faith, and that yielding her life willingly out of love for God profoundly honored Him.

OUR PERSONAL INVESTMENT

The question we have to face is what price we are willing to pay to honor God. David invested more creativity than sweat equity in honoring God. He was actually spending national treasury funds to create the huge celebration surrounding the return of the Ark. I doubt he personally lugged any of those hundreds of tons of stones for the altars. He hired the sweat equity for that part of the project.

Giving God the gift of our creativity is wonderful. Giving God the gift of our sweat equity like the citizens of Jerusalem did when they worked day and night to rebuild the wall is even better.¹³ It is hard, however, to imagine a higher price than laying down our lives in unflinching obedience to God's commands, just so He can be honored in the process.

How badly do we want to honor God? The real question is how badly do we want to accrue generational blessings? Do we genuinely believe that relentless generational blessings will pursue our children if we honor God at every level He requests? Or do we secretly believe that we can do more to build a platform for success under our children if we live and help them in the natural?

HONOR AND GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS

As it turned out, God did not want Sandra's life. Once He had proven that she loved Him more than her own life and therefore had received immense honor from her great act of faith, God moved the baby from the fallopian tube to the womb. The same doctor who initially diagnosed the tubal pregnancy examined her again a few weeks later. He did an unusual number of tests and repeated many of them. Finally he came to see her with the report. He had no reasonable explanation, but he said he was as absolutely sure that the baby was in the womb now as he had been sure before that the baby was in the fallopian tube.

A fallopian tube is designed to transport an egg the size of a dot over the letter i. At six to seven weeks, the baby is much larger than that, the placenta has formed and it is attached to the wall of the fallopian tube. The baby and placenta did not just bounce down out of the tube into the womb one afternoon when Sandra hit a pothole in the road. Almighty God reached down, supernaturally removed the child of His love from the fallopian tube and reimplanted the placenta in the right place in her womb as his response to Sandra's obdurate faith.

Shortly thereafter, God also healed her of colon cancer causing the medical establishment to concede that God had done a second miracle where they had predicted death.

THE FRUIT OF FAITH

Because of the parents' towering faith, God has been honored and therefore the family's stream of generational blessings has been significantly widened and deepened.

When the child was born, his parents honored God anew by naming him Micah, which means "Who is like God?!"

Who indeed?

And what child is this that Satan desperately wanted to kill, yet God miraculously kept alive? What will he do in the Kingdom of God with such a prodigious spiritual heritage from which to draw? What generational blessings has God placed in the trust fund to relentlessly pursue young Micah?!

Chapter 12

DEFENDING GOD'S HONOR

Reggie White was a defensive end for the Green Bay Packers. His job was to “sack” the opposing quarterback and he is professional football’s all-time leader in that category. He also played in three consecutive Super Bowls.

In the spring of 1998, in recognition of his professional excellence, the Wisconsin State Legislature gave him an award. They reviewed his accomplishments, extending great honor to him. Then, following normal protocol, they gave Reggie an opportunity to speak, expecting him to thank them and make a few inspirational comments. Instead, he seized the moment and preached to the legislators for about half an hour. In the course of his remarks, among other things he bluntly said that homosexuality is sin.

The secular press and liberal left were outraged, assaulting him with violent verbiage for several weeks. Some of the companies whose products he endorsed canceled their contracts with him.

It wasn’t necessarily that they disagreed with his theology. Their anger centered on the fact that Reggie White used the platform earned by his football fame to address moral issues. They wanted him to keep his spiritual life private. Beyond that, they really wanted him to leave other people’s spiritual (and moral) lives completely alone.

But he didn’t.

ISRAELITE ADULTERY

Reggie’s story has some striking similarities to Phinehas’ story in Numbers 25. At that time when Israel was camped in the wilderness near

Moab, the Moabites and Midianites invited the Israelite men to their worship celebrations. The seduction worked as many of the men went, ate, drank, worshipped idols and committed adultery.

While God predictably became quite angry, the story pivots on the fact that He opted not to deal personally with the idolatrous adulterers. Instead He released a plague in Israel that swept through the nation, killing people indiscriminately, moral and immoral alike.¹ As thousands of citizens were dying rapidly and randomly, the survivors came to Moses in a panic. He in turn went to God seeking a solution.

God told Moses that to stop the plague they must kill all the civic leaders who had committed these sins, strip them naked and leave their bodies on display in broad daylight. It was not necessary to kill every idolater/adulterer. If the adulterous leaders in Israel were killed and publicly shamed, the plague against the entire nation would stop.²

Moses summoned the judges and gave them instructions. Each judge was to seek out the sinful leaders in his own jurisdiction (i.e. his own clan, relatives, friends and peers) and carry out the Lord's sentence on them.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Try to imagine the emotional intensity of the moment. Among the millions of Israelites in the encampment, tent after tent was being visited by rapid death. A large crowd of hysterical, bereaved people was at the Tabernacle crying out to God for mercy and to Moses for help.

Moses was trying to instruct the tribal judges in the details of how they must carry out the Lord's sentence. The judges were facing the most unsavory task of taking to trial and publicly executing their own civil authorities. Since they grouped their tents by family clans, they would have to execute judgment on people they knew, not on strangers.

God was instructing them to invade the homes of their own neighbors, kill the head of the household and publicly shame families who had been among the most respected in Israel until that time. Then they had to live in the same neighborhood for the rest of their lives with the widows and orphans of the men they had killed, who were all relatives of theirs. How do you kill your daughter's fiancé, or your father-in-law, or your own father?

These judges were also keenly aware that millions of people were pressuring them to act quickly and decisively in order to stop the plague. The brutal reality was that it could hit any one of them or their families without warning or recourse while they delayed implementing this horrendous command from God. Any delay on their part could be personally disastrous, yet swift obedient action would most assuredly create a lifetime of emotional scars for them and their extended family.

PHINEHAS' INTERVENTION

In the midst of this emotional maelstrom, a prince from the tribe of Simeon returned from the idolatrous Gentile party. He brought home a Midianite princess, smugly parading her and his obvious intentions before Moses, the judges and the grieving people who were gathered before God at the Tabernacle.

Phinehas was one of the priests who saw the couple go by. He became so outraged by the flagrant, defiant insult to God's laws and His people that he abruptly left his priestly duties at the Tabernacle, followed the couple into their tent and drove a spear through both of them at once, killing them.³

This action ran completely contrary to the image, calling and function of the priesthood. Spears were not standard-issue equipment for priests on duty. The Levites as a tribe were to be "safe" people, not confrontational. Later God would entrust them with the cities of refuge to which the guilty

could run without condemnation.⁴ They were the medical practitioners in Israel, distinguishing among the diseases of spirit, soul and body.⁵ They were the ones who gently received guilty sinners at the Brazen Altar without a word of criticism and helped them satisfy the demands of a righteous God.

