

THE THREE POWERS OF THE KINGDOM



Robert Reeve

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Grateful thanks to the many organisations, churches and
friends who have shared their insights with me over the
years and enabled these ideas to emerge.
This is as much your book as mine.

DEDICATION

In memory of “papa” Yerima
An African apostle.

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1 PANGA WENAM

One Song. Three words. Three prayers. Three actions

The sun was beating down mercilessly on the rusting corrugated roof of the small church as folk gathered in Ouagadougou for their Sunday worship.

Gleaming black faces shone with expectancy as the drums began to beat out a holy rhythm. Hips began to sway, hands began to clap and, amid the twirling colour and noise, a bit of heaven began to invade this African earth.

"Panga Wenam, Panga Wenam, Panga Wenam, Panga! Panga!! Panga!!! Wenam, Hallélujah."

Caught up in the crescendo of faith filled words, which ran on and on in delightful repetitions, I found a deep inner strengthening as I sang. It was as if the heat had melted some liquid love which was now pulsating deeply into my inner man, healing hurts and implanting fresh hope.

"But what were they singing? What does Panga Wenam mean?"

Through the dust, sweat and dancing, I managed to glean a translation from my African friend who was part of the Mossi tribe. This colourful and happy people had generously embraced Christ into their culture, welcoming him into their lives and generations with a willing abandon.

"Panga means 'power' and Wenam is our name for God. It is more than just a song. It is our heart cry in prayer. Send us your power God!"

And this book is my own heart cry in prayer for you.

As you read, may you find a wild, but gentle, power inspiring your own soul. Much more than a power - a holy personality, bringing life, friendship and illumination on all you do and are.

Three cries – *"Panga, Panga, Panga."*

Three appeals for *"Power, Power, Power."*

Three emerging, prophetic paradigms – *"Embrace, Create, Destroy."*

Of course, we only have one magnificent Holy Spirit, dwelling beautifully in the ineffable dance of the three fold Godhead. And yet this one Spirit, this primal power and personality, has innumerable facets, glinting like a diamond to reveal the fullness of Christ. This book will take us on a journey to discover three of these vital powers - a dynamic trinity of *"dunamis"* that will empower your life and ministry.

Enjoy the ride, it may well change your life!

And you will receive Power!

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Acts 1:8

Jesus left us with a promise of power. Power for purpose!

A few years ago, I had a strange dream. I could see an enormous hydro electric dam built over an immense lake of shiny blue water. Great turbines were generating mass amounts of power.

"Where is all this power going?" I wondered in my dream.

I then saw a very small wire being attached to the huge turbines. I traced its trail which led to a small house. I followed it through the door of the house and up the stairs. It then went into the bathroom of the house where a man was standing in front of a mirror. This wire ended up connected to a small electric toothbrush in the man's hand as he happily cleaned his teeth! All that potential power being channelled only to selfishly clean one person's set of teeth!

"What a waste!" I thought.

An inner conviction from God's Spirit, took these words, echoing them into my heart.

"What a wast indeed! My people often do so little with such an enormous power available to them."

I thought how there was enough power in that dam to light up a whole city – even a whole nation. Every effort must be made to connect more than just a few little individual wires leading to mere self gratification. We need to sacrificially weave together in unity, creating thick wires from the North, the South, the East and the West, that will channel the power to the darkest places.

*"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.*

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
*that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the
earth."* Isaiah 49:6

The Hebrew word for *small* used here, קָלִיל - qalal (kaw-lal'), means despicable and vile! It is an offence to only use the *power* for ourselves - "*the tribes of Jacob,*" and for our own personal needs. We must stop posing and smiling, with our nice bright teeth in front of the mirror, and begin to make the connections to the darkened,

unreached nations of this world!

The purpose of the power is to be a light to the nations.

The Greek word for power, δύναμις - *dunamis* (doo'-nam-is), has the same root as the word for *dynamite* and *dynamo*. We have "*dunamis – panga*," to launch explosive words and actions into the world, bringing the Gospel truth and light to those in darkness.

"*Panga, Panga, Panga!*" – three cries for power. We will find such *dynamic dunamis* expressing itself in three ways.

Power to Know – Being & Intimacy – Embrace

Power to Innovate – Dreaming & Transforming - Create

Power to Preach – Doing & Evangelising - Destroy

Three sticks of dynamite to blow up the Kingdom of Satan. Three dynamos to bring inner and outer light.

God is longing to see greater intimacy in His Church. His two hands on the cross embraced a world of sin so that his father heart could hug all his prodigal sons and daughters, bringing them into the house of singing and joy. Christ saw his side pierced with a cruel sword so that a future Bride, washed in his sacrifice, might be embraced forever at his side.

God is longing to see a "*Joseph generation*," dreaming afresh. He allowed Mary to create a wonderful new life by the Holy Spirit, and He has unleashed passionate innovation in His people so that they can build the right contexts to transform society and see more of His Kingdom come.

God is longing to see courageous lovers of His Word, arising to share the Gospel in all its power and glory - a

Gospel which sets the captive free and destroys the work of the evil one.

Are you ready to embrace, create and destroy?

2 EMBRACE – THE POWER TO KNOW

*"His divine **power** (dunamis) has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."* 2 Peter 1:3

*"I want to know Christ and the **power** (dunamis) of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."* Philippians 3:10

Intimacy is the key to successful living. As human beings we are wired for relationships with others, and something of our humanity dies when we are isolated and alienated from one another.

Communication is essential to building intimacy. Successful communication occurs when we reveal ourselves to others and others reveal themselves to us. Such risky self disclosure requires a level of trust between the parties and a willingness to be vulnerable.

Christ himself gave the ultimate expression of vulnerable self disclosure when he hung bleeding, with arms wide open on the cross, embracing undeserving humanity in an invitation to intimacy.

The heart of Christianity is summed up in the royal command to build relationships of love.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39

Love God and love each other.

An easy statement, but a lifetime's apprenticeship awaits

those who would take seriously this quest for intimacy. Knowing God and one another is a base line for life and ministry.

"I want to know Christ," cries Paul, echoing our own heart desire. In the gospel of Matthew, we find a whole group of people making a strong claim of their knowledge of the Lord.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matthew 7:21-23

In this challenging passage, we see what many might call a very successful group of ministers. They seem to have the right words, *"Lord, Lord."* They *"prophesy"* and are active in *"driving out demons."* Very impressive! And in addition to all of that, they *"perform many miracles."*

So what is wrong with that? Don't many of us want to do the same things and see the same kind of miracles manifested in our own ministry?

The key question to ask here is:

"In what spirit did these ministers operate in?"

It is not enough to just jump on the bandwagon of ministry. Some folks seem to heedlessly plunge into a drummed up activity of prophecy, demonology and miracles, copying the latest techniques they have seen on the media. Others, simply use their own charisma or selfish ambition to build a little religious empire for themselves. Such enterprises are simply not born out of a life of listening prayer and obedience to the Lord, but are the fruits of human ambition looking to use the gospel as

a means of making money and self advancement.

A worst case scenario sees groups going beyond the ambitious ignorance of the human spirit to actually calling upon and using evil spirits to exercise ministry in a form of Christian animism. The prophetic words, exorcism and miracles may abound, but they are controlling and negative, spawning an evil fruit. The long term consequences of such ministry is often the abuse of people, gross confusion, lack of character and holiness and a church full of very sick – seemingly “healed,” people whose one day wonder needs a fresh shot.

Another essential question is:

“Was this ministry done in the spirit of Christ?”

Was he the originator, the sustainer and the one glorified? He is indeed the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega.

Ministry must originate from *“the will of the father,”* not the ambition of man. It can only be the fruit and the overflow of intimate knowledge and relationship with the Lord.

Ministry without intimacy receives the harsh judgement:

“I never knew you.”

This is why our hearts cry out for the Holy Spirit to give us the power to know. True knowledge is always found on the other side of crucifixion in the power of resurrection. We need a *“prophetic perspective.”* This means we take our eyes off of the problems and concentrate on the power, promise and beauty of the Lord. To do this, we need to abide in the finished work of the cross which has crucified our sinful nature, and hold fast to faith in the blood of Jesus which gives us a new beginning.

Our knowledge of God is deeply linked to our experience of "*sharing in his sufferings*," dying to our selfish needs and ambitions, yet rising to a Holy character and an interceding heart.

Allow the Holy Spirit to cut away selfishness and to plant the fruit of love into your heart so that, in true resurrection power, you may minister, like Jesus, with the power of an indestructible life.

In this very moment, call on the "*divine dunamis*" to give you "*everything you need*" for "*knowledge of him*."

3 DEGREES OF INTIMACY

How deep do you want to go with God?

Like any relationship, we can choose different levels of intimacy. The Bible contains many different images to illustrate the relationship between man and his creator, and each illustration gives us a telling metaphor and a greater opportunity to climb the ladder of intimacy.

For example, one of the levels is the image of an inanimate object.

The prophet Jeremiah uses the images of a bowl and a linen belt to express his relationship with his people. In Hosea, we find the people of God compared to *"a flat cake not turned over."* Hosea 7:8

In the New Testament, Paul - in his second letter to Timothy, speaks of varied household *"articles"* as an image of growing in maturity, encouraging the people of God to be *"an instrument for noble purposes."* 2 Timothy 2:21

However, one of the most telling images of intimacy at this level comes in Ephesians 2:10, in the context of being saved by grace through faith.

*"For we are God's **workmanship**, (ποίημα poiema - poy'-ay-mah) created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Our English word for "poem" is from the Greek *"poema"* - a noun derived from the same verb *"poiema"* that we have here, denoting to make or do. Poets are often called makers.

So you are God's poem! You have your very own unique and indispensable verse. You are indeed *"fearfully and wonderfully made."* Psalm 139:14

We have some very famous poets, like Shakespeare. I remember reading in school some of his wonderfully crafted love sonnets to his mysterious "dark lady." How much more is God crafting and shaping us to become a wonderful word of love expressed to the world. And all together, as a living and diverse church, we are called to find fresh rhyme and reason in order to bring a new song to the earth.

I get very discouraged walking around big cities when I discover an ornate wall of a Cathedral vandalized by indiscriminate graffiti. It is also disappointing to find a child's work book full of lazy scribble rather than the quality tokens of learning.

In the same way, Satan - through the trials of life and the bitter words with which we are often pierced, tries to pollute our unique "poetic" vocation by scratching scribble and graffiti over the pages of our hearts. Since childhood, some may have heard:

"You are useless!" or *"You are a failure"* from parents and teachers.

We end up believing the lie, stunting our growth into intimacy with God.

To wash away graffiti you need a strong cleaning fluid. Christ's blood is ever effective for cleansing us from the lies and blemishes on the pages of our heart.

Allow Christ to give you a new beginning. You can begin a fresh page of your life and fill it with new rhyme and reason to live. Let him wash away the lies and suffering. He will gently etch the following three words deeply into you, writing a new life poem onto your heart.

"I love you!"

And now it's up to you. You have the rest of your life to develop the next verses which will say back in wonderful syntax:

"I love you too."

Many years still, to craft your own incarnation of wonderful words to a waiting world. A world, still plodding along in the *"still sad music of humanity,"* yet waiting to hear your gospel birthed words of love and hope – words that only you can bring.

We are called to step into the daily adventure of a lifetime. Each new day presents us with the opportunity to share the simple, multifaceted, multicultural message:

"Jesus loves you."

This inanimate, poem image, illustrating the relationship between God and his people, is the base line, *"born again"* intimacy of a new beginning. It is the place where we renew our love for God and the world. With this safely etched into our hearts, we can move on to another level.

The image for this next level is that of an animal.

The Bible is full of images of animals, denoting God's relationship with his people. In Psalm 32:9 we have the warning.

"Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding, but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you."

God does not want ignorant, duty bound church goers who only worship because of cultural conditioning or because someone forced them to attend!

Intimacy is more than a *"bit and bridle."* A mature relationship with the Lord must be more than a dour

discipline, restricting our freedom of choice and our natural longing to wander the hills of life.

We can learn a lot from animals. Many years ago, I used to have a dog. I used to dread taking him for a walk because he was so wild and undisciplined. He would strain on the leash and, when I let him off to gain a bit more freedom, he would run after the first dog he saw and never respond to my vain calls for him to come back! In the end, I gave up letting him off the leash as he was not obedient enough for freedom.

Are you obedient enough for freedom in your relationship with the Lord?

In this next level of intimacy, joyful obedience becomes a key issue to get hold of. The major animal image in the New Testament to illustrate this point is that of the sheep.

*"I am the good shepherd; **I know my sheep and my sheep know me.**"* John 10:14

The sheep have a vocation to know the good shepherd. How will they build such a privileged intimacy?

Here is a selection of verses from chapter 10 of John's gospel which give us a clear indication of how the sheep can build their relationship with the shepherd:

*"The sheep **listen** to his voice."* Jean 10.3

*"His sheep follow him because **they know his voice.**"*
Jean 10.4

"They do not recognise a stranger's voice." Jean 10.5

It is all about cultivating the art of listening.

A wise Chinese man once said that we had all been given two ears and one mouth in order to learn that we should listen twice as much as we speak! No listening, no

intimacy. In a loud and busy world, we need to give space for listening to our master's voice.

God will usually speak to us in four ways.

The best and most reliable way is to hear God's voice through the words of scripture. This can happen through hearing teaching, words and sermons from ministers. However, the most efficient way to open your inner ear to God's whispers, is to cultivate your own daily times of reading and meditating on the word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit can take the words you read and apply them directly to your heart and mind so that, feeling strangely warmed, you may have specific revelation of God's character and understand the things he wants you to do.

God has a wonderful book which always lays open to bring a universal revelation of his invisible perfection. It is called creation. Spend time in the open air - in glorious solitude, surrounded by the testimony of nature. God spoke to Abraham through stars.

Other human beings represent another of God's sources of revelation. God will often use people's words to speak to us, even if they are totally unaware of it! And even without their words, people's silent needs - their anguished or happy faces, speak more than words can sometimes utter. Jesus saw the crowds and was moved with compassion.

And finally, we have the book of providence - the general rhythm of life, with all its ups and downs. Learn to interpret your times and discern the voice of God through the various events that circumnavigate your life. The famous author, C.S Lewis, said that:

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Let us be roused to listen.

*"My sheep **listen** to my voice; I know them, and **they follow** me."* John 10:27

However, listening is not the end of the journey to intimacy with God. We must also follow and obey what he actually says to us. We can only advance as far as our last act of obedience. Obedience is often costly – crucifying.

So, coming back to my wild dog. We must learn to hear and obey. God will train us and bring us to heel – on the leash as it were, until we learn to hear his voice calling us constantly back to him. We must allow our flesh life and roaming passions to be fully brought under the death sentence of the cross:

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Romans 6:6

And then, what wonderful joy and freedom! Led by the Spirit, we can fully explore life's possibilities, letting our dreams run free, daring to discover our furthest horizons.

This second level of intimacy is that of learning the foundational Christian freedoms of dying to the old sinful self, and rising to a new life of listening and joyful obedience.

Quite a programme – but don't worry. No one has perfectly mastered all the levels and it seems that God is well able to let us move on up into greater intimacy in spite of our struggles. He sees your heart and intentions, and is well able to give grace to an honest endeavour.

The next image of intimacy moves beyond the inanimate and the animal and takes us to that of a human being, but more than a simple human – a son.

With this beautiful metaphor, we begin to tread upon the Holy ground of intimacy. Jesus himself was *"The Son,"* in wonderful intimacy and union with his Father. Although we cannot, and most definitely should not, aspire to the same giddy heights of the Trinity, we too can learn from this glorious model of intimacy.

"When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Luke 3:21-22

Just meditate a while on these beautiful words addressed also to those who, through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, begin to discover God as their heavenly Father.

"You are my son. You are my daughter."

The God who made the stars is also as close as a Father's embrace. Your true identity is in Christ. You have been adopted into the ultimate royal family.

"Whom I love" – When I was a little boy living near London, I used to have to visit my auntie Nelly every Sunday afternoon. It was so boring! I wanted to be outside playing football, but I had to sit listening to the adults idly talking. My auntie Nelly would look over at me and ask this rather bizarre question.

"Why are you so big?"

Then, seeing me lost for an answer, she would lean over to my Dad and ask him the same question.

"Why is he so big?"

"Well," replied my Dad.

"It is because he eats lots of bread pudding!"

This strange answer seemed to satisfy my auntie Nelly who carried on her conversations, no doubt imagining me scoffing down unlimited amounts of squashy currants and mushy baked bread.

When we finally returned home, I asked my Dad a question.

"Is it true that I am big because I eat lots of bread pudding?"

"No son," he replied.

"That answer was just for your auntie Nelly. The real reason that you are big is that I love you, and it is my love that makes you grow so big!"

He then leaned over and gave me a big strong hug and a kiss on my forehead. What a marvellous boyhood revelation. What a fantastic lesson learned. It is a father's love that makes you grow strong.

Sometimes, like my auntie Nelly, we get the wrong answer and think that we have to eat lots of pudding – do lots of dutiful things and be under law to grow in the Christian life. But no! All you really need to grow strong in your Christian life is a wonderful revelation of your heavenly Father's love.

Not everyone has the privilege of having a good earthly role model, and many have been wounded by absent or even abusive fathers. But we do not have to stay in our wounds. The Holy Spirit can bring redemption and restore well being through revealing the heavenly Father's heart to us.

How?

In the same way he did for Jesus:

"And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him."

Ask the Holy Spirit, right now as you read, to give you a revelation of the Father's love.

Many people think that when the Holy Spirit comes we need to make a noise - and that such noise might even be a sign that we are "baptised in the Spirit." I'm sure that there is a place for all of this and for all the other doctrines concerning the reception of the Holy Spirit.