There were others whose job it was to confront sin. It was the prophets, not the priests, who had a license to hunt. Israel had Moses as her senior statesman and resident prophet.⁶ Under him were other prophets.⁷ There were also leaders of tribes, clans and families.⁸ There was an administrative council of 70 elders.⁹ There were judges.¹⁰ All of these were responsible to initiate confrontation with unrepentant sinners and to deal with their rebellion. They were to monitor society, speak against evil and implement judgment when appropriate. They were to be overtly proactive against sin.¹¹

The Levites, by contrast, were called to minister and restore the repentant sinners. They were to passively wait for people who were under conviction to come to them, and then help them make things right with God. Their job description is in Deuteronomy 10:8.

“At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name, as they still do today.”

All three of these assignments are gentle, non-confrontational, positive and upbuilding.

Yet out of this healing spiritual heritage with its passive social structure came Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, in line to be the next High Priest of Israel. He, who was destined to bear the names of Israel's tribes on his shoulders and chest as a symbol of their being sanctified, grabbed a spear and invaded the privacy of an Israelite tent. He killed two sinners without a

word of dialogue, explanation or apology, giving them no chance to repent and change their ways. This was politically incorrect in the extreme.

In doing so, he not only violated cultural norms, but defiled himself in the eyes of God. The priests were forbidden to be in the presence of dead people, let alone commit murder.¹² His unpriestly action rendered him unfit to carry out his priestly duties until he had gone through a period of separation and ceremonial cleansing. If Phinehas returned to priestly duties in a defiled state he would be excommunicated from the priesthood for life.¹³

THE BLESSING

How did God react to this priest's aberrant behavior?

He was thrilled. He immediately stopped the plague after Phinehas killed only one adulterous leader, even though the judges had not even begun to do the cleansing Moses assigned to them.

Furthermore, God was so pleased with Phinehas that He released into his family line the generational blessing of an enduring priesthood. God said,

“Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.”¹⁴

CIVIL RESPONSIBILITY

There are many issues involved here, but notice God's priorities. God was indeed angry with the Midianites, Moabites and Balaam who concocted this scam. He eventually declared war on those two nations and saw to it that

Balaam was killed in the process, but He was in no hurry to deal with the instigators.¹⁵

God was certainly angry at the idolaters and adulterers, but He never singled them out for specific judgment from His hand.

It is quite clear that He directed the heat of His anger at the silent passivity of the “righteous” majority. They did abstain from committing idolatry and adultery. They also abstained from criticizing their family members, friends and community leaders who were sinning. They decided to live and let live.

This enraged God much more than the Moabite seduction or the idolatry-with-adultery of a few people. He unleashed death in the camp because of silence rooted in self-preservation.

That is why the plague struck Israel indiscriminately. It was more important to the average Israelite to keep peace with his neighbors than to keep the camp holy. As Reggie White found out, sinners don't like to be publicly rebuked. Sinners then and now become angry and violent when righteous men and women speak out publicly against their unrighteousness. The Israelites dishonored God by fearing the reaction of their neighbors more than they feared God. It cost them 24,000 lives.

That is why God insisted on the death of the adulterous leaders at the hands of their judicial peers.¹⁶ He could have killed the individual sinners Himself, but He demanded that the Israelites do it. If they refused to kill their sinful leaders and endure social rejection for their righteous action, God would continue to kill the morally righteous, sinfully passive citizenry.

On the other hand, if the Israelite judges would courageously impeach and execute their own mayors, city councilmen, governors and legislators (who were all relatives of theirs), it would demonstrate a national willingness to honor God above the public opinion polls.

That is why God, in blessing Phinehas for his actions, expressed the issue in terms of honor. Not obedience vs. rebellion. Not true vs. false worship. Not purity vs. fornication.

Only honor.

God was furiously angry at the overt sin of the minority, but much more so at the cowardly passivity of the majority. Phinehas was able to touch the heart of God by feeling the same anger God felt over the situation. It transformed him, cutting across his cultural norms and religious training, and galvanized him to action.

His passion for defending God's honor earned him a massive generational blessing. Think about the dynamics here. Scroll through your mind and pick out the top ten spiritual giants from the last 500 years. Regardless of who your top ten are, their children are not on the scene today. Where are the godly, powerful, world-changing descendants of John Huss, Martin Luther, George Mueller, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight Moody or any others you may wish to add to the list?

Most of these family lines have died out completely. Several of those spiritual giants have had some shameful scoundrels among their descendants. None have held positions of national leadership for ten generations running. Yet in the same way that God promised to sustain godliness among the Recabites, so He guaranteed Phinehas on that day 3,500 years ago that his family line would survive and be godly to the end.

What an incredible generational blessing Phinehas received in return for burning white-hot with zeal for the reputation of the Most High God.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

So what? Where does that leave us?

You and I are unlikely to be called to slay adulterers or to preach to a state legislature. The press will probably never note or care what most of us say. Even though our playing fields will be smaller and different, we must still grapple with the same issue of being zealous for God's honor in a society that demands private Christianity.

Many Christians are so lacking in excellence and so compromised in their character that they have no basis whatsoever for confronting sinners. We are all best served by that group remaining completely silent about their faith and others' sin until they clean up their own lives.

Other Christians are professionally, permanently militant, ceaselessly railing against evil. Because of their abrasiveness, they are only marginally effective in pricking the conscience of the sinner. We would also be well served by their being muzzled until their lives are marked by a habit of genuine, sustained life-giving for saints and sinners alike.

Then there is a large group of Christians who are grieved by the iniquity around them, but value the good will of their peers so much that they are graciously silent about flagrant sin in their families, their church and their workplace.

Their silence is not golden. It is just plain yellow.

Defending God's honor is expensive. The unwritten rules of our society are absolutely unfair. Today freedom of speech applies primarily to the depraved. Everything from foolishness to perversion can be discussed with impunity over the airwaves, in the classroom or in the lunchroom, but when you or I attempt to defend God's values or His relationship with mankind, we are usually seen as an offense to the culture.

By and large, the overt and covert disapproval from the secular community has silenced the Christian in the marketplace. We put pictures of our family on the walls of our cubicle, but don't display the Ten

Commandments. We abstain from laughing at dirty jokes but fail to confront our co-workers who tell them. We try to walk in private integrity, but do not expose our co-workers who are breaking laws. Because we have been effectively programmed by our culture to crave the approval of people, it is rare that we find a Christian who burns white-hot with zeal for God's honor.

The issue is not our actions. It is our attitude. We are each willing to risk our peers' disapproval over some issues of honor. What insult gets a hot reaction from you? Is it when someone slams your spouse? Your grandkids? Your mother? Your car? Your alma mater? Your favorite football team?

How about your God?

Most of the times we fail to defend God's honor it is because of deeply rooted self-preservation. We don't want to be rejected by the person we need to confront. The fact remains that in Phinehas' day, God was angrier at the self-serving, cowardly silence of the entire nation than He was over the fornication and false worship of a few.

He expressed His anger by killing more cowards than fornicators. Then He underscored his priorities by giving Phinehas a stunning generational blessing.

I assume God feels the same way today.

THE PROPHET'S REWARD

Elijah the prophet is the only other person in Scripture who is reported to have had an intense zeal for the honor of the Lord.¹⁷ He confronted King Ahab face to face incurring such anger from the king that he became the object of an international manhunt.¹⁸ He stood alone against the depravity, idolatry and passivity of the whole nation. He publicly took the heat while a hundred other prophets were hiding in a cave, keeping themselves alive.¹⁹

Because of his zeal for God's honor, Elijah was empowered to perform many miracles in his lifetime and to pass on his prophetic and miracle-working anointings to Elisha and the other prophets in the schools he established.²⁰

In light of that, I wonder about Jesus' promise that "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward"²¹ While each individual has unique rewards based on their choices in life, there appears to be a standard reward for all prophets. What is a "prophet's reward" that is so strong that even the prophets' hosts share in it?

Prophets tend to be zealous for the honor of God. They can be so zealous that it costs them their lives. They are generally willing to speak into a society those things that society does not want to hear. This causes them to be rejected, stoned and beheaded, literally or figuratively.

Is it possible that part of the "prophet's reward" is a wider, deeper stream of generational blessings because they are more zealous for the Lord's honor than they are for peer approval?

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Honor is standard currency in the Kingdom of God. When we strive to honor God—as David, Reggie, Sandra and Phinehas did—God responds with more honor to us than we give to Him.

Phinehas found out that the honor he gave to God came back to him—and to his seed—on a vastly greater scale than what he gave. Out of an action that could not have taken more than a few minutes came a blessing of magnificent honor and spiritual security for his descendants that is still active today, 35 centuries later.

There is no reason to think that Reggie White can out-give God either. I wonder what great generational blessings of honor and privilege God has

placed in his spiritual trust fund because of his speech to the Wisconsin legislature?

I wonder what his children, Jeremy and Jecolia, and his grandchildren will be like as they benefit from the relentless generational blessings that will pursue them because of their father's white-hot zeal for the honor of the Most High God?

Chapter 13

THE DISHONOR OF DISINTEREST

Imagine the following scenario. Fred and Sally are deeply in love. One Thursday evening he calls her from New York to say he has purchased a book for her. Though he expects to see her on Saturday, he has shipped it by “next day priority” to arrive before noon on Friday.

Sally leaves a note on her front door when she goes to work Friday morning and finds a package there when she returns. The return address is from a bookstore in New York City so she concludes it is indeed the book her beloved sent. She places the package on the coffee table, puts up the groceries she had bought, cooks dinner, does laundry, cleans the bathroom and takes a shower.

Nothing was scheduled for her evening and she didn’t bring work home, so she props her feet on the coffee table next to the package and reads the evening paper. Bored after finishing the paper, she calls a girlfriend or two, chats for awhile and goes to bed.

Saturday afternoon Fred comes to her apartment as scheduled, eager to see her reaction to the book. He doesn’t begrudge the time spent calling all over the country to find a dealer in rare books that had a first edition of this timeless classic she loves. He willingly spent two weeks’ salary for this collector’s item since he felt it would bring great pleasure to his sweetheart. He had never given Sally a gift of this magnitude before, and wonders what she will say about it.

She greets him at the door with a hug and kiss and asks how his business trip went. Over dinner she is cheerful, obviously excited to see him, clearly in love, full of the joy of life, but she never mentions the book. Mildly

surprised, he says nothing. In the back of his mind he weighs two options. Either it was not delivered or she didn't like it. While either option is theoretically possible, neither seems at all probable so dinner ends with the enigma unsolved.

When they go into the living room after dinner, he notices the package on the coffee table and rightly assumes it is his gift to her. Suddenly a third scenario leaps to his mind and it is highly probable. Sally must have waited to open it until he was present so he could watch her face and enjoy her pleasure. Together they can turn the pages and savor the gift. He is thrilled with this new demonstration of her thoughtfulness. The evening is turning out better than he could have expected. He waits as she pours him a cup of coffee, expecting her to open his gift next.

But she doesn't.

There is no mention of the package that is right before them. When she steps out of the room, he discreetly checks the return address label to be sure it is from his bookseller. Seeing that it is, he again begins to wonder why it remains unopened. During the evening he delicately asks leading questions to see if she had a rough week at work or if anything was wrong in their relationship. Nothing clicked. Her week was normal. She loves him deeply and tells him so on more than one occasion. Finally, he goes home quite disappointed and somewhat perplexed.

Fred and Sally continue to see each other regularly, but she never mentions the book. Within a few days he notices that the package is gone from the coffee table and wonders whether it has been opened or merely moved to a more convenient spot. He scans the bookcase and finds his gift sitting neatly in a row with the other books she is reading. Knowing she loves books and reads voraciously, he hopes it is only a matter of time before she reads his gift and comments on it.

He doesn't understand her silence. With the exception of the book she is ignoring, their relationship seems to be superb. He waits for weeks and there are frequent discussions of whatever book she is reading at the time, but his gift to her is never discussed.

It pains him deeply and creates quite a dilemma for him. You see, Fred has an immense imagination and a flair for the dramatic. Traditional ways of doing things seem trite to him, so at the end of the stirring romance novel he had given her was his own elegant proposal asking for her hand in marriage.

The book—and his proposal—sits on the shelf, unread. The engagement ring remains in his shirt pocket next to his heart every time he sees her. Their wedding and marriage remain on hold while she loves him and reads all sorts of books but ignores one specific book.

HONOR THROUGH GIFTS

Giving gifts is a near-universal way of giving honor. The recipient in turn honors the giver by expressing appreciation for the gift. In fact, there is a whole set of cultural norms for showing gratitude even for unwanted gifts because of the importance of honoring the giver. Fathers and mothers receive many useless or inappropriate gifts from their young children, yet they typically thank them because to reject the gift is to dishonor the giver.

Thus, in Fred and Sally's case she non-verbally dishonored him by attaching such low value to his gift that she did not immediately open it, nor did she ever read it, nor did she even think it worthwhile to thank him for it. If it was an intentional insult on her part, it could be her way of communicating that the relationship was over. What was so bizarre was Sally's consistent reiteration of her love for Fred while she simultaneously dishonored him by being disinterested in his gift.

HONOR IN THE GARDEN

This to me is a picture of the Garden of Eden. If the silence in Scripture is an accurate indicator, Adam and Eve had very limited resources for worshiping God. They apparently had no religious days, ceremonies, sacrifices, vestments, land or buildings dedicated to worship. There was no religious music, no sacred book to study, no special vocabulary to use or even any designated posture when worshiping God.