However, I'd like to suggest that for Jesus the first sign was not speaking, but listening.

Allow the Holy Spirit to help you overhear the Father's loving words to you every day of the week and every moment of the day.

"With you (put your own name here!) I am well pleased."

Some people waste a lifetime trying to please everyone! Parents, teachers, pastors - the list is endless. You don't have to earn approval - you have to receive it in faith. The ultimate approval and affirmation comes from God himself. And if he says he is pleased with you, why worry about the opinions of others. And, of course, once you have found this place of ultimate approval in God's heart, it will be a natural fruit to be pleasing to those others.

The revelation of the Father's heart will help you pray. It was the base line of Jesus' teaching when his friends asked him to teach them how to pray.

"When you pray," he said.

"Begin with 'Abba - Daddy.'"

This intimacy level of a child speaking to his Father is

immensely healing and strengthening. It equips us for service, testimony and prayer. But before you get too carried away in the dizzy heights of the Father's heart, this intimacy comes - as much of the precious jewels of Jesus, with a built in cost on our part.

Every beloved son will also encounter discipline. The writer of Hebrews makes this very plain.

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:5-11

Intimacy requires holiness, and discipline is a way into that beautiful place.

Perhaps you are in a place of "*pain*" at the moment. God may be dealing with some issues in your life - an illicit relationship or some other affection that is taking his place. Don't give up! You are in training for intimacy - along with the rest of us. Remember that the pain of Godly discipleship produces a future harvest.

So, having looked at the dutiful disciple - the beloved daughters and sons, we can tentatively move onto to the next level. Many will say that they didn't even know there was a next level. Surely the father/child image is the

ultimate step in intimacy? Can there be anything more to add?

Well, nothing more to add, but another revelation to attain and delight in. Before I enter into this, I would like to share a challenge from Isaiah 62:6-7

"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."

We see a challenging invitation to the missionary, "watchman" prayer ministry here. Give yourselves no rest - night and day prayer for cities and nations. How will I keep my eyelids open in the dead of night? How can I avoid sinking into a dry, habitual routine of religious duty as the first love of prayer may be lost in the endless, restless hours of persevering intercession?

"Is this really possible Lord?"

It can be possible through the revelation of this final level of intimacy. It is given as a motivational force for the "watchmen" in the earlier Isaiah verses.

*"You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; **as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.**"* Isaiah 62:3-5

What a beautiful image of a bridegroom, rejoicing over his bride.

This is our final image of intimacy – the bride.

This relationship is all about passion and wild, extravagant abandonment to the Lord. For many years, I knew practically nothing about this level of intimacy. I knew about the *"Father heart"* of God, and the son/daughter image seemed to be as far as one could go. Then I started meeting some people who seemed to have discovered a fresh passion for Jesus in their lives as they witnessed to a second wind of devotion in their prayer and ministry.

They spoke about the *"bridal paradigm"* and were constantly finding inspiration and revelation from the beautiful book, *"Song of Songs."*

"He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love." Song of Songs 2:4

I could understand this concept with my head, but found a lot of resistance inside of me to actually moving into this paradigm in an experiential way. As a man, I had no problem with the concept of being a son, but being a beloved bride - that was harder to grasp. I had some stupid fear that somehow I might lose my manliness with all these romantic ideas!

I then began to read the Psalms and discover the life of David. He was a real, giant slaying man, and yet he also possessed a sensitive intimacy and a heart after God. He was a true worshipping warrior.

After some time pondering all of this, I found myself in Izmir, Turkey. I was sitting down one morning, quietly thinking about the Lord, when - as gently as the dew on dry ground, the revelation dawned on me like a rising sun.

"You can be a true bride through submission."

Gentle submission to God was the key. It wasn't about gender – it was about surrender. Surrender to a penetrating love. Let love lead.

Since that day, I have been discovering a whole new aspect of my relationship to the Lord. Like many, I have often struggled with a sense of rejection. Even in Christian service, it is only too easy to feel rejected and dishonoured by those we serve. It is also tempting to feel useless and unfruitful.

"What have I accomplished after all these years?"

For some, working as pioneer missionaries in difficult circumstances, this sense of ministry *"desolation"* can be very strong. Even for those who aren't serving on the far flung fields, but are faithfully labouring in their professional vocations to be a true witness amongst their friends and family, the sense of serving in an unyielding, spiritual wasteland can be devastating.

The bridal paradigm can free us from this.

Look again at the beautiful verses from the Isaiah passage.

"No longer will they call you Deserted." It is time to move out of the desert of rejection!

Leave the loneliness and isolation. Be baptised into your new name.

"What's that?"

"But you will be called Hephzibah,"
Hephzibah means, "the Lord delights in you" - "my delight (is) in her."

One of the first adverts that I can remember seeing on television as a child was for some tasty white chocolate. I

remember seeing a young boy dressed up as a cowboy called, *"The Milky Bar kid."* Well, I've got something better than chocolate to heal the pain. Be introduced to the healing love of the heavenly bridegroom.

You don't need to be the *"Milky bar kid,"* because you are the *"Hephzibah kid."*

Let's get focused on our verses from Isaiah again.

"Or name your land Desolate." It is time to move on from desolation and unbelief.

Whatever place you find yourself in, you can bring a new faith filled bridal paradigm to your environment.

"Call your land Beulah" Beulah means "married."

"Your land will be married." Move into a fresh hope and faith for the covenant promises God has made to you regarding your own land – your family, friends and your patch of ministry territory.

This personal revelation of the Church being a bride is part of the preparing for the ultimate return of the bridegroom.

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." Revelation 19:7-8

Even as we look to the end, we cannot help but turn a glance back to the beginning. At the dawn of creation, God had a beautiful purpose of communion and fellowship planned. God was concerned that Adam was *"alone."*

"The LORD God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. 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 whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name." Genesis 2:18-19

He then made all the earth formed animals do a kind of beauty parade in front of Adam to see if a suitable mate might be found. Imagine a knobbly camel catching Adam's eye, or a nice rounded heifer or a hirsute baboon! Adam did indeed make a very foolish choice later, but, at least in this instance, he made the right choice!

"But for Adam no suitable helper was found." Hallelujah!

Nothing formed from the earth could satisfy Adam's longing for communion. Something more radical was called for. Something more deep and painful needed to be opened than just the earth.

"So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man." Genesis 2:21-22

In the same way, when the "second Adam," Jesus Christ, was longing for a lifelong helper to reign with him in eternity, the Lord could find no suitable solution in just man named things from the earth.

A more radical solution was indeed needed. God sent his only Son into a crucified sleep on the cross where his innocent side was opened with a cruel spear.

"Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." John 19:34

Just as Eve, the bride, was formed from the gentle

opening of Adam's side, so the Church, the Bride of Christ, was born as a bloodied child from the life giving flow of blood and water from Christ's brutally ripped rib.

From this cruel wound comes a beautiful communion and intimacy. For just as Eve was rejoined to Adam, so we, the Church, aspire to this mysterious communion with our heavenly bridegroom.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:25-33

We tread here on Holy ground. What profound mystery and beauty. Sullied sinners like ourselves are washed and cleansed in order to enter into our lifelong vocation – called to be an eternal, reigning bride with Christ. Angels bend their burning eyes at mysteries so bright.

Let us cry, "Come," with the Holy Spirit and welcome deeply into our hearts a fresh revelation and love for our heavenly bridegroom.

We have climbed the ladder of intimacy in this chapter. A miraculous new beginning in a poem, a crucified, listening, holiness in the sheep, an obedient disciplined son and a love sick, passionate bride.

We do indeed, "*want to know Christ.*"

4 WHEREVER THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED

Intimacy and mission are very much linked together. Intimacy is the source and motivation for mission.

What is your favourite missionary Bible verse?

Mine is found in Mark 14:9

"I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

When Jesus starts a phrase with *"I tell you the truth,"* does that mean that he was lying before? I don't think so! It means that he was emphasizing his words as being particularly important.

His words have global and generational scope as they set the scene for the preaching of the good news to all nations throughout the world. We feel on familiar ground as the Lord uses such well rehearsed missionary phrases as *"gospel," "preached"* and *"world."* But then he throws a spanner in the works by mentioning a lady!

"In memory of her."

What on earth has an insignificant woman to do with mission? Surely mission is all about those white, masculine heroes of old who colonized the world for Jesus! Why bring in a woman?

Is Jesus saying that we must add something to our gospel message? We speak about the miraculous birth in Bethlehem, the sinless life of the miracle working Christ, his substitutional death on the cross, his glorious resurrection...and then there was this woman who he met at Bethany who knelt down at his feet.

Perhaps I've been reading the wrong tracts, but it doesn't

seem that Jesus was wanting us to add the woman to the essentials of the gospel message – even though the story of this woman is actually known throughout the earth through the Bible itself being translated into so many languages now.

So why speak about this woman?

Before giving you my answer, I need to make a confession. I have a love/hate relationship with mission.

I hate some aspects of missionary history. It is a sad fact that, although there were many Godly missionaries who brought a positive transformation to the societies they encountered, others came with a dangerous and destructive spirit of pride which totally disregarded the culture of the peoples they lived amongst. They waded into foreign cultures with no sense or sensitivity, with a mission to "*civilize the natives*" into their own dominant – and often brutal, Western ways.

The indigenous life was a little life of no importance, compared to the god like superiority of the materially empowered white missionary. In the name of religion, lives were enslaved and resources pillaged.

Such a spirit of pride was in total contradiction to the spirit of Jesus who came into this world as a servant. He was the one who emptied himself - *kenosis*, and became nothing.

Others have gone into the world, peddling the word of God for profit. In the spirit of the old, perverted prophet Balaam, they see the gospel as a means to financial gain and invent all sorts of miracle formulas - with no discipleship or cost attached, to embezzle funds from desperate people who are looking for a lifeline. They pervert the genuine covenant of "*shalom*" into a wicked, superficial mantra of a "*get rich quick*" culture.

So what is the spirit behind our missionary zeal - pride, selfish ambition, material gain, or self glorification?

It is not enough to *"do"* mission, we must also *"be"* mission. This is why Jesus was emphasizing *the "truth"* - the imperative of doing mission in the right spirit.

So was Jesus wanting us to add something to the gospel by speaking about this woman?

Not add, but *"incarnate"* the right spirit behind mission. This woman personifies the very spirit of mission that Jesus required to preach the gospel throughout the world. It is as if he were saying,

"If you can't go like this woman, please stay at home!"

A.B. Bruce, in the *"Training of the Twelve,"* puts it this way:

"In other words, the breaking of the alabaster box must be worthy to be employed as an emblem of the deed of love performed by Jesus in dying on the cross...Wherever the gospel is preached, the story of the anointing is sure to be prized as the best possible illustration of the spirit which moved Jesus to lay down His life, as also of the spirit of Christianity as it manifests itself in the lives of sincere believers."

It is a sad fact that too many preachers of the gospel are divorced from the true spirit of the gospel and have long since severed their links to this woman.

Jesus emphasized this woman as epitomizing the very heart of mission. He urged his followers to look closely at:

"What she has done."

So, if it is so important, what did she do?

"She **broke** the jar and **poured** the perfume on his head." Mark 14:3

Notice the two verbs – breaking and pouring.

Mission has to be undertaken in a spirit of brokenness and Jesus centred worship. It is launched in the spirit of sacrificial love and intimacy.

Sometimes mission can seem to be all about money and helping the poor - more about humanism than "*Jesusism*", more about the immense human needs and problems than a celebration of the ultimate solution.

There is obviously a place for helping the poor:

"The poor you will always have with you."

But it is essential to keep mission focused on Jesus so that it does not simply dilute itself into a form of humanism.

We need the woman with us.

Mission activity can sometimes seem a very distant concept from our everyday realities of life. It is all about planes, visas, exotic lands and languages. It is about extraordinary missionary types who study anthropology, eat insects with the Pygmies in the equatorial forest and sweat with malarial fevers - welcome to a part of my life!

But this "*distance*" is only a very small and specialised part of mission. The "*woman*" shows us that mission is an option for all. I recently read the following two quotations:

*"For last year's words belong to last year's language,
And next year's words await another voice."* Little Gidding
– TS Eliot

"The oppressed feminine wants to speak, and in hearing

her voice, we might all find ourselves."

There is a new voice of mission emerging. Over the years, many groups of people have had their voices, gifts and contributions oppressed. This is not the place for looking back in anger or bitterness, but for looking forward to the new intimate voice of multicoloured, multi gendered mission.

To fully come to grips with this essential spirit of mission we need to journey back to our text in Mark 14:3-9

"While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper."

This world changing event happened in a very local context – *"at the table."* As with so much of Jesus' ministry, the important events happened more over a meal than in the pulpit. It is a precious thing to have the ministry of facilitating meals – it attracts the angels.

Simon the Leper would have been an oppressed outcast to many. But Jesus chose his home for a context of a new, humble beginning of the Kingdom.

"A woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head."

We rediscover what the woman did. Her action was the very embodiment of the spirit of mission. Like the apostle Paul, we all carry our treasure in fragile jars of clay. Instead of trying to perfect our *"clayness"* and look good on the outside, we need to be willing to be broken open by God's compassion for the world and unleash the hidden treasure of Jesus.

The woman's hidden treasure was the very expensive perfume, held in the fragile alabaster jar. Once broken open, it could never again be closed up for personal use.

The prophetic action of the woman shows us three ways of being broken open in intimacy to release our precious fragrance to the Lord.

She broke her jar in worship.

The famous missionary writer, John Piper, says that:

"Mission begins and ends in worship."

In the New Testament, we often quote Matthew 28:18-20:

"Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

These verses are traditionally seen as teaching some of the foundational missionary commandments.

This "*Great Commission*" is often cited, beginning with the verb, **"Go!"**

This is not the whole story, and not the best place to begin. The danger of emphasising the verb can induce a lemming like rush to the mission field, induced by a sense of guilt, or even fear that an angry preacher is running after you with a whip or a size ten boot to kick you into mission – "Go!" The fruit of such guilt induced endeavour is rarely long lasting.

Perhaps we should move a verse higher and begin with, **"All authority."**

This too, is not the whole story. The volume increases and I can already feel the rafters shaking in the church.

Watch out, the man of power for the hour is coming! We launch ourselves as a gospel army, ready to cast out, prophesy and do miracles, but we may have sacrificed the intimate knowledge of Jesus on the altar of a new form of charismatic cultural imperialism.

To find the true beginning, we need to look a little higher to verse 17:

*"When they saw him, they **worshipped him**; but some doubted."*

Mission began with a deep revelation of Jesus – and seeing him, the risen Lord, they worshipped. Mission begins in worship, not in need, duty or cultural imperialism.

I love the vulnerability of the "doubting" as well. I am always wary of the confident know it all's who never bend a listening ear to the "doubts" that often lead to deeper truths. They were only a handful of men being asked to grasp the reality of physical resurrection and to take that reality to all the nations of the world. The shadows of their doubt simply enhance the glow of Jesus' faith in them.

The famous missiologist David Bosch writes concerning this vulnerability.

"The disciples doubt is strangely juxtaposed to their worship...the same two verbs are closely connected in Matthew 14:31-33. As Matthew looks at the members of his own community - living at a frontier, experiencing difficulty in defining their own identity on the borderline between increasingly hostile Jews and as yet alien Gentiles – he reminds them of a rather bewildered band of simple folk on the slopes of a mountain in Galilee, just across the border from Syria where they are now living, and he wishes his community to know that mission never takes place in self-confidence but in the knowledge of our own weakness, at a point of crisis where danger and

opportunity come together. Matthew's Christians, like the first disciples, stand in the dialectical tension between worship and doubt, between faith and fear." Transforming Mission p.76

At the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation 7:9-12, we also discover the wonderful conclusion of nations celebrating.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. All the angels were standing round the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying:

Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

New Testament mission does indeed begin and end in worship.

As we break open our own little alabaster hearts, may our own personal mission also begin in the intimacy of worship.

She broke her jar in prayer.

"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." Psalm 2:8

We can travel the world in prayer and even the most humble Christian can find a lifelong vocation on his knees.

We can all be kneeling missionaries, asking - as obedient sons and daughters responding to the Father's command, for the nations.

If the incense from the jar was worship, it was also prayer. Incense, sweet smelling perfume, is often an image used for the reality of prayer.

"Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand." Revelation 8:3-4

Prayer means answer.

Jesus, no doubt thinking of the promise in Psalm 2, delegated this prayer authority to his disciples.

"You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." John 14:14

This uncompromising, faith inspiring, verse is so easy to remember. Two 14's! Notice too, that John is the fourth gospel. So we can find the following prayer formula:

41414 – Join the 41414 club!

Just put your own name in the place marked "you" to personalise this powerful promise of prayer.

Matthew 7:7 is also clear in calling us to unequivocally ask.

"Ask and you shall receive."

God is longing for us to take up prayer as a key to intimacy and missionary breakthrough.

He wants us to look at the beauty of his Son and hear his longing for nations, rather than gaze upon our own needs and problems.

Matthew 8:25-26, reveals how most of us are used to praying. Let's call it "*panic praying*." Often, it's the only prayer that ever rises from the Church, for without a crisis or problem to inspire us, we so often remain prayerless! Anyway, the boat begins to fill up and the storm is raging overhead. All eyes are on the problem. A prayer rises out of man's basic instinct for survival:

"Lord, save us!"

This is as far as many of us get. *Save me! Help me! Bless me!* I can sympathise with all who start with such prayers, but we must be vigilant to move beyond this knee jerk natural response. As the disciples' eyes are fixed more and more on the storm, the prayer becomes prophetically negative.

"We are going to drown!"