So what did they have? How could they worship God when he showed up in the Garden? Consider the record of Genesis 2.

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ...

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’

... Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and whatsoever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.”

This is all the information we have about the interaction between God and Adam in the Garden prior to the fall. It is interesting that none of it shows Adam doing anything remotely like “worship” as we know it. The relationship between God and Adam centered on God’s creation and Adam’s response to creation.

HONORING THE PRODUCT

I believe the only form of worship Adam had at his disposal was to enjoy God's presence and His creation.

Consider the day God paraded His creation before Adam.¹ He had already seen it all and I believe He enjoyed His own creative process immensely. I suspect the angels partied wildly as each new day unfolded. Now God was showing His treasures to the man He created. Adam was seeing these things for the first time.

Think of Fred watching Sally's face if she had actually opened the package in front of him. The look of surprise and pleasure on her face as she first read the title of the book she had longed for would have repaid him richly. Being ecstatic about the gift would have honored him.

Similarly, I think God was watching Adam's face as he saw each new creature. Adam's reaction would either honor God or dishonor Him.

I wonder if God set him up from time to time. Did show him a little brown wren, then a plain gray pigeon, then an ordinary crow before suddenly springing a male cardinal on him, blazing in all his courting glory? If Adam responded with a long drawn out "Oh, wow!" that gave honor to God and was as elegant an act of worship as a finely trained choir singing Handel's "Messiah."

Did Adam's jaw drop in amazement when he saw the peacock unfurl his long tail into a flamboyant fan of feathers? Did he jump back in shock and then give an embarrassed snicker when the peacock let out its paradoxically discordant screech? If so, the unfettered expression of his emotions gave honor to the Creator and was a form of worship.

Did Adam literally roll on the ground with laughter over any of God's offbeat creatures? If so, that too was high worship of the Creator.

After naming all the animals, he took a nap while God made Eve.² When he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and saw this new creation before him, he must have blinked a few times and thought furiously. As comprehension dawned and Adam realized this was no new animal but one like himself, only a little different and very special, a look of wonder must have crossed his face.

If he momentarily forgot the Creator who had been his only companion so far and started walking toward this woman, even that honored God. Adam's wholehearted enjoyment of the latest creation extended honor to the Lord. The look on his face profoundly approving of Eve's design was also an act of worshiping Eve's Designer.

HONORING THE PROCESS

Worship through honor did not end after the first guided tour. God ordered Adam and Eve to work in the Garden, fill the earth and take dominion over it.³ I feel the Garden of Eden was a prototype. It was a classroom where they could learn about the functions of God's creation.

With that learning, they were to expand the perimeters of the Garden, using their most recently accrued knowledge to subdue and beautify other portions of the earth. So when Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden each day, I suspect most of what they talked about was gardening, animal husbandry and ecological balance. It was Science 101. The Garden was a giant research and development lab for them.

When Adam asked, "Why did you make the cedar and pine trees with many branches, but the palm tree with only a trunk and leaves at the top?" it was an act of worship. Like my apprentice Jim, Adam presupposed God had profound reasons for every design decision and that those reasons were worth knowing. He was probably convinced that God would never answer a

“why” question by saying, “Oh, there is no reason. I just tossed some things together and it came out that way.” Rather, every “why” question netted an explanation of functionality and synergy and was another insight into the workings of the Creator’s mind.

On the first tour of the Garden, Adam worshiped by showing interest in the finished product. During subsequent work in the Garden, he worshiped through interest in the process God used to produce the exquisite harmony, balance and beauty in the Garden. And every time Adam figured out on his own some new piece of synergy in nature, he reported it excitedly to the Lord who already knew all about it. As they shared the joy of Adam’s discovery, that too was worship.

DISINTEREST AND DISHONOR

Go back to Fred and Sally. Sally hugged and kissed Fred and told him she loved him. She served him dinner and invited him back time and again. All of these were valid expressions of honor. By contrast, her utter disinterest in something that he had purchased for her at great sacrifice was quite dishonoring.

In fact, if Sally had been totally disinterested in Fred’s life and only wanted to talk about herself, we would say there was no love, only self-centeredness. If he had walked in the door that Saturday night and she chatted all evening about her job, her neighbors, her plans, her problems and her aspirations and never once asked about his business trip, she would be considered quite rude and insensitive. Certainly not in love!

Normally young people in love want to explore every nook and cranny of their sweetheart’s life. They talk about childhood, families, mutual friends, work, hobbies, schoolyard mishaps, etc. Things that would be boring trivia to anyone else are fascinating glimpses into the soul of your beloved. When

you are in love, every detail of the other person's life is interesting and important.

Therefore, Sally did ask about Fred's business trip, how the flight was, who sat next to him, whether the flight was on time, whether he got any sleep and many other details. Showing interest is an act of showing honor and it is an integral spontaneous part of love.

THE COST OF DISINTEREST

Being disinterested is dishonoring even to the point of being an intentional insult. What if, part way through the day of discovery, Adam had said, "You know, Lord, this has been fun, but I wonder if I could finish naming the animals another day. I enjoy looking at everything you made, but right now the beach by that river is calling my name. I'd like to go down and see what kind of sandcastle I could build. Do you mind? What time tomorrow would you like to get together again?"

That is ludicrous, of course. For Adam to be more interested in his skill at building sandcastles than in the Almighty God's skill in creating living creatures would be abjectly insulting. His indifference to the hitherto unseen portion of creation would represent major dishonor to the Most High.

It was precisely that kind of disinterest that resulted in Adam and Eve's sin. There were two special trees in the Garden of Eden. They were planted in the middle of the Garden, presumably in a place of prominence. God drew Adam's attention to them by personally naming them rather than allowing Adam to do so. He named and pointed out the tree of life first. Then He identified the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He told them that they were not to eat of it. Then He added that they should eat of every other tree in the Garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

It was a hint, a slight push, a suggestion, but He stopped short of overtly telling them to eat of the tree of life.⁴

He certainly wanted them to eat of it. Much more to the point, He wanted them to WANT to eat from it. He wanted them to be curious and ask about it, to notice that there was only one tree like it in the Garden. God put many clues in front of them, inviting them to let their godly curiosity, their fascination with everything He created, draw them into asking what the tree of life was about. He wanted to be honored by their interest in it.

TWO GENERATIONAL TREES

What was so special about the tree? Very simply, if they ate of it, they would live forever.⁵ You see, both significant trees in the Garden were generational. Because they ate of the one tree, a generational curse came into the world that has touched the entire creation, including every one of us.⁶ If they had eaten of the other tree, the ultimate generational blessing would have been released and all mankind would have walked in sinlessness, communing with God face to face, expanding the beauties of the Garden across the globe, mentored by Creator God.