It seems that their prayer is being inspired more by the spirit of death than by the Holy Spirit. I'll leave each one to judge what spirit inspires your own prayer meetings. Unfortunately, so many missionary prayer meetings focus on the problem, and risk the danger of praying out negative statements over the nations of the world.

Jesus hears the request, as he hears all our words. He hears more than the words, he hears the spirit and motivation behind them. With cutting discernment He succinctly summarizes the spirit behind their request:

"He replied: You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

Here we have it. Unbelief and Fear, the two foundations on which our "*panic praying*" is based. Focussing on the problem always leads us into such unbelief and fear.

We need to turn away and let Jesus and His word fill our perspective until we find faith and boldness filling our hearts.

We all know what it's like when the water starts filling our boats, but before panicking, look to Jesus - "*sleeping*" as the waves rage, and find the peace and faith He is longing to inspire. Take time to look on His power and authority rather than on your own weakness and problem. Let Him rebuke the waves and the wind - the earthly and the spiritual powers, and bring the calm. Don't "*panic pray*" the problem, but look to the power and authority of Jesus. Then pray.

The home of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:40-41, gives us some more insight into how and how not to pray. This time we'll call it "*worry prayer*."

Often folk relate well to Martha and, of course, we need to honour those with servant hearts and a practical bent. However, in this particular incident, Martha proved herself to be quite a formidable character. First of all, she wasn't thinking straight. She launched into the "*prayer*," or talking to Jesus, "*distracted by all the preparations that had to be made*." How many prayers die before they even begin because of distraction? It comes as no surprise that Jesus himself went to the quiet, desert places to pray and advised his disciples to shut the door of the hidden chamber in order to find a place far from distraction. The place of inner calmness - even if the outside is bustling, is the place where prayer begins. Anyway, Martha is getting more and more agitated and, as the deadlines begin to approach and she imagines the guests arriving, she blurts out.

"Lord, don't you care?"

Fancy that! Accusing Jesus of not caring.

The distraction and agitation have given her a completely erroneous view of the Lord. She begins to lose sight of His love and compassion. This often happens to us all in the face of fatigue, weariness and advancing deadlines. We may not be as direct as Martha, but often the hurt is there in our prayer, accusing Jesus of not caring. True prayer can only be birthed as we arrive at the place of being convinced of God's intimate care - His commitment and compassion for a world of people. He may not care so much about our own selfish private agendas.

"My sister has left me to do the work."

She accuses her sister next!

"Worry prayers" are marked by their spirit of accusation, no matter how religiously veiled they may be. Martha was focused on the work whereas her sister was focused on the word. Here is a key. We must not let ourselves get focused on the work, which will only lead us to worry, but rather be listening to the word of God, which will lead us to a place of intimacy at Jesus' feet.

"By myself."

She is now wallowing in isolating self-pity.

Looking only at the work, has given her a false sense of martyrdom. Somewhere inside she is wounded with rejection and this shows itself in the desperate plea for help. Many missionaries, pastors and servants of the Lord may often find themselves praying, as Martha, out of their feelings of frustration and loneliness. We long for more *"workers"* but often our asking is based on worry, need and a sense of getting an *"uncaring"* Jesus to act on our behalf.

"Tell her to help me!"

Now she's giving orders to Jesus!

At first glance, it doesn't seem like sin. We can all fall victim to the arguments that need and worry present before us. However, it really is quite serious. Martha has slipped into a spirit of manipulation rather than the submissive resting of the Holy Spirit. She is on the road to a manipulative, domineering spirit, which the Lord will not tolerate. We really do need to be careful about how we pray for workers and the "needs" of the mission field. If we drift away from the intimate centrality of Jesus and His love and provision, we end up self-righteous, accusing, worried and rejected manipulators. However, before giving up in despair, let's take a look at Jesus' loving response to Martha.

"Martha, Martha!"

He quietens her down. Speaking out her name restores the intimate relation with Him, and one can sense the love and patience of Jesus, coming over in His double mention of her name.

How often we need to be quieted by Jesus' loving words to us.

"He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:15

As he did with the disciples in the boat, he put His finger on the true inspiration of Martha's prayer.

"You are worried and upset about many things." The word worry - *turbazo*, in Greek, means to make turbid, like troubled waters - in tumult and uproar.

Although stress and anxiety are often challenges which push us to the Lord, worry should never be a substitute for true prayer.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Philippians 4:6

Let the Lord calm our *"troubled"* waters before we pray. Worry and upset should never dominate or even infiltrate our prayer times. They steal the precious power of confident intimacy.

Jesus brings the solution.

"Only one thing is needed."

"What's that?" we cry.

Well, Mary was clever enough to have chosen it. We can choose it too. It is not forced upon us as a rigorous duty.

"What is it then?"

The answer is to simply listen at Jesus' feet. Prayer, like intimacy, is all about listening.

"Mary sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he said."

We need to come back to Jesus' own advice about praying for missionary advance which we find in Matthew 9:36-38.

"When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them."

Jesus' eyes were not on himself. He saw the crowds, and their utter helplessness. He had compassion. This is His spirit, and the same spirit which He longs to inspire within us as we pray. He longs to melt our hard hearts with his compassion. Then He said:

"The harvest is plentiful."

Jesus emphasises the opportunity, not the problem.

Just take a look out there! All those nations to be won for Jesus. They are ready for harvest. What an opportunity.

Vision and Compassion - seeing the opportunity, the ready harvest, and feeling the pain of people, are the two pillars of *"harvest praying."*

"But the workers are few."

Again, Jesus is saying this, emphasising the opportunity, rather than lamenting the issue with fatalistic resignation.

At the time there were only 12 disciples. As they prayed and went they quickly became 72, and then 3.000 on the day of Pentecost. Some sad servants continually whine out this phrase, as if it was set in stone at the time of *"only 12,"* as an excuse for failure to pray and recruit more workers. They totally ignore the fact that the whole idea is to multiply the workers! In an age when millions of *"eleventh hour"* workers are waiting to join the final thrust of world evangelisation, surely we should be taking the prayer opportunity that Jesus offers us seriously.

"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

The key prayer for our generation is to ask God to release the workers from Africa, Asia and the Americas. Those who genuinely ask, with compassion and vision, will find themselves going as well.

Ask in intimacy, go in faith, with the *"panga"* to know!

Our musings on prayer have taken us away from that intimate meal, where the woman is still bending at Jesus' feet, and breaking open her jar. She has a third lesson to teach us.

She broke her jar in sacrifice.

Bonhoeffer's famous words from *"The Cost of Discipleship"* sum up the cross-centred consecration of a life broken open in sacrifice.

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time - death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call."

As the woman broke her jar, she was responding instinctively to the love of Jesus. Hers was no small offering grudgingly given, but a generous extravagance of joyous self surrender. She willingly gave up the precious perfumed ointment - some say it represented her life savings, even possibly her dowry, and in surrendering it up to Jesus she may have been abandoning all possibility of a future marriage. She sacrificed the immediate and time limited earthly intimacy of physical marriage for the deeper, eternal, faith inspired intimacy of communion with her beloved bridegroom Jesus.

It is not only love's destiny, but it is love's delight, to endure hardships, to bear burdens for the object loved.

The book of Revelation reveals to us the slain Lamb right at the heart of God's throne. Far from being a subject of sadness, far from being weeping wounds of despair, these scars of love are transfigured as emblems of worship and celebration, emblems which:

"Purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." Revelation 5:6-14

Bridges and Thring, in the wonderful hymn *"Crown Him with many Crowns,"* capture the mysterious beauty of such sacrifice.

*"Crown Him the Lord of love:
Behold His hands and side.
Those wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified:
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight
But downward bends his burning eye
At mysteries so bright."*

Men of God throughout the ages have followed Mary of Bethany and Jesus in the extravagant giving of their lives in sacrifice at the feet of Jesus, both near and far away on the mission fields of the world. They too will wear their scars as trophies of victory, shining in heaven.

Quoting Bonhoeffer again, the painful shattering of the vulnerable alabaster, gives way to a vision of the beloved Jesus, and the promise of true sacrificial intimacy.

"Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of mortification or asceticism. It is not suicide, for there is an element of self-will even in that. To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us. Once more, all that self-denial can say is: "He leads the way, keep close to him."

Let us be willing to break open our own jars in sacrifice.

So, *"wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world,"* it must be done in an incarnated, intimate spirit of worship, prayer and sacrifice.

Be willing to "waste."

If you are going to be serious about breaking open your

life to follow Jesus, in a spirit of worship, prayer and sacrifice, you will no doubt hear two major objections from the enemy – such insidious opposition even coming from the very people you are close to.

"Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another."

"Why this waste of perfume?"

This first accusation of wastefulness is very common. It would be expected from those who love the world more than Jesus, or from narrow religious Pharisees who, stunted by the confines of their dark, airless doctrines, are more interested in the form of worship than the one to be worshipped.

It would be normal for militant humanists to mock the Jesus centred activities of the devoted. However, even a dedicated disciple of the Lord, might shrink back and take offence at endless hours spent in worship. Someone, who easily handles the standard liturgy and the Lord's Prayer, may find it hard to understand those who "waste" days and nights in fasting and intercession.

A "hired hand," carefully exercising - with the smallest possible cost to themselves, an ecclesial or humanistic role in a church or NGO, may see it as foolhardy to risk life and limb for the lost.

Unfortunately, in so many situations today, it is the, treasurer, or accountant who calls the shots rather than the prayer warrior, the worshipper or the sacrificial servant on the ground. We can easily slip into being "cost centred" rather than "Jesus" centred. We embrace the cold pragmatism of "*more than a year's wages...given to the poor,*" rather than the extravagant magnificence of a costly investment into heaven.

Let's move on to consider the second venomous barb

from the enemy.

This second accusation may be disguised in many ways, but it will essentially be trying to lure you away from the present consecration to a fantasy world of imagined future promise and possibility.

"It could have been."

Some shrink back from the immediate challenge of breaking open their jar to serve Jesus, saving themselves for some imaginary future scenario that may never come to be.

"Instead of being a hidden missionary, I could have been a footballer. I could have been a successful banker. I could have been married to a prince."

Never get caught up in the insidious regrets that the *"could have been"* accusation spawns. Never miss out on the now opportunity to be extravagant for Jesus that the *"could have been"* fantasy hijacks.

Mission today needs magnificence.

David was a magnificent warrior who danced extravagantly before the Lord. His Psalms are full of the generous enthusiasm and wildness of a man who walked close to the heart of his God. Magnificence, a more noble name than extravagance, is an invariable attribute of all true love. David recognised this in Psalm 133, when he chose the profuse anointing of Aaron with the oil of consecration at his installation into the office of high priest as a fit emblem of brotherly love. There was a waste in that anointing, just like the broken jar anointing that took place at Bethany.

Another beautiful quote from A.B Bruce, encourages us to a life joyously *"wasted"* for Jesus in worship, prayer and sacrifice.

"David, Mary, Jesus, all loving devoted beings, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, belong to one company, and come all under one condemnation. They must all plead guilty to a waste of affection, sorrow, labour, tears; all live so as to earn for themselves the blame of extravagance, which is their highest praise. David dances, and Michal sneers; prophets break their hearts for the people's sins and miseries, and the people make sport of their grief; Mary's break their alabaster boxes, and frigid disciples object to the waste; men of God sacrifice their all for their religious convictions, and the world calls them fools for their pains, and philosophers bid them beware of being martyrs by mistake; Jesus weeps over sinners that will not come to him to be saved, and thankless men ask, Why shed tears over vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?"

We should ignore such harsh accusations of the enemy and allow Jesus to strengthen and encourage our hearts with his own proclamation of love and truth. He rebuked the "rebukers."

"Leave her alone, said Jesus. Why are you bothering her?"

If you are in that place of being oppressed for your faithfulness, allow these words to come to you with authority. In the name of Jesus, may all oppressive thoughts, accusations and events "leave!" Receive the accolade that Jesus gives to all his fragrance releasing friends.

"She has done a beautiful thing to me."

Mission is a beautiful thing for Jesus. Anyone can do "humanism" with a bit of cash:

"The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want."

But only a few faithful find the true worth of elevating the death and resurrection of Christ amongst the nations.

I'd like to end this section, by asking you to use your imagination for a few minutes. Imagine one of the old priests who used to minister in the temple, walking up to Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement. He stumbles across a dangerously excited crowd gathering on the hillside. He looks up and see's the tragic site of yet another cruel, Roman crucifixion.

"But who is that in the middle on the cross, hanging bleeding, naked and beaten before the baying mob? Why it's Jesus. What a tragedy! I remember him as a beautiful twelve year old boy in the temple, confounding and astounding us with his wisdom and insight. To see him hanging there, broken and humiliated. What a waste!"

And, as he sadly walks on into the distance, he muses.

"He could have been the one promised from ages past, the Messiah."

Well indeed, *"he could have been"* the awaited king, the Messiah, taking vengeance on his foes and ushering in the much hoped for *"golden age"* of Israel. He was indeed the Messiah, but not on their terms. He broke open his pure life, as the fragile alabaster jar he was, on the brutal cross, liberating the wonderful fragrance of redemption - not just for Israel, but for the nostrils of the nations to generously enjoy.

Our friend A.B Bruce brings a fitting conclusion.

"For He speaks of that gospel, which was to consist in the proclamation of His deed of love in dying for sinners, as a gospel for the whole world; evidently desiring that, as the odour of Mary's ointment filled the room in which the guests were assembled, so the aroma of His sacrifice

might be diffused as an atmosphere of saving health among all nations."

This is the power of intimacy for mission.

5 THE GOAL OF INTIMACY

"David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" 1 Chronicles 11:17

How does a pioneer work begin? What are the staff qualifications and what do the facilities look like?

1 Samuel 22: 1-2, gives us a hint of an answer. David is running from Saul and having to make a new start. His first *"mission's base"* is a hole in the ground - the cave of Adullam! A team of folks are drawn to him. At first glance they do not seem to be the most promising of people. Here we have the principle of *"3D"* pioneer teams. Do you have this vital *"3D"* qualification?

*"All those who were in **distress** or in **debt** or **discontented** gathered around him and he became their leader."*

Distress, debt and discontent also make you more **desperate** for God. God uses desperate people! The successful *"happy clappy"* folk rarely change the world.

Team life may be a bit stressful with such a group of folks! You have a cave, people in debt, distressed, discontented...and something else. You have David's holy anointing. You have God's heart, vision and passion residing in the cave as well. This is a transforming anointing. It changes *"3D"* Christians into *"mighty men and women."* You may have a cave of problems but you will make it through if you have the passion and purpose of the *"Jesus"* anointing with you.

1 Chronicles 11: 10-47, shows us how these desperate folks were transformed into mighty warriors. One of the keys to such transformation is intimacy with the king. Our

intimacy with *"King Jesus"* will effect positive change in our lives.

Some of David's key men were so intimate that they could hear his longings. The Philistine garrison had occupied Bethlehem, making it enemy territory. So what was David's longing? What indeed is the longing of Christ?

He is thirsty to drink water from the wells of occupied lands!

It is a missionary longing, a longing to see the living water of life springing up in the occupied hearts of the nations. Jesus longs to drink living water from Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu hearts.

Like the three mighty men, our intimacy with Christ - if it is genuine, must lead us to heed his apostolic passion.

This *"hearing"* of longing goaded them into concrete action and adventure.

"So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David."

True intimacy leads to breakthrough!

Courage rises, apathy is cast out and pioneer, persistent *"breakthrough"* prayer rises from faith filled hearts.

People become *"risk takers,"* fear is cast out and bold action in enemy territory undertaken.

False intimacy lacks missionary passion. It leads to more and more sterile meetings in comfortable halls and hotels. We soak in the stench of our hedonistic comfort zone,

never taking an inch of territory in the real world. The *"bridal paradigm"* becomes an impotent wedding – the hotel was nice, the beach pleasant, the food good, but no real action!

True intimacy leads to personal sacrifice and *"risk."*

"Because they risked their lives to bring it back."

The Three mighty men undertook bold action in a dangerous place which could have cost them their lives. The longing of their King inspired their wild dream. They truly lived on the edge, enjoying the fellowship of the bold and the *"sold out."*

True intimacy leads to *"poured out"* worship.

"But he refused to drink it; instead he poured it out before the Lord."

All the glory of the missionary endeavour of the Church goes back to Christ. No prominent heroes, only prostrate worshippers.

The goal of intimacy is to overhear the longings of Jesus to *"drink"* from occupied lands. Intimacy will give us a missionary heart willing to take risks to satisfy our King.

He also longs to drink from the well of your own heart which might be occupied by the enemy through sin and unbelief. Come close to Him and breakthrough into fresh anointing and grace.

Allow Him to drink deeply from the well of faith, purity and intimate love which resides in your own soul.

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." John 7:37-38

May new streams of worship and love pour forth from you to satisfy the thirst of Jesus.

Seize your missionary "*Bridal Paradigm*" and breakthrough for Jesus. Enjoy your intimacy and take territory!

6 FROM "GO" TO "COME"

As the old Bob Dylan song says:

"The times they are a changing."

A new paradigm of mission is emerging. In a volatile, fast paced world, the ethic and thrust of mission strategy is undergoing a major shift.

Missiologist David Bosch, wrote in his classic book, "Transforming Mission:"

"We live in a period of transition, on the borderline between a paradigm that no longer satisfies and one that is, to a large extent, still amorphous and opaque...In the field of religion a paradigm shift always means both continuity and change, both faithfulness to the past and boldness to engage the future, both constancy and contingency, both tradition and transformation...Neither extreme reactionary nor excessively revolutionary approaches will help."

Trying not to be "excessively revolutionary," let's take a tentative glance into "the opaque."