So each time God met them in the Garden, He waited for Adam to say, “By the way, Lord, I’ve been wondering about the tree of life. Can you tell us how that fits into the master plan? Why is there only one of that tree?”

And the Lord would have smiled and responded, “I thought you’d never ask. Call Eve and let’s go look at it.”

But they never did ask.

So the greatest generational blessing of all time went unclaimed.

Sally’s indifference to the book kept her from finding the marriage proposal that she was eagerly awaiting. Her disinterest became dishonor and led to her despair over Fred’s failure to propose.

Adam and Eve's disinterest in the tree of life became dishonor and set them up for personal death and a generational curse on all mankind.

SERVANTS VS. LOVERS

Luke 17:10 says: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" God already has the angels who are punctiliously obedient servants. He is looking for lovers who are fascinated with everything there is about Himself. He is looking for Christians who want to know both His mind and heart so they can leave His imprint on the world around them, not because they have to, but because they are wildly in love with God.

Now, let's rewrite Sally's story. This time she is so excited about the promised unknown gift from her beloved, that she takes the whole day off work on Friday and waits near the door to sign for the package. She doesn't want to leave any gift from her man sitting on the doorstep waiting for her to come home. Work means nothing compared to a gift from Fred.

Sally immediately opens the package and stays up until three in the morning to finish reading the book she has read so many times before, because this copy is from HIM, the man she loves. At the end, she discovers the proposal from her beloved and her heart leaps with joy.

She reaches for the phone to call him right then. When she gets his answering machine, she remembers that he is on a plane coming to her. The hours drag by, but when he knocks on her door the next evening, she throws herself in his arms and says, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!"

THE HONOR OF ANTICIPATION

Sally extended great honor to Fred by taking the day off work because she was consumed with anticipation of his gift. She also extended honor by

saying “Yes” to his proposal. The former honor was much greater than the latter.

You see, she already knew him and knew she loved him. She knew she wanted to marry him and would say “Yes” if and when he proposed. By contrast, she did not know what was in the package.

She honored him by simply assuming the gift would be wonderful because it was from Fred. Her sense of expectation about this unknown facet of her man was so consuming that she knew she would not be able to concentrate on work, so she offended her boss and lost a day’s wage to stay home.

Similarly, when we look at things God has already done and express our approval of what we have seen Him do, it is pleasing to Him. It gives Him honor. It is an act of worship. However, when we look ahead and see wrapped, sealed, secret packages from God and our emotions are stirred with anticipation, that honors God even more and is an act of high worship.

REDEMPTIVE GIFTS

I am a researcher and an amateur historian. I study the founding of cities with an eye toward discovering their redemptive gifts. That enables me to understand the plan God has for a city and the stewardship responsibilities of the Body of Christ in it.

From my earliest school days, I hated history. It was meaningless names and dates to be memorized for a test and forgotten as soon thereafter as my mind could be purged of each inane bit of trivia. Then I began to see the creative genius of God in the founding of cities and nations. Some seem to have been founded haphazardly. Others were founded with clear intent. Regardless of the beginning of each story I eventually am able to see the Lord’s fingerprints. Each is a new masterpiece of divine creativity. After

reading the history of a city or nation, I celebrate God's artistry and power by sharing the story with others. This is an act of worship.

My anticipation is the higher form of worship. Frequently when I drive through a new town I have a craving to stop at the local library, even if only for ten minutes. I yearn to see what neat divine surprises are hidden away by the Lord in the history of the city. I mentally scan my schedule to see if there is any way possible to squeeze in the time. I sigh when the time analysis comes back with an emphatic "No way! Keep on driving!" Diligence keeps me on the road, but my heart is in the library, exploring some new facet of my Lord's creativity. That sigh is an act of worship.

It is worship when I see God's fingerprints in a city's history and celebrate His workmanship. It is a higher form of worship when sight-unseen I assume the fingerprints are there and my emotions rise in anticipation of discovery. Even though I do not have time to find His fingerprints, the fact that I know they are there and want to see them is an expression of honor to my Beloved, the Master of History.

TRAVEL GIFTS

When I leave home on a ministry trip, there are many things I know about the schedule and the people to whom I will be ministering. There is a sense of anticipation over the things I know God has already provided.

My emotions are more deeply stirred over the certainty that my Lord has some surprise gifts for me along the way. I walk in expectation, never knowing where He will surprise me but sure that He will. In the Atlanta airport, His gift to me was a shoeshine man talking to a soldier fresh out boot camp. From their banter I picked up a sparkling illustration of spiritual truth.

Another time I was having breakfast with a local pastor in Tampa Bay I had never met before. It turned out he was one of the spiritual gatekeepers of the city. As a result, the official welcome he extended to our team significantly increased our spiritual authority and our freedom in ministry that weekend.

In Washington, D.C., I led a team in some warfare on the Mall. When we arrived, we found a Black congregation doing intercession on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and some Messianic Jews holding a Feast of Tabernacles worship service by the Washington Monument. The Lord had brought us there to be part of a larger orchestra. There was intercession, warfare and worship happening on the Mall at the same time, all master-planned by my Bridegroom.

When I come home from a trip, there is eager anticipation to look at the mail, read e-mails and listen to messages on the answering machine. I have a basic assumption that the Lord has been busy while I was gone and there will be exciting glory stories awaiting me.

REVELATION

When the Spirit stirs within me and I sit down to write, there is a sense of expectation because I never know what the Lord will reveal as I write. Many times I get to the end of a chapter and say, “Wow! I didn’t know I knew that!”

As I open the Word to study, there is expectancy before I even get into the passage. I assume God has some new jewels He wants to show me. After He has fed me with fresh manna I worship out of gratitude. But the expectancy of encountering God’s gifts that I have beforehand is an even greater act of honor and worship than the praise I give Him after I experience His presence and His presents.

PRIORITIZING WORSHIP

Unlike Adam and Eve, we now have religious days, ceremonies, vestments, land and buildings dedicated to worship. We also have endless amounts of worship music, a vast sacred Book to study, ever-changing special vocabulary to use when worshiping God and a variety of designated worship postures. Our electronic communication now enables us to celebrate what God is doing in the far corners of the earth as well as in our midst. All of these things are fine.

But I still believe the highest form of worship is to walk through a day with a spirit of anticipation, keenly interested in everything about us, assuming that our Beloved has gone before us scattering His gifts throughout our day before we ever walk that way.

A COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Clearly the dishonor of indifference cost Adam and Eve the greatest generational blessing of all time. Scripture does not guarantee that if we are passionately interested in everything about our Beloved we will receive generational blessings. However, I do feel it is certainly a possibility since it fits the pattern of other generational blessings flowing from various acts of honor.