Revelation often comes through the cut and thrust of on field involvement rather than the passive theories of the classroom. Over the years, I have developed a great love for the Indonesian Church. On one of my more recent visits, caught up in the vibrant life of a young and growing community, I felt I heard an echo of the future. This church has been gifted with wonderful worship and a beautiful heart of prayer which seeks after its beloved Bridegroom. As young people wept, sang and came forward to give their lives for mission, it seemed that they were "following," rather than "going,"

The traditional "Go" of mission seems to be giving way to the wooing of "Come." Mission and intimacy are being glued together as never before.

Mission never really began with a verb. Even the command of a Father to his two sons in Matthew 21:28 gives a hint of this.

"Son, go and work today in the vineyard."

Mission always begins with a revelation of intimacy. In this case, it is the wonderful thrust of being loved by a heavenly Father. Even before the Son Jesus began his ministry, he needed to hear the intimate words of the Father.

"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Luke 3:22

This revelation of the intimacy with the Father has been a mainstay of my own mission endeavour over these last 33 years. The Father's command calls for obedience, centred on the "work" - church planting, prayer, mercy ministries etc, to be accomplished in a measured - "today," and organised way amidst the thousands of unreached peoples in "the vineyard." Good stuff.

However, I dare to say that I think there is more. The previous season of mission has been rightly nourished by the revelation of the "Father's heart." The next season of mission will be motivated by the revelation of the Bridegroom's love for His Church. It seems to me that the young people of the "majority world" global south nations are entering into this new paradigm as they discover their own missionary destiny.

As we saw earlier, in Mark 14:1-9, Jesus spoke of the

importance of having the right spirit at the heart of mission when he linked the vast enterprise of "*preaching the gospel throughout the world*" to the extravagant action of a lone woman. "*What she has done.*" What did she do?

"*She broke the jar.*" The Lord is seeking a deeper level of brokenness in our lives for Him.

Mission is not humanism. It is not all about fund raising and money. Mission finds its heart in the worship, prayer and sacrifice that rises from cross smitten hearts.

Perhaps the double refrain from the love poem, "*Song of Songs*," should displace the more classic texts on mission.

"*My lover spoke and said to me, **"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me."***"

Missio Dei theology sees a God already at work in the world, waiting for us to join him. He is already in the hardest sacrificial places. Perhaps the "*work ethic*" of the son, will not withstand the final onslaughts of the evil one as this world groans in the beginnings of labour pains. Perhaps the love of most will indeed grow cold. Perhaps the lamp of worship and Jesus centred prayer will dim in the glare of humanistic solutions.

But perhaps a bride is also making herself ready - a bride "*faint with love*," long prepared in the clefts of the rock. A bride who, even in the harshest persecution, will overcome with joyful singing.

"*Draw me unto you and let us run together,*" is the wonderful refrain which paraphrases the King James, "*Draw me, we will run after thee.*"

Is the Lord drawing you afresh into a greater intimacy with Him? Not a passive intimacy that makes you a static zombie in a hedonistic trance, but an intimacy linked to a joyful running after him into the action - a communion with His brokenness, and a personal resurrection into indestructible life.

The oppressed, hidden ones are showing their beautiful faces and new songs from the African & Asian hillsides are resounding.

May we also find a new voice in this global love song, and humbly join the dance. And those who felt deserted and desolate are hearing afresh the new name spoken over them in the earlier chapters.

"But you will be called Hephzibah - for the Lord will take delight in you." Isaiah 62:4

"The Spirit and the bride say 'Come'" Revelation 22:17

7 "HESED" – A WORD OF INTIMACY

In my opening title, I promised you three words - one for each "power." Let us look at our word linked to the "dunamis" to know.

Question- *"Could you sum up all the Psalms of David in one word?"*

Is it possible? It would need to be a very special word. Look at Psalm 13 which begins with the very real struggles of a man of God:

"How long, O LORD? Will you forget me for ever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?"

How can David overcome this sense of solitude and sorrow? How can he defeat the enemy?

"But I trust in your unfailing love - חַסֵּד hesed, my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me."

He overcomes through the power of "Hesed" - intimate, unfailing love.

The word, "Hesed," which is the underlying theme of the Psalms, is also our key word for intimacy.

It can mean, *kindness, piety, beauty*. From the Greek Septuagint, which used "eleos" ἔλεος, we get the idea of mercy, whereas the major thrust of the original Hebrew seems to be that of covenant loyalty. The translations "steadfast love" and "unfailing love" seem to do justice to both the notions of mercy and loyalty.

This "Hesed" is the very character of God himself as seen in the beginning of Psalm 136.

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures for ever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures for ever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures for ever."

His "*Hesed*" endures forever!

The Jews, most loyal to God's word, often call themselves Hasidic Jews or Hasidim. Hasid is an adjectival noun of Hesed. You too can be part of the "*Hasidim*" – those who have grasped the intimate power of unfailing love.

Now we have the word, we must move on to our first action that accompanies it.

Are you a good hugger? The world needs more embracing and less exclusion.

Now stand up where you are and get ready to embrace!

"Who will I embrace?"

"Yourself!"

Give yourself a big long hug. Do it slowly and think back to our different images of intimacy with God. Think of a loving Father's secure embrace. Imagine the arms of your beloved bridegroom Jesus.

Now, as you hug yourself, slowly and deeply speak out the word "*Hesed*." May each long, clasping hug correspond to the strong speaking out of the word "*Hesed*."

Give yourself three "*Hesed*" hugs and receive the power to know.

Embrace, embrace, embrace.

Christ embraced our sin on the cross. The Father embraces His repentant child, the Heavenly Bridegroom embraces His Bride.

8 THE PRAYER FOR KNOWING

I also promised you three prayers, so here is the prayer for knowing.

I'm going to hide this prayer in a small personal testimony about how I personally discovered the power to know Jesus.

Thirty years ago, when I was still a young man, I went canoeing for the first time. I was a real beginner and volunteered to be the guinea pig for some friends who were being examined for their instructor's award. Being on the bank was easy and I was quite enjoying waving my paddle around in the air. Getting in the canoe was a bit harder but having mastered the art of sitting down, paddling around in the shallows was very pleasant. The water was still and there was no current. Everyone was having a wonderful time when suddenly the instructor cried out:

"Everyone over the weir now!"

I couldn't believe it! I had only volunteered to be "dummy" and now I was getting caught up in the current heading towards a roaring white-water weir! I was petrified. As the weir got closer, for some strange reason, my canoe would not go in a straight line and approached it sideways on. Suddenly it was as if I was in the middle of a washing machine being rolled around in the rushing water. I emerged, paddle still in hand but with the canoe merrily continuing on its way upside down. This provided the perfect opportunity for the instructors to demonstrate their rescue techniques as they got me back into the canoe. However, I could not get out of the current. There was no escape. The only way out was to go with the flow. I cannot remember how many times I capsized and was

rescued before reaching the end. Other beginners were having the same problem.

I remember one Welsh girl clinging for dear life to an overhanging tree, one foot in the canoe, the other on the bank. Another girl, after several dunkings, abandoned canoe and paddle to the water and went walking off into the fields bordering the river. The whole thing was a nightmare! I had not mastered the basics of manoeuvring the canoe in order to enjoy the ride.

Years later, after many hours of practice, I was accomplished enough to be able to lead a team of canoeists down the 30 km of the very popular Ardèche river in France, enjoying every minute of negotiating the rapids and feeling the thrill of being in the current.

These experiences proved to be a kind of living parable for my beginnings in growing in the knowledge of Jesus. God catches us up in His ultimate purpose. His Spirit gives a new dynamic to lives that are shallow and in a rut. I know there have been many times when I have wanted out or was simply in two minds before some situations - a very precarious position to take up, before deciding, in the end, to go with the current and try, with practise, to enjoy the experience.

My early Christian debuts were a bit of a nightmare. Up until then most of my life had been built on values and practices that did not match up with the new life Christ offered. It was as if the little mustard seed of faith, which was bringing me into a relationship with Jesus, was now moving the whole mountain of my past life and experience. It was not always a comfortable experience. It often felt like a civil war was going on in my heart and I began to wonder who I really was. On one particular

evening I remember sitting down in front of the television to watch an inappropriate comedy series. Normally I had no problem with such a programme but, as I sat on the sofa, something inside of me was uneasy to be watching some of the more compromising scenes. I could not believe it. Something very real and very radical had happened to me.

I had never had a problem with sin until I discovered Jesus!

As the days went by, more and more areas of my life were being challenged and I found myself on the verge of abandoning everything. The growing knowledge and discovery of the person of Jesus within me was far too uncomfortable and disabling for my usual lifestyle.

One morning, when I had more or less decided to give up pursuing Jesus, I received a letter from a friend who had always encouraged me to know Jesus. He strongly recommended that I try to find a church to go to. He gave me the name of an Anglican vicar in Finchley and let me know that he was praying for me. I was so ignorant about church life at that time. I hadn't ever considered that growing in the knowledge of Jesus might even be linked to going to church. The idea of joining up with a group of other people on my precious Sunday morning came as quite a shock to me and I resolved that I would not do it.

A few days later, I was shopping near the church. I had just bought some rhubarb and was heading homewards. Suddenly, I had a strong impression that I must go and see the aforementioned vicar. I ended up in front of the door of the vicarage. I rang the bell to be greeted a few moments later by the beaming face of an American vicar.

"Hi, Rob! Come on in!" he said.

"I've already heard about you."

I was a bit taken aback but walked in. He was an incredibly open and friendly man, full of generosity and patience towards me. I explained some of the difficulties I was going through and he encouraged me to come back on Sunday and take part in the Service. Although it had been a short visit, I felt strangely encouraged by it all.

Sunday arrived. I had never been to a proper Church Service before in my life so I felt quite challenged. I arrived early and sat on a wooden park bench in front of St Paul's, North Finchley, listening to the church bell calling the faithful. The presence of God seemed so real to me at that moment even though I was only just becoming aware of Him.

For someone who had never ever read or heard the Creeds - or even understood much about Church, I was quite touched by the Service and the message. However, I was still carrying quite an ache on the inside, struggling with the problems this new intimacy with Jesus was bringing me.

After the Service, there was a lunch given in aid of the poor of the world. It was all very nice, noble and the kind of thing you would expect from good Christian people, but deep within I was still struggling to touch something real concerning Jesus. Was this it then? Had Jesus died on the cross and gone through all the agony for this? Was it worth it? Was it worth my own personal sacrifice of giving up the pleasures and security of sin for such a life?

"How are things going?" the vicar asked me.

"Well, I'm still not so sure," I replied.

He invited me back to the vicarage for a few moments of prayer with his wife and the parish worker. Little did I know it then, but those few moments of prayer were about to radically change the direction of my life.

No one had ever spoken to me about the Holy Spirit. It seems that most people have no problem talking about God - even if their god happens to be money, themselves or a plastic gnome in the garden! A more limited group may be free to talk about Jesus, but ask if anyone knows the Holy Spirit and you will probably be greeted with confused silence. God, the Father, okay, God the Son, just about, but God the Holy Spirit remains a mystery to many. And yet, it is the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus real to us. Without the dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit, Jesus remains a mere historical figure, a kind of holy hippie walking the streets of Galilee in sandaled feet and yet irrelevant to the world of twenty-first century men.

The Holy Spirit puts Jesus into your flesh!

Anyway, in blissful ignorance of any theology, and with only a beginner's grasp of the bible, I took my place in the vicarage, sitting a couple of metres away from the others. I was deeply aware of my own need.

The vicar then turned and, looking me in the eye, said:

"You pray!"

I was so shocked. I was expecting him to pray for me. Apart from a hurried *"Lord's Prayer,"* I had never vocalised prayer before.

What on earth could I pray?

Out of the very depths of me, the only thing that would come out without sounding false, embroidered or hypocritical, were the words:

"Help!"

So, with all my might and conviction, I prayed:

"Help!"

I was not expecting anything to happen, so I was all the more surprised when a kind of shiver seemed to wash over me. The shiver was followed by a wave of love which seemed to break almost physically over me. Another wave and another - each coming with greater force, bringing a warm supernatural encouragement of God's presence.

I had never known anything like it. It was quite supernatural, spiritual and yet physical. Amazing! I felt as though I was going to burst inside, and when a more intense wave rushed over me, my heart seemed to explode and I began to weep with tears of healing and inexpressible joy.

The vicar and his team seemed a bit challenged - it was an unfamiliar experience for a more traditional church, and yet they seemed happily overwhelmed by what was happening.

"It's like the book of Acts," said the vicar.

I was quite overwhelmed. It was as if I had stepped into a kind of spiritual elevator which had taken me far above the problems of my life.

Of course, my problems were still there, but I had received a completely different perspective on them. Instead of being under them I was far above.

I knew that I had received something special from God - a power from on high, an ability to truly know and experience Christ deeply. I was filled with a real love - remember "*hesed*," and I knew inside that I belonged forever to God. I left the house a new man. I had been caught up in a powerful current of love and my own heart was also overflowing with the joy of knowing Jesus.

As I walked in the streets of Finchley, I had an indescribable, yet genuine, love for the complete strangers around me. It was as if my little human heart had been suddenly invaded by the immense love of the Father. I could hardly hold it in! I made my way to the underground station. As I bought my ticket, unable to restrain myself any longer, I leant over and hugged the lady who had just sold me the ticket saying:

"Jesus really loves you!"

She must have thought I was mad.

When I got home, I found a little "*Gideon's Bible*." There on the back page was a blank space entitled, "*My Decision*." I had never before had the conviction to fill it in, for fear of giving up later, but now I was absolutely convinced. An intimate little seed of knowledge of God had taken root and was ready to grow. I signed my name. God had taken up residence.

I'm sure you found the prayer!

Even today, I still need to cry out this prayer of "*Help*" to keep me in the vulnerable freshness of knowing God. You

too will find this prayer useful as you pray for the power to know God more.

One of the more precious names used for the Holy Spirit, especially in the gospel of John 16:7, is the "Counsellor" or "Comforter."

"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

When we take a closer look at this word in its original Greek we find some interesting things.

Parakletos - παράκλητος – "Para" means alongside, near. "Kletos" means to call.

It literally means:

"One called near - to give help."

If you are fully self sufficient and need no help, well the Comforter doesn't need to come. He responds to vulnerability like a bee responds to honey. His job is to draw near to help. When he hears a genuine heart cry for help, he comes!

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness."
Romans 8:26

The same word "παράκλητος parakletos" is also found in 1 John 2:1-2: *"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate – parakletos, with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world."*

Our greatest cry for help is to be forgiven from our sins and failures. It is our sin that separates us from the knowledge of God.

It is such a strength and encouragement to know that "*if*" and when we sin and miss the mark, we can call on our "*lawyer friend*" in heaven who will always come along side to help, bring forgiveness and set us back into right relation with God.

Jesus himself, along with the Holy Spirit, in the heart of the Father, respond to our cry for "*help.*"

I spent the first ten years of my ministry life learning to pray "*Help,*" building a strong foundation of the knowledge of God.

We all need to see our lives built on this strong foundation of intimacy.

I spent the next ten years learning to pray the prayer for the second power.

Let's journey there together in the next chapters.

9 CREATE - THE POWER TO INNOVATE

Let me start this section in bringing you our second prayer for power. Not this time for the power to know, but for the power to innovate and create.

We serve a creator God. He has made us in his image and shared with us something of the ability to create. God loves colour and variety. His life brings inspiration, genius and dreams. Adam named the animals and worked the earth. He was a worker/poet, called to collaborate in creation.

Adam's creative ability - often called the "Cultural Mandate," was to express itself in society by governing and managing the world and the family that the Lord had given him. This function was tragically marred by sin, but the redemptive strategy of God throughout history - culminating in the coming of the second Adam, Christ, is still using mankind to bring positive transformation to a fallen world.

God wants men and women everywhere, in their daily studies, jobs and vocations to unleash the power of their innate creativity. He wants us to stir up the entrepreneurial gifting which creates blessing from nothing but our heaven inspired dreams.

In Romans 10:4 Jesus is called the "*end of the law*" - "*telos nomus*". Everything points to him.

I would like to suggest that Christ is also the "*telos ktisis*"- the goal of creation. All of our inspiration, dreams and genius should be channelled to uplifting Christ in society.

Not everyone is called to have a prominent ministry

within the four walls of a church or on the far flung mission fields of the world. Great if you are! However, we are all definitely called to exercise our gifts and callings in the society and families that God has set us in. The false dividing wall of sacred/secular -that is more of an inheritance from our Greek Platonic traditions, is quickly crumbling before a more holistic approach to life, which sees each of us as key players in transforming the world for the better.

Let's focus on one very special young lady in the New Testament in order to learn some of the principles of this innovation paradigm and discover the key prayer she prayed to release the creative power into her life. She is a young lady, the "*Hasidic Mother of Yeshua*," better known as Mary in the Western tradition. I truly love this wonderful Jewish intercessor.

Her story begins in the first chapter of the gospel of Luke from verses 34-38.

"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary."

Mary is happily doing the housework, cleaning up all that nasty sawdust, when suddenly, heaven invades her life in the form of an angelic visitation.

"The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be."

This is the one of the key principles. What indeed was "*the kind of greeting*" that had so troubled the still waters

of her soul? We will come back to this vital salutation later.

"But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his Kingdom will never end."

The angel introduces the concept of the Kingdom. A son will be born who will fulfil the Messianic promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7:16.

"Your house and your Kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever."

Mary is stepping humbly into destiny. Times and circumstances are coming together to both fulfil and transform history. Something, indeed someone, will be born through Mary who will carry the authority to transform the world.

This was a huge, wild challenge for Mary. In the same way, we also can have a visitation of power from on high which can release our own creative potential to birth positive transformation to the world.

Obviously, we are not exactly like Mary, called to give a literal birth to a physical Jesus. However, as the living body of the Church on earth, we are called to birth the Kingdom of God – Jesus' transforming reign, in any and every situation.

To understand this more fully we can look at Revelation 12 which introduces us to a praying woman, birthing the

reigning "male child" to the world.

"She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth... She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre."

This woman is an image of the heavenly Jerusalem –

"But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother." Galatians 4:26,

She represents the people of God, throughout all the ages, in prayer to birth the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

A major part of our Christian calling is to transform the families, societies and nations that we live in through a creative "*travail*," an intercession inspired birthing of Jesus centred works and initiatives.

The climate into which the child is born seems very dark and threatening.

"The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born."

It often seems like many of our attempts to make a better world end up being devoured by evil. Some circumstances seem so helpless and dark that we almost abandon all hope of seeing any transformation flourish.

However, we must never give up. The woman's vulnerable child was born with innate authority. Even though he looked small and helpless, he was born with an iron rod in his hands.

Anything born out of true intercession will look hopelessly

vulnerable, and yet it will also have the innate power to survive, overcome and multiply!

Never despise the day of small beginnings. Never despise your own creative sparks, your butterfly winged dreams or your first entrepreneurial efforts in business. They carry an innate destiny and are born to overcome and reign.

So what is the key to releasing such creative power?

Let's go back to Mary, coming to terms with her own very physical reality of a promised Kingdom birth. She made a vital response:

"How will this be?"

This is our second prayer - **"How?"**

Don't spend your life trying to tell God what he needs to do or what he can't do. Start asking him some questions and then align your life in obedience.

"How will I launch this business idea? How will I write my book? How can I mentor my children? How can I lose weight? How can I improve my town?"

The answers to such questions lay beyond the domain of mere human solutions, just as Mary's conception of a son lay beyond the realm of human intervention.

"Since I am a virgin?"

There was no *"man-made"* interaction offered to Mary, only a God given answer.

God rejoices in human impossibility. It gives him more glory, and us more humility, when he produces answers from our seemingly impossible challenges. Never attempt

something easily accomplished through your own resources, but abandon yourself to the faith stretching impossible dreams that the Lord will put on your heart.

"How," is the kind of prayer that opens a door to the answer. Let us learn this prayer from our Jewish handmaiden Mary, and enter into our own adventure of innovation.

10 THE HOLY SPIRIT

*"The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the **power** (dunamis) of the Most High will overshadow you."*

The heavenly answer to our "how?" is always the Holy Spirit.

Just as a cry for "*Help*" brought the Counsellor, so the submissive prayer of enquiry, "*How?*" will call down the Holy Spirit. It will bring his "power" to innovate and create as we allow ourselves to be overshadowed.

I love swans! In fact, whenever I imagine the Holy Spirit I find myself visualising a mighty swan rather than the more biblical holy dove image. When I meditate on the word overshadowed, I think of those great holy wings coming down in power to brood and create life.

We find a strong parallel in the first creation story.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Genesis 1:1-2

In Hebrew the word hover is translated, *rachaph* - *raw-khaf'*, which means to brood, like a hen fluttering over its eggs.

The poet, John Milton, at the beginning of his great poem, "*Paradise Lost*," seems to understand this creative power of the Holy Spirit, brooding over our "creative waters," making them pregnant.

"Thou from the first, Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread, Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss,

And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark, Illumin, what is low raise and support."

The Bible commentator, John Gill, also makes reference to the various creation myths which prepared a cultural context for the true word of God to manifest.

"This same Spirit "moved" or brooded upon the face of the waters, to impregnate them, as an hen upon eggs to hatch them, so he to separate the parts which were mixed together, and give them a quickening virtue to produce living creatures in them... Hermes says, that there was an infinite darkness in the abyss or deep, and water, and a small intelligent spirit, endued with a divine power, were in the chaos : and perhaps from hence is the mundane egg, or egg of Orpheus : or the firstborn or first laid egg, out of which all things were formed; and which he borrowed from the Egyptians and Phoenicians, and they perhaps from the Jews, and which was reckoned by them a resemblance of the world. The Egyptians had a deity they called Cneph, out of whose mouth went forth an egg, which they interpreted of the world : and the Zophasemin of the Phoenicians, which were heavenly birds, were, according to Sanchoniatho, of the form of an egg; and in the rites of Bacchus they worshipped an egg, as being an image of the world, as Macrobius says; and therefore he thought the question, whether an hen or an egg was oldest, was of some moment, and deserved consideration: and the Chinese say, that the first man was produced out of the chaos as from an egg, the shell of which formed the heavens, the white the air, and the yolk the earth; and to this incubation of the spirit, or wind, as some would have it, is owing the windy egg of Aristophanes."

What is your egg?

As I said before, I love swans. They often build great big nests and the mother swan can be seen sitting and incubating her eggs for days on end.

God has placed dreams, visions, goals and projects in each of our hearts. So often we struggle to believe in such inner potential and too often settle for passive, passionless, mediocrity rather than straining to attain our full measure of being in God. Learn to discover, feel and carry your own inner eggs.

"What drives and motivates you?"

"What are your longings and burdens?"

Just as a little swan egg needs the warmth of a mother swan's wings, so our own delicate and unhatched visions need the stimulating presence of the Holy Spirit.

Allow him to brood profoundly over your life. Find the place of inner stillness and calm that allows him access. Resting in the silent prayer of *"How"* will draw him and begin the whole process of divine incubation.

However, the key to all this creativity is in the greeting. A divine seed needed to be planted in Mary, and we also need a grain of heaven to be sown in our own souls.

11 HAIL MARY!

We saw earlier that Mary, troubled by the angelic introduction, wondered what kind of greeting it might be. Over the years, the angel's greeting to Mary has taken many forms, from the reserved English "*Greetings*" to the French "*Salut*" and the Roman "*Ava*"...to name but a few.

The Hasidic mother of Jesus is too often divorced from her Jewish context and become the Roman icon of "*La Pieta*" or something even worse when she is confused with ancient, female deities. If we understand her Jewishness we will come closer to understanding the creative greeting she received.

Could you sum up the Old Testament in just one word? Any attempt may well be doomed to failure, but there is a word which comes close to capturing all that God was creatively weaving into Israel through the law and the prophets.

Such a word, and indeed our second key word for the power to innovate, is:

"Shalom!"

Mary spoke Aramaic, and the angel, being a good cross cultural messenger, spoke to her in a way she could understand.

"Shalom, Myriam!"

He spoke into her – her womb being a bridge between the old and new testaments, all the essential truth of the ancient covenant. Shalom is no mere "*hello*," not just a declaration of peace, for it carries a depth of association and meaning. Hebrew words go beyond their spoken

pronunciation. Each Hebrew word conveys feeling, intent and emotion. Shalom is more than just peace - it is a complete peace. It is a feeling of contentment, completeness, wholeness, well being and harmony.

According to *Strong's Concordance*, Shalom means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, and harmony - the absence of agitation or discord. Shalom comes from a root verb meaning to be complete, perfect and full. In Modern Hebrew, the obviously related word "*Shelem*" means to pay for, and "*Shulam*" means to be fully paid.

It is a word which sums up God's covenant to mankind via Israel, his desire for wholeness, health and commonwealth as seen in all the intricate details and laws of the Torah. Some have summed up its essential meaning as:

"Nothing missing, nothing broken."

This greeting, this word of peace, became the incarnated Prince of Peace, the King of Shalom in the womb of Mary.

One might almost say that Mary conceived through hearing. No wonder she was troubled by the greeting. It would have been an awe inspiring moment of transfer. She may well, like Daniel and the other prophets of old, have been brought to the floor at such a dramatic declaration. It speaks much for her prepared and holy heart that she was able to receive such a potent word of creative life.

"So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

The entire promise of the old alliance was channelled, through the divine conception, into the incarnated flesh of a new beginning - the divine Son that Mary was to bring to the world.

The Holy Spirit rejoices to do the impossible where he finds holy hearts filled with long held yearnings. He desires to break into all our histories and make a profound difference. Mary's aunt Elizabeth was also being caught up in this outpouring of fecundity. Her long forgotten, seemingly barren, "eggs" were also infused with life.

"Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

What are your own barren, impossible dreams? Might there be a "Shalom" word, a "How" prayer and a brooding Holy Spirit to give them flesh?

Nobel prize winning scientist Alex Carrell once said:

"The most powerful form of energy that we can generate is prayer, for it seems that as we pray, God is still willing to speak creatively into reality even today."

Mary understood the power of divine word and acknowledged that heaven had indeed taken the creative initiative in her life.

"May it be to me as you have said."

The power of saying, of speaking out divine promise, is very much part of the power to innovate.

"I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered."

Yes, Mary was indeed the Lord's servant, or as the King James Version so delightfully puts it:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

She was a unique handmaiden, with a unique experience and a unique Son. Yet we too are servants of the Lord. We are not called to literally birth Jesus, but we, like the great creative woman of Revelation 12, are called to birth Christ's Kingdom in our daily lives and activities.

We have looked at the process of conceiving through hearing our own *"Shalom"* word from heaven, allowing the Holy Spirit to overshadow our *"eggs"* - our dreams and goals, and through a persevering prayer of enquiry.

However, before concluding, I would like to introduce you to a wider conception of the *"Shalom"* principle which will supply us, at the same time, with our second action.

12 SHALOM! SHALOM!!

*"At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.** Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"*
Luke 1: 39-45

As we read this wonderful family story we can see the power of the "greeting" again. We witness the domino effect, or multiplication, of the heavenly "hello."

Two Jewish family members would not have simply said a nice American,

"Hi there!"

They would have joyfully bubbled over in a glorious Middle Eastern,

"Shalom!"

Something quite literally moved within Elizabeth as she heard the creative Shalom from her niece's lips. There was a dynamic synergy as future destiny and prophetic purpose were meshed into a present greeting. This innovative moment was acknowledged by the innocent, joyful, leap of little John the Baptist.

Our embryonic steps of faith are confirmed by such inner,

vulnerable joy. We experience the affirming power of God's word and we know we are on the right track, stepping into something bigger and wilder than we could ever think or imagine.

Allow your inner dreams and longings to leap in joy and faith. Hear, even as you read, the Holy Shalom of God's encouragement and purpose for your life.

Elizabeth, filled with the contagious Holy Spirit who was brooding over Mary, prophetically proclaims blessing and confirms the destiny of the Kingdom child in Mary's womb.

She speaks out and through her words we find a principle for our prophetic action.

The ear/womb principle!

"As soon as the sound of your greeting - Shalom, reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."

Shalom in the ear, and joyful leaping inside!

Shalom...Shalom!

Faith comes from hearing and produces living, creative works.

Let's do an action together.

Stand up, clap your left hand to your left ear with the loud proclamation:

"Shalom!"

Do it as if you were making a clap, but instead of meeting your right hand, you touch your left ear.

After this, use your right hand to tap your tummy with another loud proclamation of "Shalom!"

"Shalom!" Clap your ear. "Shalom!!" Clap your tummy.

Now do this double Shalom action three times.

"Shalom, Shalom! Shalom, Shalom!! Shalom Shalom!!!"

As you do this, may your "Shaloms" become prayers and prophetic proclamations of all the Kingdom dreams and goals that God is planting into you. He will birth them in His time as you hold them deep within. Call on the power of the Holy Spirit to create and innovate.

Like her old ancestor, Abraham, Mary believed the promise. May we also believe in the "Shalom" promises that the Lord has placed in us to transform and bless the world around us.

"As it is written: I have made you a father of many nations. He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, So shall your offspring be. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-- since he was about a hundred years old-- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." Romans 4:17- 21

Rejoice in your dreams and unleash them in bold creativity to a waiting world.

13 TELL ME YOUR DREAMS

"We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."
Genesis 40:8

God has placed in every human soul the potential to dream. His creative love breathed vision, ambition and passionate goals into our hearts. To add a bit to St Irenaeus' famous quotation:

"God's glory is man fully alive...in achieving his dream."

One of the saddest things about life is that most people have no context to fulfil their dreams:

"There is no one to interpret them." Genesis 40:8

This lack of a genuine context to encourage and mentor embryonic dreams leads to great frustration. This expresses itself in the various evils and addictions that try to offer a measure of relief from the inner pain of carrying an unfulfilled dream.

We are also sold bogus dreams. Here are three categories of counterfeit dreams:

The MTV dream. Life is just one hedonistic video clip. If it feels good, do it now!

The Disney dream. You can buy anything! Or as Madonna might say:

"I am a material girl, living in a material world."

The Twisted dream. This is religious zeal without love or the Holy Spirit. Hitler, Marx, the "Moonies," Inquisitions

and Religious wars would all come under this category. False Messiah's - greedy, intoxicated vampires, drinking on the untapped hunger so many harbour to die for a cause, to die for a dream.

God longs to reveal a "*Kingdom dream*" to our hearts. Find your egg! A revelation of the King, of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the key to fulfilling dream.

The story of Joseph in Genesis gives us some great insight into how a "*Kingdom Dream*" is worked out. Read it through from Gen 37 to 42. Let's look at 4 principles.

1. A dream is born in an environment of fatherly love. "*Now Israel loved Joseph.*"
2. A dream needs anointing. This anointing is symbolised by "*the richly ornamented robe*" which was given him. The Septuagint uses a Greek word "*poikulus*" here. It is used in the New Testament to mean "*manifold*" or "*diverse.*" We find "*grace in its various forms*" in 1 Peter 4:10, "*the manifold wisdom*" of Ephesians 3:10 and the "*trials of many kinds*" of James 1:2. True anointing develops within a context of grace, wisdom and testing.
3. The death of a dream. Joseph's dream was severely tested to the point of destruction by his jealous brothers. "*Here comes that dreamer...Come now, let's kill him...Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.*" Genesis 37:19- 20. Joseph's robe was dipped in blood and our dreams will also go through a cross to prove their authenticity. Christ's very robe, stained red in the victorious combat, is "*dipped in blood.*" Revelation 19:13
4. The discipling of a dream. There was a huge distance between Joseph's dream and Joseph's

character. To fulfil his dream Joseph had to go through a long process of on the job training. This included:

Learning to succeed in Egypt under a pagan master. Genesis 39:3. He learnt the basic disciplines of life.

Learning to resist temptation. Genesis 39:10. In the end it was his genuine desire for God which protected him from falling into sin and losing his dream. Intimacy and holiness protect our dreams.

Learning to succeed even in a narrow place. Genesis 39:23. Don't crave a wide platform. Learn to succeed in the ordinary, narrow duties of everyday life - even if it feels like a prison sometimes.

He learnt to make space for others in interpreting their dreams. Genesis 40:8. This was Joseph's finest hour. He had come of age. Instead of having his eyes fixed on his own personal vision, he began to listen to others, using his gifts to create a context for their dreams. He became a disciple maker.

In giving time to interpret the dreams of others he ended up fulfilling his own greater dream.

If we and our churches and movements want to fulfil our dreams we must create an environment which disciplines others and releases them into their Kingdom dreams. As soon as Joseph learnt to listen to others, God released him from the prison and he found himself in front of Pharaoh, interpreting the dream of a whole nation.

"Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I had a dream, and no one can interpret it.'" Genesis 41:15.

What are your dreams and visions? Don't give up on them, but learn to create the environment which enables others to fulfil their dreams around yours. Surely, the church should be a place which interprets dreams. As Joseph discovered, it can be quite a wounding experience going for your dreams. God prophetically gave him two sons of healing and hope to see him on his way. Let's end by making these sons our own promise in the one and only Son Jesus.

Manasseh – *"God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."* Genesis 41:51

Ephraim - *"God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."* Genesis 41:52

May you be whole and fruitful as you fulfil your dreams.

14 BUSINESS AS MISSION

One way of expressing this "*Shalom*" creativity – your Kingdom dream, is through making a transformational impact in society, beyond the four walls of the church building. Many people speak about influencing culture, sports, government, education and the media with the Gospel. Perhaps the most strategic area to influence may well be the market place where most of us spend the majority of our time. The concept of *Business as Mission* was born from this dream of making a better world.

Business as Mission - often abbreviated BAM, is a relatively new term, but it is based on ancient Biblical concepts. Its applications vary from country to country and from business to business. Other words and phrases used to explain the BAM movement today include, "*transformational business*," "*great commission companies*" and "*Kingdom business*."

There are many historical examples of Christians doing business in such a way that people and societies have been transformed and God glorified.

Business as Mission & Societal Transformation

Mats Tunehag, Lausanne Senior Associate for Business as Mission writes:

"Hans Nielsen Hauge was born in Norway in the late 1700's. The country was a poor, underdeveloped agricultural society, with no democracy and limited religious freedom. Hauge travelled extensively throughout Norway and did - what we in modern day terminology would call - church planting and business as mission.

He started 30 businesses, including fishing industries, a

brickyard, spinning mills, shipping yards, salt and mineral mines, paper mills, and printing plants. He was an entrepreneur and a catalyst. Many others were inspired to read the Bible, to meet with other believers for prayer and fellowship, and various businesses were started and developed.

Even secular historians today acknowledge Hauge's legacy and contribution to the development of modern Norway. He is sometimes called "the Father of democracy in Norway." He facilitated equality between men and women. His work led to a spiritual awakening and an entrepreneurship movement. Hauge's legacy is thus one of spiritual, economical and social transformation. He did not use the term business as mission, but his life and work illustrates some of the BAM goals, principles and outcomes."

He certainly seems to have modelled the "panga" to innovate and create!

A Definition of Business as Mission

"Business as Mission is about real, viable, sustainable and profitable businesses; with a Kingdom of God purpose, perspective and impact; leading to transformation of people and societies spiritually, economically and socially – to the greater glory of God." Mats Tunehag; Lausanne Senior Associate Business as Mission.

Business as Mission releases God's power to transform societies and make a better world.