Having Christ as our emotional focus will undeniably enrich us in our own lives and it may well open greater doors for us and for our descendants than we could ever imagine.

Chapter 14

THE HIGHEST MOTIVATION

Why is honoring God such a central issue in our pilgrimage? It is not that He has an emotional need for affirmation. Rather, honoring Him is a basic tool to enable us to come into agreement with truth since He is Truth.

Recently there was a funeral for a local politician. In the course of the public remarks, someone made a comment that was hugely controversial. Hundreds of people applauded strongly, while hundreds of police officers sat perfectly still with their hands in their laps. The applause extended honor to the speaker, communicating agreement with her value system. The officers' refusal to applaud communicated overt rejection of her and her value system.

COMPETING VALUE SYSTEMS

As we extend honor to God, we are affirming the entire package of universal, eternal truth that exists because it is from Him and reflects Him. Each choice we make in life (especially the choice of silence) gives honor either to God's value system or to that of the devil. They are diametrically opposed. One is fully and completely truth. The other contains huge amounts of truth as well as enough lies to utterly destroy the value of the truth.

The devil's first strategy to persuade us to live out his value system is to convince us to make a priority of becoming comfortable in the context of happiness. By contrast, God wants us to experience fulfillment, not happiness. Fulfillment comes through generational stewardship and invariably involves voluntarily embracing a great deal of pain.

If the devil loses the battle and we retain a sense of stewardship to the next generation, his backup plan is to distort our stewardship so that we make it a priority to provide for our children's material needs and develop their souls. God's value system makes it a priority to nurture their spirits and this often comes at the expense of meeting material needs or providing short-term emotional pleasure.

If the devil loses that battle as well, his last stand is to permit us to be quite obedient in our generational stewardship while being emotionally focused on the obligation of obedience. Our Father wants us to be so focused on the inevitable fruit of our obedience that the price we pay is a non-issue because we are driven by joy not duty.

This was Christ's approach to obedience. He was fiercely intentional about focusing on the joy while embracing the pain of being a generational steward.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”¹

PASSION AND PURPOSE

Our relationship with God, including the whole subject of generational blessings, revolves around the twin issues of our passion and our purpose. Notice the sequence.

1. When we have a passion for God, we will demonstrate it by fulfilling His purpose for our lives.

2. To enable us to fulfill His purpose, He releases to us generational blessings that were accrued by previous generations and have been held in reserve by Him until He found a passionate steward who would use them wisely.

3. As we experience the power of generational blessings relentlessly authorizing our Kingdom work, it gives us multiplied opportunities to celebrate God's wisdom, love and power. This honors Him and the values that flow from who He is.

4. As our passion for honoring Him grows, He adds blessings to our children's trust fund to help the next generation fulfill their purpose.

David was called a "man after God's own heart."² Did he earn the title because of his impeccable obedience to God's commands? Not hardly. I believe it was because He knew how to celebrate God's nature and His works. Then from David's passion flowed purpose. Generational blessings from the past empowered him to fulfill his purpose, and out of that process flowed more blessings for his posterity.

THE CRITICAL PASSION

Jesus is still looking for passionate people. In the first half of this book I asked, "Do you love children?"

I close the book by asking a more important question: "Do you love your Bridegroom?"

It is well and good to have a generational worldview, to turn your heart away from your own success and to value your children so much that you build your life around making them mighty in spirit. If you do these things, you will stand head and shoulders above the society around you. God will be pleased and your children will benefit immensely.

However, it is far better to do the right things because you are in love with Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church.

Will God add riches to my family's spiritual trust fund just because I am deeply interested in Him, His people and His world? I don't know for sure. Although the events in the Garden of Eden suggest that, I have not found any verse that specifically says so, but it doesn't matter. I am not pursuing Him primarily as a cold, calculated, commercial generational investment. I am not driven solely by duty to my children.

I am in love with Jesus.

Honor is the fuel that keeps the flame of love burning hot in a marriage. Where there is overt dishonor or merely dishonor communicated through disinterest, love wanes and only duty is left. Where honor is extended, love is heightened.

So I honor my Lord in every way I can because I love Him. As I honor Him, my love for Him grows. Because I love Him and He loves me, He honors me in far larger ways than I could ever honor Him. This causes my love for Him to grow again.

Along the way I am doing my duty. But that is incidental.

Along the way I am widening and deepening the stream of generational blessings for my children. But that too is incidental.

I am in love. And I am loved.

Life (and theology) does not get any better than that.

EPILOGUE

I wrote this book in the spring of 1998, within a year of Miss Elsie's impartation to me. However, God did not immediately open doors for it to be published, so I left it in my archives and waited.

In July of 2002 while I was engaged in business in Washington, D.C., God unexpectedly spoke to me that it was time to revise the manuscript and publish it. I rewrote the book in a hotel in Shanghai, China, in October of that year. I could never manage to get my body clock calibrated to the 15-hour time difference from Los Angeles to Shanghai, but my laptop didn't seem to care. I would write until I was sleepy, sleep until I was rested, and then write some more.

THE PROCESS

I was hugely pleased to see how much I had grown in three years. God continually drew fresh manna from my recent encounters with Him and wove it into previously researched truths to give the book a richer texture. I was especially gratified to see my inner healing reflected on the screen when a stream of heart words swiftly tumbled out, gentling the cerebral tenor of the first version. There are softer tones, more subtle hues and even fleeting fragrances that are derived from my more intimate pilgrimage of late.

Two intercessors accompanied me to China to provide on-site prayer support (and badly needed proofreading skills). Elaine is Chinese and was a gift from heaven as she consistently solved every logistical problem that came up.

Our first day there the transformer on the 110 volt printer I brought from the U.S. went up in smoke. No problem. She searched the town and found a 220 volt printer we could buy for \$60 and I was back in business.

The toilet in my room ran all the time, driving this ex-plumber crazy. No problem. She got engineering up to the room and persuaded them to fix it.

My tummy was mildly cranky over the abrupt gastronomic paradigm shift. No problem. She had seen a pharmacy while she was out and found aloe vera and acidophilus to swiftly restore order.

Horror of horrors: my e-mail would not work there. How would I keep in touch with my intercessors from around the world? No problem. Elaine just happened to have her own laptop with her which was on good terms with Chinese cyberspace. I wrote my e-mails onto a CD at 2:30 a.m., slipped it under her door and the e-mails were peppering other continents before breakfast.

In short, Elaine dealt a crushing blow to the Philistine curse which had hammered me on my previous trip to China. I was free to devote my best efforts and finest energy to thinking and writing, two my strongest addictions.

Janis, my other intercessor, does not speak Chinese. She definitely pulled her weight with hours upon hours of proofreading, but told me she felt like she was just tagging along to keep Elaine company since they had been prayer partners for years. She wasn't sure why she was on this trip.