Kingdom of God perspective

God wants his rule to penetrate all levels of life and society. We always live in the tension between the "now"

and the "not yet" of the rule and reign of Christ on this earth. Business can be a part of releasing the now of heaven into society and stakes a claim in the new heaven and new earth.

May your Kingdom come, **on earth**, as in heaven.

Hebrews 6:5 talks about those:

"Who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age."

Ask God to give you a "taste" of heaven in your earthly enterprise.

The knowledge of God and the building the Kingdom of God involves body, mind, soul and spirit. Therefore, we need an increasing integration of the material with the spiritual in our service to society and proclamation of the gospel.

Business as Mission might be considered as "*an act of **co-creation** in imitation of God.*" In this way, it frames itself theologically as being a response to the "*Creation Mandate*," developed in God's first commission to Adam and Eve. This takes us back to our "power" to innovate, and our Kingdom prayer of "*How?*" A successful Kingdom Business is an incarnation of the "*good news*" of the gospel, and an expression of the missionary thrust of the Church.

Business as Mission is about wealth generation and spiritual transformation. As such, it should be viewed, not only within the narrow church-mission-business perspective, but also within the wider macro perspective of sustainable development. Such development consists of abundance, empowerment, character and service, in

which people break loose from the shackles of a world bound by abject poverty.

God's calling is to purify and season our earthly environment:

"You are the salt of the earth." Matthew 5:13.

The Luke 14:34 version is even stronger when it talks about salt needing to be thrown onto the *"manure pile."*

"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out."

The business world can often be seen as such a *"manure pile"* of greed, worldliness and exploitation - all the more reason for some to take up the mantle of *"salty entrepreneurship,"* with a vocation to bring salvation, healing and transformation to this unreached area.

In the past, trade was often a means of carrying the good news of salvation:

"The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion. Thus when Celsus denounces a religion which spreads through workers in wool and leather and fullers and uneducated persons who get hold of children privately and of ignorant women and teach them, Origen does not deny that this occurs. In the commerce and the travel which were so marked a feature of the Roman Empire, the faith must have made many new contacts through Christian merchants and tradesmen. Involuntary

travellers such as slaves and Christians deported for their faith were also agents." Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The First Five Centuries*.

In my travels around the world, one of the things that most pains my heart is to witness unemployed, wasted youth. Whether it be the many young Algerians spending their days leaning against the walls in Constantine, or the frustrated, impoverished "godebé" – street kids, of Bangui, Central Africa, I long to be able to offer them a future which is more than just an empty promise of sitting in a church on Sunday. We must be the Body of Christ at work:

*"Poverty is holistic in nature and consists of not only economic poverty but social, political and spiritual poverty as well. **The solution to holistic poverty must be the holistic and transforming message of shalom** - remember our key word in the last chapter? Business as mission is a response both to the mandate of stewardship over creation as well as the mandate of the great commission to all nations. It is a response to the immense spiritual and physical needs of the world and its application is displayed on many levels."* Lausanne paper on Business As Mission

Many countries that are in the greatest need of transformation also represent hostile environments for business. Corruption, intimidation, economic and political instability make it challenging for any business to survive.

Most business investors would not invest in some of the places that Jesus has called us to venture. This is why it is even more important that we provide those called to start businesses in these difficult places with the support that they need. We need to look at creative solutions to

compensate the reality of low returns on investment that are inherent in these difficult places. To create a better business environment in these challenging locations, it is crucial that we partner with those relief and development entities which protect and develop a basic infrastructure. We must also work with and encourage those called to transform legal, political and educational spheres.

After more than twenty years of working in Central African Republic, I can see that this is a critical area. We have managed to run business seminars and launch the beginnings of some businesses, but at a great cost! Just as it needs that special type of missionary to pioneer unreached areas for the gospel, it also needs courageous business pioneers willing to invest their skills and talents into the more stony ground.

Even in the more prosperous Western European nations, youth unemployment has never been so high.

Our world is not an easy place to live in and the future of the next generation is highly challenging. In the next twenty years, two billion people will enter societies where there are few living churches and scant job opportunities.

Who will be able to channel this wild sea of youthful passion and expectation into something meaningful?

This is a great mission, and it will require inspired business to make it happen. Business as Mission is a growing and maturing missionary movement - something which the "*Shalom*" of the creative, Holy Spirit is bringing about. It calls many to a lifelong and passionate vocation. It is so much more than just a fund raising tactic or visa platform. It is a relevant, Kingdom strategy for the 21st century.

We need to think differently

The church is not simply a building! It is a collection of relationships propelled out into the cultural context the Holy Spirit has prepared for us.

Your context is your mission field.

Many know that the Greek word the bible uses for church is "ekklesia" – "called out " or "gathered" ones.

Paul, in Acts 17:17:

"Reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace – agora, day by day with those who happened to be there."

Both "synagogue" and "agora" have the same notion of a gathering place. It seems that the thrust of Paul was to use any structure necessary get the word of God to as many folk as possible. He could cater for the "in crowd" Jews but also for "those who happened to be there."

I think that the Holy Spirit may be calling us to think more widely about the nature of church so that it can be available for those crowds around us who caused Jesus such compassion.

As many seek to find God's direction and call on their lives, we may do well to listen to the challenging advice coming from Wayne Grudem and Dallas Willard.

"As for the relationship of business to serving God, when people ask how their lives can "glorify God," they are not usually told, "Go into business." When students ask, "How can I serve God with my life?" they don't often hear the answer, "Go into business." Wayne Grudem – Business for the Glory of God.

"Holy people must stop going into "church work" as their natural course of action and take up holy orders of farming, industry, law education, banking and journalism with the same zeal previously given to traditional evangelism, pastoral or missionary work." Dallas Willard – The Spirit of the Disciplines

15 NO-ONE HAS HIRED US

The power to innovate must inspire us to create vital contexts of life and service for the emerging generations.

I've always been inspired by the parable in Matthew 20:1-16 which talks about the workers in the vineyard. It is a great encouragement to see how, throughout the ages, the great "landowner" has been pursuing His purpose of sending out workers into the harvest field.

Great missiologists, like David Bosch in his classic book *"Transforming Mission,"* have seen different paradigms of mission throughout the ages. Here is a brief summary of the 6 different periods of mission – with a few comments and verses to sum up some of the essentials of each age:

- The Apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity. Vision of Christ's imminent return.
- The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period. 313 AD – Edict of Milan – Principle of Theosis – God became man so that man might become God. – John 3:16.
- The Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm. 600 – 1500 AD. Middle ages. Luke 14:23 – *"Compel them to come in."* Individualisation & Ecclesiasticisation of salvation.
- The Protestant Reformation paradigm. From 1517 AD – A return to the Gospel. Romans 1:16
- The Modern Enlightenment paradigm. 1700 AD Newton 1750 AD Voltaire. Rise of science and humanism.
- The Emerging Ecumenical paradigm. After 2000 AD – Death of modernism. Inclusive, multi faceted and spiritual.

So for Bosch, the “emerging ecumenical paradigm” or “post modern” period would perhaps equate to our “eleventh hour” in the parable.

God is raising up new missionary armies from the four corners of the earth to facilitate the task of gathering the harvest. A prophetic word given during a prayer vigil held in Jerusalem in May 1989 over Pentecost gives an encouraging confirmation of all that is in God’s heart for the last days.

“Today is the time of harvest and ingathering, a time when the Spirit is being poured out upon all flesh in these last days. Through the centuries he has called workers into his fields and has promised that they are worthy of their hire; These have indeed borne the burden and the heat of the day. And still, the harvest is not finished.

Now, the Lord says, I will send to work at your sides eleventh hour workers, those who have been idle because no man would hire them. This army of workers will be mostly young people who will go forth to proclaim the gospel without fear or compromise. They will come from the nations and peoples that you least expect. They are a great company that you do not know at this time, but the Lord is preparing them even now.

You must pray for and welcome these eleventh hour workers that I will give to you. You must not be jealous of them but rejoice at the reward that I will give them – for they were willing to come at the last hour – and without them the harvest would not be complete.”

All encouraging stuff, but the reality of the eleventh hour seems to be a bit more challenging. Sometimes, we find it so hard to break out of the beloved “paradigms” of the

8th, 9th and tenth hour. The wave seems to be coming to an end and we find it hard to catch the new one!

I was recently teaching at a well-known Bible school who had only a very few students while many mission agencies are reporting record low numbers in candidates and immense financial challenges. I know that this is not the same story everywhere, but there seems to be a mismatch between the present needs and the available workforce. At the "eleventh hour" the workers were abundant, but redundant!

"Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?"

Their reply is perhaps God's word to us at this time.

"No-one has hired us."

No context had been created to link the tenth hour to the eleventh – a paradigm shift is needed.

We are called to create a context for the next generation of young, eleventh hour workers.

I can think of three pioneer areas which might begin to knit together a context to release the full potential of these end time labourers.

- Missional business. We looked at BAM in the previous chapter.
- Global partnership and mentoring contexts – church planting movements in difficult areas, for the emerging missions of the Global South.
- Wild, radical, prayer and worship communities.

No easy answers on the above, except our prayer "*How?*" and the longing that the Holy Spirit give us "panga" – power, to build such contexts.

The fundamental factor for every worker will be the privilege of bearing:

"The burden of the work and the heat of the day."

Our reward is the sharing in the sufferings of Christ himself and also in His glory - Romans 8:17. If we lose sight of Him, our portion, we will quickly slip into legalism and grumbling. The work will become heavy and joyless rather than a glorious celebration of Christ's ultimate victory over sin and death. Christ was the first and last - Revelation 1:8, the first worker at the Father's side in creation and the last worker returning for the heavenly harvest. He fills up each hour with his life and gift of himself. To see who truly bore the burden of the work and the heat of the day, we need only to look to that naked figure nailed to a wooden cross under the hot Palestinian sun, bearing the sin of the world and the heat of hell upon his shoulders. No grumbling for him! Rather the glad accomplishment of the heavenly mission.

"For the joy set before Him, he endured the cross and scorned its shame." Hebrews 12:2

His joy was seeing the army of workers who were being raised up to follow him. His joy was in the emerging missionary communities – the African, Brazilian, Chinese or Korean missionary armies.

His joy is in us!

Perhaps we feel in the very last place as a person or a nation, but God wants to make us first in our desire to

witness and glorify Him. We may be the last in a long history of missionary movements, but perhaps we may be the first to usher in the return of the King!

"The last will be first, and the first will be last."

Many years ago, my wife was pregnant with our third child. As the bump grew bigger, I asked the Lord to give me a prayer of blessing for the child. I laid hands on the yet unborn child and heard the Lord give me the verses from Matthew 20. Could there be a greater blessing or privilege than being a worker for God and inheriting the glory of Christ.

"Oh God, please may there be some work left for her as she grows up. Give her the joy of serving you."

My daughter is now 25, She has a Master's degree business and is working with a BAM company to empower young people. In the same way, may he give the emerging nations of this world - may he give you, the joy of being eleventh hour workers in his harvest!

"You also go and work in my vineyard." Matthew 20:7

16 TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE!

I've got a challenge for you. Try lifting a chair near you with just one hand. Can you do it? Have you got control? Now try it using two hands. Much easier!

Why do we seem to only use "one hand" when we approach the arduous job of building God's Kingdom? Ecclesiastes 4:9 gives us some good advice:

"Two are better than one."

The prophet Zechariah had a wonderful vision of a solid gold lampstand. The apostle John in Revelation also saw Jesus walking amongst the seven golden lampstands, and concluded that such lampstands signified churches.

Zechariah saw two olive trees, feeding golden oil into the lamp to make it shine. Twice the angel asked him:

"Do you not know what these are."

Do we know what the two principles are that anoint the church and give it light? Happily the angel gives a clear answer:

"These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth." Zechariah 4:14

In the context of Zechariah, we see clearly that these "two anointed" make reference to the High Priest Joshua, and the King Zerubbabel.

We can discern two principles.

1. Temple ministry to heaven via Joshua – Prayer.
2. Hands on, earthly ministry via Zerubbabel – Action.

We are all very familiar with anointed temple ministry, but perhaps we are less familiar with the concept of anointed ministry to society. This may well be the time to be anointed for business, for politics, for education, for sports, for art and for all the other domains that the "*power to innovate*" makes available to us.

It is time to release Zerubbabel!

The Church will find a much stronger grip on evangelism when she encourages and recognises those with vocations to society. We need to see such ministries as being in the same anointed league as the priests and pastors who look after the temple. Zerubbabel is a bringer of transformation – he puts holistic flesh on the bones of the Gospel message.

However, before we look more into this kingly anointing, I want to emphasise that it works, hand in hand, with the priest. Just Joshua or just Zerubbabel will not get the mission done! The praying, intimate ministry which deals with warfare in the heavenly realms is totally indispensable, so let's have a look at Joshua first.

Big heart, Broad shoulders!

*"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has **chosen** Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes."*

Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin,

and I will put rich garments on you." Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here." Zechariah 3: 1-7

Many times, we find ourselves too worn out to pray or engage in victorious spiritual warfare. We are too tired and overwhelmed to take up our priestly role in the world. We feel accused and sinful. Useless parents, bad spouses and failed missionaries! The last thing we want to hear is someone telling us to fast or conjure up some effort to be free from the oppression, and yet we feel guilty about our lack of zeal.

After more than 30 years in mission and churches, I can well identify with Joshua. He represents every person who has tried to pray and minister before the Lord. He might also symbolise a collective movement of people – a church, a region, a mission group, attempting to be "*prayer based*." Every such expression will find itself thrust into warfare, enjoying the ultimate victory of Christ, but having to cope daily with the evil, accusing angel at one's side. His clothes are stained by his personal sin, but they may also have become soiled through warfare and work. A visit to a smoky café will leave even a non smoker smelling like an ash tray.

I recently stood before the Lord under a cloud of accusation and discouragement, feeling a burnt out failure. Hanging on in there, I seemed to hear the Lord

say.

"I really love the Joshuas."

He loves us because we have owned our priesthood, even under the pressure of accusation and warfare.

His love expresses itself in His sovereign *choice* of our lives. He calls us to belong to Him and bear fruit.

This "*divine choice*" is the key to spiritual victory. God will honour His choice and rebuke even the most intense opposition in order for His purpose to be achieved. I'm beginning to come to grips with the amazing fact that my spiritual victory doesn't depend on my own efforts, but more on my ability to believe and relax into His sovereign choice and love.

Relax into your election!

The first "prayer" of such Joshuas is to simply overhear the echo of the Lord's eternal voice, rebuking the enemy on your behalf!

*"The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has **chosen** Jerusalem, rebuke you!"*

The Lord's rebuke opens up an enlarged space, a new field, a fresh initiative and is the ultimate necessity for preparing the way for Zerubbabel - apostolic advance into society.

Do you want another prayer?

"Thanks for forgiveness and new clothes!"

Ever since the Fall, God has been in the tailoring business, clothing His children with redemption and power. From the bloody animal skins which covered

Adam's nakedness in Genesis, to the heavenly bride making herself ready in Revelation, God has been infusing the life of Christ into us through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Much could be said concerning the garments of the high priest and the book of Exodus, chapter 28, is well worth meditating.

A renewed and holy mind set, anchoring our purpose and identity, is found in the turban. The gold bells –noise, and pomegranates – fruit, arranged alternately around the hem of the robe, speak of the delicate balance between gift and character so essential for Christian ministry.

However, I feel that two particular articles are very much on the Lord's heart to give to us for this season.

The ephod and the breast piece.

What are you carrying? What is on your heart? The people, places and projects that we own are like the precious stones on these garments. Perhaps some have lost their sparkle through disuse or disappointment, while others still lay hidden, waiting for their moment to shine. Our shoulders may have grown weak from the constant burden. Our hearts may have grown strangely cold over the years, worn out and tearless from emotional exhaustion. Take up your burdens afresh, remembering Nathan's advice to David to do what was on his heart. Christ, like Aaron, is our example as we own anew the prayer life of a priest.

"Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the Lord."

"Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart."

Just as God gave new clothes to his priest, so he is wanting to give you fresh strength and encouragement. Your shoulders, which have carried so much and can take no more, will be given a fresh "ephod." This miracle will enable you to carry even more weight, and carry on.

Your heart, which is emotionally drained and dry from giving out to others, can also be made new. Receive a new "breast piece" and be emotionally empowered to love again.

And a final prayer to receive a promise.

Extending the Kingdom of God in the world is all about authority.

Can you believe that God wants to open a new season of authority over your life? It may be time to speak to certain mountains rather than continue to journey around - or moan, about them. Action without authority is just more empty work. Our various works can know greater authority and breakthrough as we take up our Joshua mantle.

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: `If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.'"

Receive a promise to govern. We are called to be the head and not the tail. Not in some cheap, triumphalistic mantra, but in the sacrificial exercise of prayer and faith, incarnating itself in a life laid down for the nations.

This intercessory prayer in the heavenly places will open a space for the Zerubbabels to govern with us – for the church to govern and shine as the bright lampstand she is

meant to be.

Govern regions in prayer and worship, creating a favourable environment for men and women to discover the beauty of Christ.

Govern the discipling and team building activities, allowing folks to come free into courage and ministry.

Govern the whole realm of calling into existence new works and initiatives, releasing the workers for the strategic harvests.

Govern the finances needed to glorify Christ in His ministry through us.

"Thank you Lord for calling me to be a Joshua. I receive your promise for greater authority and I choose to walk by grace in your ways. Give me a bigger heart and broader shoulders so that I can carry the responsibilities of my life and be renewed in love. May I, those who travel with me, and the whole body of the church, know a renewed mandate to govern in your Name and for your glory. Amen."

Zerubbabel - anointed "*mountain moving*" ministry.