I know why. And it wasn't just to keep Elaine company while she played trivial pursuit for me all over the lovely city of Shanghai.

THE NON SEQUITUR

I had asked a few people to read the original manuscript three years ago, and the consensus was that it was incomplete. Another chapter needed to be

written. Although that was a very helpful insight, none of them could give me a clue about the content of this mysterious missing chapter. I carried that concern for three years, confident that I was missing something huge, but unable to look for it in a logical manner.

How do you find the right answer when you don't know what it is you don't know?

On Monday night, the three of us were eating dinner in Angel Café. Actually only Janis and I were eating. Elaine was just nibbling at her bowl of won ton soup because she had been indulging in her favorite Chinese candies all day and consequently had no appetite.

I was musing over the near silence in today's church on the topic of generational blessings. It seems bizarre that this niche would remain so nearly vacant while the two contiguous truths were loudly proclaimed.

On the one hand there has been a flood of teaching in the last 15 years on the topic of generational curses. This is the companion truth to the left of my niche. There has also been a flood of teaching on the theme of blessings, impartations and anointings, the companion truth to the right of my niche.

I wondered aloud why most American Christians will go to great lengths to have some national figure pray for them, lay hands on them, impart blessings and anointings, but are only mildly interested in accessing their own generational blessings. They clearly believe in being blessed, so why is there such a disconnect when it comes to seeking generational blessings?

Janis replied simply, "Because they don't respect their families."

That truth reverberated through the empty restaurant like the booming sounds of a giant Chinese gong. It pursued me night and day as I finished revising the original manuscript.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

It is true that America abounds with dysfunctional families. It is true that we are now raising the third generation of unfathered children and that unfathered fathers make poor fathers themselves. And it is true that Hollywood's massive assault on the American family has produced millions of casualties.

I concede all that.

However, that is not the whole truth. It is also true that having a Joel in the family line does not negate the accrued blessings from a Samuel and a Hannah. The riches stored up in heaven by previous generations are secure, recorded under our family's name, waiting for a passionate, faith-filled steward to file a claim for their release.

We are the nation that produced the Portland Revival, the Azusa Street Revival, the NYC Businessmen's Revival, the First Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening. Those people who sought God at an unusual level were our forefathers. They honored God immensely and thereby accrued many generational blessings ... for us.

We are descended from the radical Methodist circuit riders, the tenacious Baptist lay preachers and an army of stalwart Presbyterian ministers who kept the Gospel near the forward edge of the westward expansion of the White culture. They honored God by the sacrificial investment of their lives in communities that were rough at best, frequently ungrateful and rarely extravagant in their support of these rugged foot soldiers of the Gospel. They honored God immensely and thereby accrued many generational blessings ... for us.

Our American churches have sent out hundreds of thousands of missionaries and poured billions of dollars into overseas ministry. They honored God immensely by caring for those He loves who had not yet

heard the Gospel and thereby they accrued many generational blessings ... for us.

Our nation has been the primary secular cause of the nation of Israel coming back into existence and surviving this long. By those political decisions, America as a nation has honored God and accrued great generational blessings ... for us.

Today's Hispanics do not have a monopoly on coming to America to benefit their children. We Caucasians are also descended from immigrant people. Our forefathers fled Europe for religious freedom and to build a better future for their children. Our forefathers, by and large, had a generational worldview. The Irish, Italian, German, Polish and Jewish ghettos of 100 years ago extracted as high a price for our forefather's investment in the next generation as do today's Hispanic slums in Los Angeles. Our forefathers honored God immensely by investing in the next generation at their own expense, and thereby accrued many generational blessings ... for us.

This is our heritage. These are our forefathers. These are the men and women who have made a huge deposit in our family lines. If your forefathers in the past two or three generations have not made withdrawals from that account, it just means that the blessings in your family trust fund have been compounding interest while God is waiting for the first time to dispense them.

HIGH HONOR

Jacob recognized that he was in the presence of a man of God and he would not let that man go until he had been blessed. This honors God. He responded with a blessing and with honor. It honors Him when we see a

spiritual giant in our midst and go to great lengths to receive a blessing from that man or woman.

It is a higher form of honor to pursue God by faith, not by sight, by believing the best about our family tree.

God could have placed you in any family in the whole earth, in any period of human history. He placed you in the family of His choice at the right time. You only know about the last few generations of your family. He knows every single righteous thing that every one of the millions of your ancestors has done from Seth to the present. He keeps track of accrued righteousness for 1,000 generations.¹ He knows what generational blessings have been accrued. He knows what blessings have been released already to prior generations. He knows exactly which ones remain in the account.

God intentionally placed you in a specific family line that has all you need to accomplish everything you were called to do in partnership with Jesus.

Maybe all you can see is the recent brokenness. That does not change the reality of past righteousness. It merely gives you a platform to honor God by faith instead of by sight.

If you have despised the family God placed you in and considered them a liability, you have dishonored the God who placed you there. I invite you to honor Him by embracing your whole family line, sight unseen, as a gift from a wise, loving Father.

You will not receive treasures from your family line so long as you are convinced there are no treasures there.

Janis was so very right.

NOTES

Chapter 2 - GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS DEFINED

- ¹ Jeremiah 35:1
- ² Numbers 10:29-32; Judges 1:16
- ³ Genesis 25:1; Exodus 2:16
- ⁴ Jeremiah 27-28
- ⁵ Jeremiah 19:1ff
- ⁶ Jeremiah 32:1ff
- ⁷ Jeremiah 23:15
- ⁸ Jeremiah 35:6-10
- ⁹ Jeremiah 35:13
- ¹⁰ Jeremiah 35:19
- ¹¹ 1 Kings 19:18
- ¹² 2 Kings 10:15-24
- ¹³ Numbers 10:29-32
- ¹⁴ Judges 4:17-24

Chapter 3 - RECESSIVE & DIVERTED BLESSINGS

- ¹ 1 Chronicles 15:16-18
- ² 1 Chronicles 6:31-47
- ³ 1 Chronicles 15:17
- ⁴ 1 Chronicles 25:1
- ⁵ 1 Chronicles 25:5
- ⁶ 1 Chronicles 25:4-5
- ⁷ 2 Chronicles 5:12-14
- ⁸ 2 Chronicles 29:14
- ⁹ 2 Chronicles 28:24-25
- ¹⁰ 1 Samuel 8:1-5
- ¹¹ 1 Chronicles 6:25-28; 1 Samuel 1:1-2
- ¹² Genesis 48
- ¹³ Genesis 49:4
- ¹⁴ Genesis 49:5-7
- ¹⁵ Genesis 49:8-12
- ¹⁶ 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Chapter 4 - GOD'S INITIATIVE & CONTROL

- ¹ Isaiah 36-37

- ² Genesis 15:12-16
- ³ 2 Chronicles 29-31
- ⁴ Isaiah 36
- ⁵ 2 Chronicles 32:1-8
- ⁶ 2 Kings 18:13-16
- ⁷ Isaiah 36
- ⁸ Isaiah 22:15-24
- ⁹ Isaiah 22.24
- ¹⁰ Genesis 17:7
- ¹¹ Genesis 25:1-9
- ¹² Genesis 27
- ¹³ Genesis 49
- ¹⁴ Genesis 46:26-27; Exodus 1:6-7
- ¹⁵ Genesis 17:18; 27:36-40
- ¹⁶ Genesis 15:13-21; 17:8
- ¹⁷ Genesis 15:16
- ¹⁸ Genesis 3:15
- ¹⁹ Genesis 4:1
- ²⁰ Galatians 4:4
- ²¹ 1 Chronicles 17:3-14
- ²² Genesis 12:1-3

Chapter 5 - MAN'S INITIATIVE & RESPONSIBILITY

- ¹ Genesis 27:27-29; 49:1-28; 1 Kings 2:1-9
- ² Deuteronomy 33:1-29
- ³ Genesis 22:1-18
- ⁴ Luke 1:42; 2:25-38
- ⁵ 2 Kings 2:9-10
- ⁶ Luke 2:25-35
- ⁷ Genesis 25:21-23
- ⁸ Genesis 25:29-34
- ⁹ Genesis 27:1-40
- ¹⁰ Genesis 32:22-32
- ¹¹ Genesis 25:34; Hebrews 12:16
- ¹² Luke 18:1-8
- ¹³ Luke 18:8
- ¹⁴ Genesis 27:33-40; Hebrews 12:17

Chapter 6 - THE STEWARDSHIP FACTOR

- ¹ Corinthians 1:5-7
- ² 2 Corinthians 8-9
- ³ Luke 19:11ff

- ⁴ Romans 1:8
- ⁵ Romans 1:11
- ⁶ Luke 19:26
- ⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:15
- ⁸ John 11:51

Chapter 7 - TWO MODELS FOR IMPARTATION

- ¹ Galatians 3:6-9
- ² Genesis 21:22-23

Chapter 8 - LIMITATIONS

- ¹ Genesis 34
- ² Genesis 49:5-7
- ³ Exodus 32:25-29
- ⁴ Joshua 21
- ⁵ Ezekiel 48:8-22
- ⁶ Malachi 2:2
- ⁷ The Seven Curses CD set by Arthur Burk; Sapphire Leadership Group, Anaheim, CA; 2002
- ⁸ Joshua 5:1-11
- ⁹ Luke 12:48 KJV
- ¹⁰ Matthew 12:43-45
- ¹¹ Proverbs 26:1, 8
- ¹² Luke 16:10-12
- ¹³ Judges 10:6-12:15
- ¹⁴ 1 Samuel 10:6-7
- ¹⁵ 1 Samuel 11:6-11
- ¹⁶ 1 Samuel 15:1-22; 24:16-21; 31:1-10
- ¹⁷ 1 Kings 3:1-15; 11:1-10
- ¹⁸ Matthew 10:1-4; John 13:27; Matthew 27:1-8

Chapter 9 - INIQUITY VS. HONOR

- ¹ Genesis 4:11-12
- ² Genesis 4:12
- ³ Genesis 4:15
- ⁴ Genesis 4:13
- ⁵ Romans 3:23
- ⁶ Genesis 4:7
- ⁷ 2 Samuel 6:1-11
- ⁸ 2 Samuel 11
- ⁹ 1 Samuel 17:10
- ¹⁰ 1 Samuel 17:25

- ¹¹ 1 Samuel 17:26
- ¹² 1 Samuel 26:11
- ¹³ 2 Samuel 6:1-11
- ¹⁴ 1 Chronicles 15:12-15
- ¹⁵ 2 Samuel 6:13
- ¹⁶ 1 Chronicles 15:16-22
- ¹⁷ 1 Chronicles 16:7-36
- ¹⁸ 1 Chronicles 15:25
- ¹⁹ 2 Samuel 6:14
- ²⁰ 1 Chronicles 25
- ²¹ 1 Chronicles 26
- ²² 1 Chronicles 24
- ²³ 1 Chronicles 17:1-2
- ²⁴ 2 Samuel 7:5-16
- ²⁵ 2 Samuel 7:19

Chapter 10 - ATTITUDES BEHIND OBEDIENCE

- ¹ 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Leviticus 24:5-9
- ² Matthew 12:1-8
- ³ 2 Samuel 6:1-8; Exodus 37:1-9; Numbers 4:15
- ⁴ 2 Samuel 6:9-10
- ⁵ Numbers 35:34
- ⁶ Hebrews 11:6
- ⁷ Malachi 1:12-13
- ⁸ Malachi 3:16
- ⁹ Malachi 2:1-2
- ¹⁰ Malachi 2:2
- ¹¹ Malachi 2:3

Chapter 11 - LIFE & DEATH CHOICES

- ¹ Exodus 20:13; Revelation 22:15
- ² Philippians 4:19
- ³ Acts 17:28
- ⁴ Daniel 3:17-18
- ⁵ Matthew 4:5-6
- ⁶ Deuteronomy 6:16
- ⁷ Hebrews 11:6
- ⁸ Daniel 3:28-29
- ⁹ Mark 14:32-40
- ¹⁰ John 17:4
- ¹¹ Philippians 2:9-11
- ¹² Genesis 22:12-18

¹³ Nehemiah 4:10-23

Chapter 12 - DEFENDING GOD'S HONOR

¹ Numbers 25:3, 9

² Numbers 25:4

³ Numbers 25:6-8

⁴ Joshua 20-21

⁵ Leviticus 13-15

⁶ Deuteronomy 18:15

⁷ Exodus 15:20

⁸ Joshua 7:16-18

⁹ Exodus 24:1, 9

¹⁰ Exodus 18:21-22

¹¹ Leviticus 20:1-2

¹² Leviticus 21:1-4

¹³ Leviticus 22:1-9

¹⁴ Numbers 25:10-13

¹⁵ Numbers 31

¹⁶ Numbers 25:5

¹⁷ 1 Kings 19:10, 14

¹⁸ 1 Kings 18:10

¹⁹ 1 Kings 18:13

²⁰ 2 Kings 2

²¹ Matthew 10:41

Chapter 13 - THE DISHONOR OF DISINTEREST

¹ Genesis 2:19-20

² Genesis 2:21-24

³ Genesis 1:26

⁴ Genesis 2:8-9

⁵ Genesis 3:22-24

⁶ Genesis 3:14-19

Chapter 14 - THE HIGHEST MOTIVATION

¹ Hebrews 12:1-2

² 1 Samuel 13:14

Epilogue

¹ Exodus 20:6