Having gained the ground in the heavenly places, like Moses praying on the mountain while Israel won the battle in the valley - see Exodus 17:10-11, we must, through intelligent, culturally sensitive and strategic action, occupy the ground that Joshua's priestly intercession has taken for us.

Although these passages speak of two distinct historical people, we shall see later in Revelation 11, that these "*two witnesses*" represent universal paradigms of the

Church. We may find that all of us have something of both Joshua and Zerubbabel within us. However, for some, one particular element will be a real passion and ministry. Unfortunately, many people who have felt this passion for business, politics or beyond, have not always felt that they found an appropriate context in the church. This must change. Zerubbabel, like Joseph:

"Is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall." Genesis 49:22

He will get us out of the four walls of meetings, get us back down from the mountain of transfiguration, and help us get our hands dirty in the rough and tumble of society.

"So he said to me, This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!' Then the word of the LORD came to me: The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb-line in the hand of Zerubbabel. (These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth.)" Zechariah 4:6-10

Zerubbabel is very much *"by the Spirit"* of the Lord.

He carries the *panga* power to innovate and transform. Anointing is not just for the pulpit. You can be anointed for business. However, there is a warning here as well. The instinctive reaction of most "kingly" ministries is to work out of natural strength.

"Hit it with hard work and money," they say.

But the Lord says,

"Not by might nor by power!"

Without understanding this, it is only too easy to join the ranks of so many "burnt out," workaholic - and sometimes bankrupt, Zerubbabels. The wise apostle John reminds us that,

"Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." John 3:6

Even in society, as anointed kingly, ministers, we must avoid the temptation to function in the flesh. Every "Joshua" in the temple knows that he must work at sanctification and the crucifying of his old nature. In the same way, every Zerubbabel must learn to carry his cross. The wooden cross applied to the heart is the perch for the Holy Spirit to land upon.

Zerubbabel is a mountain mover!

The mountains represent all the problems that face us. There are two basic types of problems – those in heaven and those on earth. The spiritual and the practical. Actually it is wrong for me to separate these two spheres as, within the traditional Hebrew world view, they were very much linked. Earth and heaven intertwine. It is basically because of the Greek influence and Plato's philosophy that we have emerged into a more "dualistic" world view in the West, seeing the material and spiritual as separate entities. This is why we need the "two hands" of Joshua and Zerubbabel coming together to give the Church a bright, shining "Holistic," Shalom, world view.

When the visible – the materially real practical domain, is in disarray, it often signals a spiritual malaise as well. It is only too easy for us to get overbalanced. During my many years in Africa I have seen great “Joshua” pastors binding the spirit of Satan who had apparently stolen the petrol when their car ran out of fuel! In Britain, I have seen fantastic “Zerubbabel” businessmen totally out of their depth when trying to cope with a demonized person. They have wanted to call the police rather than understanding their authority to deal with the issue.

I pray for more practicality in Africa. So much progress is handicapped by the sheer non-ability to move material mountains. Countries, supposedly in revival, are poverty stricken wrecks, abounding in suffering and corruption. Where are the anointed businessmen, politicians, teachers, engineers, plumbers and mechanics, capable of moving the dark mountains of ignorance and unfulfilled potential?

For many years, I have personally been working with an indigenous African mission called “Nations en Marche” which has set up a “Polytechnic,” aiming to equip its students with practical talents as well as the more traditional Bible school training.

If “Joshua” changes the heavenly climate, then Zerubbabel challenges the mighty mountains of poverty and ignorance, making level ground – opportunities for all, and bringing transformation.

I’m pretty sure Jesus must have been thinking of this passage when he spoke about moving a mountain to his disciples:

“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a

mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20-21

I don't think that this was just some crazy "magic" statement from Jesus in which he envisaged seeing hundreds of literal mountains flying through the air. He may well have been thinking of the thousands of "small faithed" Zerubbabels, willing to sow themselves humbly into the world's earth and, through their living words and action, bring the kind of transformation that the watching world thinks impossible.

It only needs a dream the size of a "*mustard seed*" to move a mountain. Allow the Holy Spirit to empower your dreams and release you into a Zerubbabel ministry.

Zerubbabel is a founder and finisher.

Any fool can begin a work, only a true hero can finish it! Only works with good foundations will end up finished. Zerubbabel has the entrepreneurial skill to start something and the perseverance to see it through. I thank God for the apostolic "Joshuas" who have planted "temples," but we also need to encourage and acknowledge that same apostolic anointing on the pioneer business people and educators - creators of companies, jobs, wealth, and knowledge.

Paul likened his own ministry to that of an architect:

"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:10-11

Christ-like housewives, plumbers, electricians, nurses, businessmen and many others, empowered by God's grace, are laying a foundation of Christ into society. We need to encourage them and give them eyes to see their vital Kingdom work. They are no less anointed than the spiritual "Joshuas," no less valued in their ministry.

Mountain moving needs perseverance and, whatever the heavy task begun, it must be finished. Like the man wanting to build a tower or the general wanting to go out and fight, we must make a real assessment of our resources and resolution before launching out. A daily glance at Jesus - empowered by intimacy, will inspire us to the finish line.

*"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter (**finisher** - teleiotes,) 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." Hebrews 12:2*

The apostolic cry of Paul, nearing the end of his life, challenges us to press on and finish well.

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:6-8

As I said before, there is no neat dividing line between Joshua and Zerubbabel. There is one Spirit, one Church and one holistic ministry which encompasses heaven and earth. Let us pour ourselves out for Jesus, fighting to the

finish, and passionately longing for more of his Kingdom to come **on earth**, as it is in heaven.

Zerubbabel is a visionary.

The leader's "lead" is his vision. We must know where we are going. It is easy to follow a big marching army, but who has the vision to see and mentor the first soldier in a future army? Anyone can follow the visible, but it needs a special person to see the invisible. Zerubbabel is able to see the great oak tree behind the little acorn. He is not afraid to begin small and embrace vibrant vulnerability:

"Who despises the day of small things." Zechariah 4:10

In today's success orientated society, many people despise the "small." Jesus was the opposite. Although he was well able to minister to the crowds, he gave his best into a "little flock" of rugged, ordinary people. He could see beyond the temper of the "sons of thunder," James and John, to a time when they would be writing apostolic letters about taming the tongue and love. He didn't despise the passionate unreliable bluster of Simon, but saw a future solidity, prophetically naming him Cephas, Peter, the rock.

What is the small thing you may be called to nurture? Don't despise it, but embrace it by emptying yourself of pride and taking up a truly kingly ministry of service. Train your inner eyes to see beyond present weakness into a future transformed by faith.

If you are going to be successful in society you will also need vision and the perseverance to stick with it. Look at "Apple" founder, Steve Jobs story.

"When Steve Jobs was born February 24, 1955, in San

Francisco, California, his unwed mother decided to put him for adoption because she wanted a girl. So in the middle of the night, his mother called a lawyer named Paul Jobs and said, "We have an unexpected baby boy; do you want him?"

His mother felt very strongly that he should be adopted by college graduates and when she found out that both his future parents had never graduated from colleges, she refused to sign the adoption papers. She only relented a few months later when his future parents promised that they would send Jobs to college.

He went to college but decided to drop out because it was too expensive. Recalling his time there he said,

I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends' rooms, I returned coke bottles for the 5¢ deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the 7 miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple.

At 20, he and a friend (Steve Wozniak) started a company in a garage on April 1, 1976. Later that year, the duo debuted the Apple I at the Homebrew Computer Club in Palo Alto, California. A local store offered to buy 50 machines and to finance the production, the duo had to sell their most expensive possessions. Jobs sold his Volkswagen van while Wozniak sold his Hewlett-Packard scientific calculator."

Jobs named their company "Apple" in memory of a happy summer he had spent as an orchard worker in Oregon.

After several ups and downs in the company – even leaving it, Jobs returned to make it one of the most successful and innovative companies of all time. He had

vision, but he was also passionate about what he did.

"Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work."

"And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle."

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma-which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice."

"And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition."

"They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

Zerubbabel, like many Steve Jobs, has a clear grip on his own destiny and somehow knows what his small beginning may well become. He is deeply motivated by such a vision.

The Bible story of Jacob also shows us a man on a transformational journey. Jacob is staying with his uncle Laban who is looking to get a good worker in his nephew. Jacob's eye has caught that of Laban's daughter, Rachel. She,

"Was lovely in form, and beautiful."

She was Jacob's wonderful vision. She was his dream and hope. Laban's other daughter, Leah, was less in view. Indeed, she seems to have been less visually attractive than Rachel.

Rachel represents vision. She is the ideal, Platonic form. She is the beautiful dream to be pursued. Leah, on the other hand, is all that vision is not. She is not beautiful and exciting. The fact that she is described as having "weak eyes" is the very antithesis to vision. Leah represents our unwanted realities of life.

"Jacob was in love with Rachel." Genesis 29:18

We always love vision. Vision encourages us in our labour and gives it meaning. Jacob was willing to work seven long years because his heart was motivated by the prize of Rachel.

What motivates your own work ?

Here, we rediscover the same principle that motivated Steve Jobs. We must be:

Motivated By The Vision.

Jacob was so in love with Rachel that his tough life of a shepherd was transfigured. Instead of enduring the drudgery of dirty, smelly, boring sheep every day, he rose above the problems, upheld in his labour by his passion for the dream.

"So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her." Genesis 29:20

Without a vision, the time drags. Without a passion, we get bogged down in problems. It is essential to be motivated by a vision. At the very least, we need to be

able to see Christ glorified as the goal of our lives and activities. We need to be captivated by his beauty.

John Stott wrote the following concerning work.

"The story is told of a man who was taking a walk down a country lane, when he came across a stone quarry in which a number of men were working. He questioned several of them about what they were doing. The first replied irritably,

"Can't you see? I'm hewing a stone."

The second answered without looking up,

"I'm earning £100 a week."

But when the same question was put to the third man, he stopped, put his pick down, stood up, stuck out his chest and said,

"If you want to know what I'm building a cathedral."

So it is a matter of how far we can see. The first man could not see beyond his pick, and the second beyond his Friday pay packet. But the third man looked beyond his tools and his wages to the ultimate end he was serving. He was co-operating with the architect. However small his particular contribution, he was helping to construct a building for the worship of God.

So *laborare orare*, "work is worship," provided that we can see how our job contributes, in however small and indirect a way, to the forwarding of God's purpose for mankind. Then whatever we do can be done for the glory of God"

Stott is confirming the principle that every Zorubbabel needs farsighted faith.

So, having fired you all up by a call to fresh vision, I still have to come to terms with the questions that arise when the reality doesn't always measure up to the vision. Let's go back to Jacob who has finished his labour and is looking forward to consummating his relationship with Rachel. You can almost feel his eager enthusiasm as he says to Laban.

"Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her." v.21

They have a marvellous feast, singing and dancing. In the dark of the night, and the heat of his enthusiasm, Jacob gains his prize.

But,

"When morning came, there was Leah!"

As they say in French.

"Quelle horreur!"

He was expecting to gaze into the lovely eyes of his beloved, his beauty, his vision, but instead he got landed with Leah. How many of us also know the feeling of being landed with Leah?

We dreamt of a vibrant, *"New Testament"* church coming into being, and yet after many years, the *"Sunday morning comes,"* and we find the same old faces, the same old songs and the same old boredom. A *"morning"* of division, personal failure, sickness, poverty, tragedy and strife. A *"morning"* when our wonderful *"Kingdom Business"* gets hijacked by fraud, greed and corruption, leading to the humiliation of bankruptcy, bringing us to the sad revelation of our own personal Leah. In a nutshell, we are deeply,

Disappointed By The Reality.

This was Jacob's reality. He cries out:

"I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?"

This may well echo our own personal heart cry to God. I served you because I believed in a beautiful church, a successful career, and now this! I served you for a vision of unity and prosperity, and now all this division and bankruptcy! We don't always vocalise it, but often we feel deeply let down by God. Do we think that God has somehow deceived us, conned us into ministry? We can blame more than just God and also begin to accuse other authority figures. How many feel let down by parents, politicians, teachers and pastors?

The expression of these feelings of disappointment can lead us to rebel or run away. The non resolution or sublimation of these issues can leave us in a constant state of anxiety, bitterness and anger, with a fatigued inability to push through and finish anything.

Laban gives some priceless advice to Jacob. It is as if he encourages the Zorubbabel principle of founding and finishing.

"Finish out this daughter's bridal week; " v.27

The temptation is to flee our realities. Like pampered butterflies we fly from one "vision" to another, never able to settle and build. The Christian and business world can also feed us on unreal expectations, and we end up running after one illusion after another instead of achieving something in our everyday circumstances. Miracle crusades, new books and techniques, special anointing, new breakthroughs, come and go while often the very basics of Christian character and commitment

are neglected. Families and employees need to be loved and served, telephone bills paid, promises kept and the hurting people prayed for.

In order to get Rachel, Jacob had to learn to love Leah. However much he disliked the fact and wanted to run away, he had to learn to embrace his reality and finish his time with her. It takes both vision and reality to build the Kingdom. They are the two facets of the Bride. Like Jacob, we love our vision more than our realities.

"He loved Rachel more than Leah." v.30

"The Lord saw that Leah was not loved." v.31

This brings us to back to an important point for all vision chasers. We must learn to,

Love Leah!

We need to learn to love our less than beautiful realities. This is so important. If we refuse to embrace Leah our vision remains sterile and empty.

"Rachel was barren. Leah became pregnant." v.32

Embracing our reality forges God's fruit into our lives and we are prepared to own a future vision. We must learn to love Leah because she puts the character of Christ into us. So many "visions" are just empty illusions because they are not owned in reality. Many dreams become sterile fantasies because no one pays the price of rooting them in reality.

You'll have to read my book, *"Open Heaven,"* to discover the benefits of loving Leah, revealed through the various names of her children. However, for the moment, having committed ourselves to vision, and embracing our

realities, let's look at another aspect of the anointed kingly ministry.

Zerubbabel brings the joy of accountability and order.

"Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel."

Have you ever been involved in an enterprise where there was no order, and selfish anarchy reigned? The book of Judges tells of such a situation in the past, and it could also be a refrain to express the same permissive spirit that is still alive and well in today's society.

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." Judges 21:25

Winston Churchill said that,

"The price of greatness is responsibility."

Someone, somewhere has to pay the price, take up the mantle of "kingly" leadership, and bring order and accountability to people.

The poet W.B Yeats, in his famous poem *"The Second Coming,"* put it another way.

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

The *"passionate intensity"* of evil - whether it be in our own hearts or in the power structures of society, is always ready to break loose. It needs to be reined in by the *"conviction"* of the best. What good is salt if it loses its saltiness? God is looking for those willing to raise a plumb line - willing to impose some Godly order on the

"*mere anarchy*" of the world. The famous quote often attributed to Edmund Burke confirms this sentiment.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

Fathers and mothers need to hold up a suitable plumb line to their kids, business men, politicians and pastors also need to make sure they are holding and modelling a true line for folks to follow.

Discipline and standards are a form of love. They encourage folks to live up to the best, rather than descend to the lowest common denominator of fleshly mediocrity. It takes courageous leaders to impose a plumb line.

We need the plumb line of the Word of God.

God spoke divinity and life into humble clay and, in the same way, he took man's linguistic clods, caked in culture and history, breathing into them perfection and divine revelation. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16,

"All scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

Whatever "kingly" role you express, your plumb line can only be found in the living Word of the Lord.

We need the plumb line of holiness.

According to Hebrews 12:14, the absence of wholehearted purity creates blindness to the things of God, for,

"Without holiness no one will see the Lord."

True holiness is experienced in four essential encounters.

An encounter with ***living force.***

There is nothing dead about true holiness. It is a call to life - a call to the awesome. All the great works of God have been accomplished through men and women who had an encounter with this passionate revelation of powerful life force. Wild nature, transcendent worship, incarnate silence, living word and covenant fellowship can all renew us in such an encounter.

An encounter with ***separateness.***

The Hebrew word for "holy", *qadosh*, means "to set apart." We are called to be different. A chosen people, a holy nation, belonging to God.

"You are to distinguish between the holy and the common,"

declares the Levitical law. Leviticus 10:10. Many of us can feel continually condemned by such a law, painfully dogged by a persistent sense of a lack of holiness. Leviticus 10:10 has to be put aside Hebrews 10:10 which gives us the fantastic news that our holiness is already won for us through faith in the redemptive work and will of Jesus Christ.

"And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Rather than be continually worried about being polluted by the world, let us instead infect the world with our holiness. This is a call to the holy business leaders, politicians and nurses – the Zerubbabels with the plumb line, to make a better world.

An encounter with ***God-likeness.***

Holiness has a God reflecting quality. The Lord says,

"Be holy, for I am holy" Leviticus 11:44

He encourages us to enter into His character. God-likeness is *wholeness*, and God has a passion for completeness in every area of our lives. The idea of wholeness links very much to the word *"shalom."* As we saw earlier, this Jewish greeting was much more than a simple *"hello."* It was a desire for harmony - for right relations between men and creation.

The Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov, wrote the following:

"The power of divine holiness is a devouring flame that consumes all impurity; when it touches a man it purifies him and makes him holy; it brings him into harmony with the holiness of God-even into his likeness."

Another Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3:18 wrote:

"We all, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his image from one degree of glory to another."

An encounter with **dynamism**.

Holiness is on the move. There can be nothing "static" about the "ecstatic!" It gives us a sense of destiny and purpose. Holiness shows itself in action. It is the fuel of the Kingdom of God. Holiness is courageous in proclaiming truth and justice and working with others for good. John Wesley recognised that there,

"Was no holiness but social holiness."

Holiness is a group event to be lived out in the rigours of

the real world.

We need the plumb line of right relationships.

Paul appealed to the church in Ephesians 4:3 to,

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Zorubbabels, in every social arena, will need to put in a lot of effort to keep people functioning well together. Every business leader knows that when people are happy and together they work better. It doesn't just happen. It needs, like the effort of a patient gardener digging out the poisonous weeds, lots of care and nurture.

The writer, Tom Marshall, underlines four key areas that we must look out for in building strong relationships.

1. Love – the most enduring.
2. Trust – the most fragile.
3. Respect or honour – the most neglected.
4. Understanding or knowledge – the one that takes the longest.

When no one lifts a leadership plumb line to these four components, we sacrifice the living warmth of community for a set of cold, administrative rules with folks functioning as self contained units, doing their bit, yet sharing little life together.

When any of these components are deliberately flouted, we need courageous leaders willing to confront and exhort their people to the highest standards. Leaders themselves need to be accountable to their people and peer groups to maintain their own integrity in these areas as well.

Men will indeed "*rejoice*" when courageous leaders apply such kingly standards.

Having seen Zorubbabel in action, following on from the priestly intercession of Joshua, we can indeed agree together that,

"Two are better than one."

17 THE TWO WITNESSES

I hope you are beginning to pick up that the major theme of this book is the “power” of God. He chooses to express His power through people. We have looked at “embrace” – the power of intimacy. Create – power to transform. We still need to look at “destroy” – the power to preach and demolish the enemy’s work. Three powers, panga, panga, panga, in one eternal Spirit!

Having looked at both the “priest” and the “king” principles, we find them again, in all their eschatological beauty, in Revelation 11.

We began this journey together by seeing how God, in the book of Acts, promised power, *dunamis* to be witnesses to the world.

This mission of the Church throughout the ages comes into very sharp focus here with a strong emphasis on the importance of the bitter sweet Gospel message which must be proclaimed to the nations to save them from destruction.

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” Revelation 11:3

The repentant prophesying speaks of the Church’s humble ministry of engaging with the “*heavenly scroll*,” the prophetic mystery of the Gospel, which alone can bring men to turn from their sins and embrace salvation in Christ.

The previous chapter, Revelation 10, throws a dramatic, cosmic light on this message.

Sweet and sour.

"The World exists only by virtue of the breath of little children studying Torah."

These wonderful words are accredited to Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, or Reish Lakish, who lived around 200 AD. He had a colourful life and was known for his amazing strength and large body. When sleeping on a hard floor, he was heard to say,

"My fat is my cushion."

For such a great lover of the divine, he also had a very colourful life. He was once a bandit, skilled in the use of knives and swords, and even performed in a circus showing off feats of strength. However, his life knew a deep transformation, and this big, hard, bandit became a giant of a scholar from whose lips such sensitive inspirations came.

He understood that,

"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4

What do you live on?

Revelation 10, taking up the prophetic mantle of chapter 12 from the book of Daniel, emphasises the urgency of sharing the "mystery" of the Gospel.

"There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." Revelation 10:7

This "mystery," since the appearing of Christ can, according to Paul, be known to all.

"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ." Ephesians 3:6

This quest for unity and salvation in Christ motivated Paul and the apostles to preach the Gospel. They were filled with an urgency to build up the Body of Christ. The book of Revelation gives a kind of colourful, cosmic, sacramental picture of the Church being established victorious, in all its universal, Jew/Gentile beauty, with Christ as the glorious head.

It is said that the Jews had such a high view of the word of God and the Torah, that they would introduce the word to the pure mouths of young lips as soon as possible. The first book to be appreciated was "Leviticus." With all its blood and rituals, it is considered to be the book of purity. It is said that they would coat the scroll with honey to encourage the not yet literate young mouth to find succulence in the living word.

I think back to the aging prophet Ezekiel who, having received a mandate to "*speak my (God's) words*" to a rebellious people, saw a vision.

"Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe." Ezekiel 2:9

If someone is going to speak into the reality of this beautiful yet troubled, bitter-sweet world, he would indeed need to know tears as well as honey.

"Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted sweet as honey in my mouth." Ezekiel 3:3

I love the sweetness of friends, fellowship, celebration and word – written in all the three "books" of Bible, Humanity and Creation. I may still be just a child, licking the honey and learning to go deeper into the depths of life.

One man who went deep was the old "camel-kneed" apostle and best friend of Jesus, John. While a prisoner on the island of Patmos, he too received a tremendous vision of prophetic words to speak to the troubled waves of the world.

In our Revelation 10 passage, he saw a mighty angel, like the one the prophet Daniel saw, astride the earth and sea, a finger pointing heavenward and holding out a scroll. The triangular pose of the angelic messenger, linking heaven to earth, and earth to sea, is an awesome encouragement to seek the words which bring a fulfilling harmony to history and humanity.

"Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land. So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll."
Revelation 10:8

At which angel's feet do you sit?

"Take it."

That's the easy bit! It is always a less arduous option to have mere words and theories on our lips. They are not always costly to say. Our world is overwhelmed with useless words. The superficial tide of social media is

relentlessly flowing over the world, creating, as Walter Benjamin said:

"More wreckage at the feet of the angel of history."

"Eat it."

The hard bit! Can I own in my heart the words and wisdom I so glibly speak? Can I grow from a child to a man – yet keeping the essential, pure, sweet breath of a child?

John had a go:

"I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour." Revelation 10:10

I think the world needs a new generation of "prophets" willing to not just chew, but swallow. Those who, rejoicing in the pure, sweet taste of honey, are also willing to own the sour, sullied pain of the world. This painful identification with the world is the beginning of true intercession, a necessary requisite to be able to speak the Gospel to a world in turmoil. Without such sourness, our Gospel is in danger of becoming only superficial sweetness, another "self-help" psychological prop, rather than the gut wrenched cry to men to repent from sin and be saved from destruction.

May God raise up such a generation of witnesses who will speak to kings and nations, and keep the world spinning a little longer!

"You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." Revelation 10:11

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most

will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:12-14

Two olive trees.

A Gospel needs witnesses and we find our "dynamic duo" of Joshua and Zerubbabel again.

"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth." Revelation 11:4

They have the New Testament "power" of the apostles, rooted into the Old Testament prophets like Elijah and Moses who called down fire, shut up the sky, turned water to blood and struck the earth with plagues. They are the people of God throughout history, a Holy City built with apostolic foundations and prophetic gates, flinging wide the door of salvation through the Gospel.

This holistic Gospel expresses a salvation in Christ that encompasses both earthly and heavenly realities. It needs its priests and its kings, its prayers and doers, its preachers and cooks, pastors and plumbers, apostles and entrepreneurs, prophets and journalists, Joshuas and Zerubbabels - all eating a bitter sweet scroll, and all rolled into one beautiful diversity in Christ.

The Scriptures often mention a time when the people of God will be severely persecuted and seem to go under. Just as Christ endured his three days and nights in the tomb - and Jonah his three days in the belly of a great fish, we may also be called to carry a cross. This has always been the case for faithful Gospel preachers.

"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ

Jesus will be persecuted."

2 Timothy 3:12

There will be an increase of wickedness as the visible return of Jesus gets nearer, but let's already gird ourselves up for our present day ministry as "witnesses," owning our small three and a half days share of "crucifixion" with Christ. Our sufferings in extending God's Kingdom to the unreached peoples of the world have – in past future and present, a tremendous missionary impact.

"For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial." Revelation 11:9

Martyrs, the Greek root word for witnesses, have died daily for the Gospel throughout Church history, their words and lives "unburied" and marked indelibly on the fabric of eternity.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."
Tertullian

Every crucifixion anticipates a resurrection.

"But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on." Revelation 11:11-12

The witnesses embody the message of the Gospel - the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if

you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

They join Jew and Gentile by fulfilling Ezekiel's awe inspiring vision of the resurrection of a nation, and give us hope and promise for a worldwide revival being born from the dry bones of death.

Ezekiel was called to give a prophetic witness in an impossible, barren and hopeless situation.

"Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!'" Ezekiel 37:4

After 33 years of preaching the Gospel in France, I am well acquainted with the commission of speaking into a very dry context! Like Ezekiel, there has also been a bit of progress. Bones coming together in stronger unity. Sinews and muscle, bringing more prayer, and a covering of flesh giving more visibility for the Church in society.

Like all of us witnesses, I'm waiting – and hopefully being already launched, into a next phase of ministry.

It is time to,

"Prophecy to the breath!"

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" Ezekiel 37:9

May we know a new passion for souls. May a new creative cry for revival be on our lips. May we rise in Christ with healing flowing to the nations from His wings. May the gospel be preached to all nations - and then the end will come.

Whether we be a businessman or a pastor, an electrician or an intercessor, it is time to use two hands! Let's cast off the spiritual/secular dualistic world view and embrace both Joshua and Zerubbabel in a holistic Gospel thrust into the world.

Let us know the power to create - the power to innovate, empower and transform. Let us pray for a whole new generation to rise up out of the dry bones to become a mighty force for Christ in our days. Like the two witnesses who rose again to their feet, may there be a fresh breath blowing new life into the Body of Christ.

"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet - a vast army." Ezekiel 37:10

18 RE - THINK

"Christendom has done away with Christianity without being quite aware of it" Soren Kierkegaard

As we tie up this section on the innovative power that the Holy Spirit gives us, it may be worthwhile to spend some time in a creative "re think" concerning the heart of our mission to the world.

Ever since the cross was painted on a shield – held about one yard from the heart, Christendom, began to lose its true identity. Instead of being modelled on the humble servant Jesus, it became influenced by the political power of the Roman Emperor Constantine.

Money and power have never been far away from the cloistered chambers of religious leaders. Even today, when we survey the blighted history of the Church, we come to the sad conclusion that we didn't always do a particularly brilliant job. While many zealots are hunting down the "speck" of moral failings in others, it seems that we might do well to take the great plank out of our own eyes first. Weeping is a good way to dissolve planks!

God is the master of history and, as the famous parable says, has allowed the good seed to grow with the weeds. There have always been the bright periods when pioneer missionaries - often perceived and persecuted as heretics, opened their hearts to love, bringing the Word of God to the world.

It is said that the fastest growing church in the world today is made up of those who are leaving it. People want Jesus, but not the institutions or buildings that come with him.

I have more than thirty four years experience of missionary endeavour – a lifetime of service. I remember those inspiring moments when God called me to follow Him in "*triumphal procession*," empowering me to share something of the perfume of Christ amongst the nations. It has to rate as life's greatest privilege. However, I am still mindful of the pain that the word "*mission*" can conjure up for many. Let's hear what Mark Twain, writing at the dawn of the twentieth century, had to say:

"I bring you the stately matron named Christendom, returning bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonoured, from pirate raids in Kiaochow, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and towel, but hide the looking glass."

In the wake of an often chequered colonial past, Western mission needs to heed the new voices. Lesslie Newbigin has long been such a prophet and shares his "Open Secret" – the title of his book, with us.

"We are forced to do something that the Western churches have never had to do since the days of their own birth - to discover the form and substance of a missionary church in terms that are valid in a world that has rejected the power and influence of the Western nations. Missions will no longer work along the stream of expanding Western power. They have to learn to go against the stream."

Mission needs to negotiate new currents. The world is changing so quickly and the Church is faced with significant challenges which demand a radical, inspired and repentant response.

Listen to what Roman Catholic theologian José Camblin has to say in his work, "The Holy Spirit and Liberation."

"There has never, since the origins of Christianity, been such a radical change in the world as the one that is now taking place. For the church, this transformation is more radical than the transition from Israel to the Gentiles, more important than the establishment of the institutional church under Constantine or the Protestant Reformation: the present transformation forces it to a more radical reappraisal of itself and challenges many more aspects of it than have been challenged hitherto."

How will we face up to the challenge? We could avoid the difficult questions by retreating into self centred, hedonistic spirituality and just, like the good old British films of the past, "Carry on Singing." Another approach might be to batten up the hatches, get into defensive mode, and preserve the dwindling flock with endless Bible study.

We might also be inspired to create a new context. It is time to think and do differently.

Building on the radical voice of Michael Frost's teaching, let me offer three ways of renewing our intelligence.

1. It is time to think differently about God

For many, God is "up there," hidden away in distant omnipotence. He seems to be a static God, carved into the rocks and doctrines of time, erecting megalithic churches which need their roofs repairing.

There is nothing passive about God! He is ever on the move, breathing his creative life over chaotic waters and into human clay. He sent out the Lamb that was in His

heart, sent passion and purpose into the world at Pentecost and sends us, his wounded, vulnerable Church, into the dung and dough of this world.

"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:21-22

The very nature of God is to send. He is constantly creating and innovating committed, compassionate responses to a world in need. A key attribute of God is mission.

Theologians put it another way. In 1934, Karl Hartenstein, a German missiologist, coined the phrase "*Missio Dei*" - Latin for "*Mission of God*," in response to Karl Barth and his emphasis on "*Actio Dei*" - "*The Action of God*."

According to David J. Bosch:

"Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God."

Jurgen Moltmann says:

"It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."

Mission must be understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It should be put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. Church planting and saving souls – necessary as they are, cannot sustain the weight of the missionary mandate. Only God's nature, expressed in triune love and action, can carry the true responsibility and thrust of mission.

The classical doctrine on the *Missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit is expanded to include yet another movement - the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.

Let us encounter the *Missio Dei* in a new wave of intimacy, allowing fresh expressions of ministry to emerge.

Jesus said that he could do nothing without the Father.

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." John 5:19

Jesus worked by revelation rather than perspiration! No redundant, ambitious energy here. He took the time to see, and worked out of divine relationship with the Father. There was no forced tension or difficulty. Divine flowed into Divine.

Intimacy with the Father is the foundation for our collaboration with the *Missio Dei*.

There is a danger that the marvellous revelation of God's Fatherhood may be perverted into some introspective, Freudian passivity. This is so wrong!

We have boxed the Father into a psychological, pastorally weighted paradigm instead of releasing Him into His transformational, missional identity.

Look again at the intimate words of Jesus in Chapter 5 of John, and see what other word is associated with the revelation of "*Father*."

*"He who does not honour the Son does not honour the **Father, who sent** him."*

*"Whoever hears my word and believes **him who sent** me."*

*"I seek not to please myself but **him who sent** me."*

*"For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the **Father has sent** me."*

*"And the **Father who sent** me has himself testified concerning me."*

You cannot separate the Father from his "sending!"

Jesus is totally impregnated with the notion and character of a missionary Father. The closer you get to such a Father, the more "sent" you become. The intimate revelation of the Father heart of God is not meant to be limited to your personal inner healing. It must spread like a magnificent tree for the "healing of the nations."

So think differently and get sent!

"The primary purpose of the "missions ecclesiae" can therefore not simply be the planting of churches or the saving of souls; rather, it has to be service to the missio dei, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. In its mission the Church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil. Thus, in its missionary activity, the church encounters a humanity and a world in which God's

salvation has been operative secretly, through the Spirit."
Vatican 11 Gaudium et Spes 26

2. It is time to think differently about the Church

Let us remind ourselves that:

"The church is not a building! It is a collection of relationships propelled out into the cultural context the Holy Spirit has prepared for us." Michael Frost

Have you discovered the cultural context that the Holy Spirit is wanting you to impregnate with the perfume of Christ? Church is not just a place to go on Sunday, but a space to transform every day. Church must become a verb rather than a noun. The "*High Church*" must become "*I church!*"

Many know that the Greek word the bible uses for church is "*ekklesia*" – "called out ones" or "gathered ones."

I sometimes wonder what Jesus was thinking about when he said in Matthew 16:18:

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

He links church – a good thing, with hellish gates – a bad thing. Now Jesus, with his Jewish background, would have known all about gates. It was the place of authority where the wise would sit and judge for the benefit of their community. When Jesus later talks about "*keys*," – usually used for opening gates, he is continuing the parallel of church – a good gate, versus the bad gate of the Satanic Kingdom.

He would have known how Moses put blood on the

doorposts to protect from the destroying angel. He would have cherished the memory of Nehemiah, restoring the glory of Jerusalem by repairing the gates that were burnt with fire.

Perhaps he may have been thinking of the wife of value whose husband was,

"Respected at the city gate where he takes his seat among the elders of the land." Proverbs 31:23

Or thinking of the wonderful blessing Rebekah's family prayed over the future bride:

"Our sister, may you increase to thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies." Genesis 24:60

Where is your *"gate?"*

Discover the place of authority where the Lord wants you to serve with wisdom and love. It may be in the family or in society – business, education or government. Where is your *"agora - marketplace?"*

We need to review the *"attractional"* paradigm of church which sees everything drawn into it, and move to a more *"incarnational"* one which sees us sitting as servants within our society.

Can we begin to think about church as the "called out" wise ones, given as God's gift to our villages, towns and neighbourhoods – salt and light, bringing protection and restoration within the heart of our communities?

3. It is time to make mission the organisational principle of Church

From a study of Acts 2:42-47, most people would conclude that there are four basic functions of Church.

Worship, Fellowship, Teaching and Mission.

Over the years, it seems that worship has emerged as the dominant or organisational principle of most churches. There are many ways to worship and share the sacrament, but essentially people go to a building to take communion and share in whatever liturgy their community offers – from strumming a guitar to Gregorian chants. We would usually enjoy *"something from the Word,"* as a minister shares his thoughts with us all, followed by a time of fellowship together. In the midst of all of that, we might feel a kind of guilty numbness about all those not availing of such means of grace, those who will never *"come to church."* From time to time, we may be inspired to call in a guest speaker and engage in an *"outreach programme"* which mobilizes the more noble amongst us.

While asking you to forgive my simplistic generalisations, can I also assure you that I think very highly of all these functions and do not want to dismiss any. However, I'm making a plea for mission to become the organising principle and not just the last resort.

Once people grasp a clear, missional goal together, the fellowship and teaching get done "on the job." Instead of the teaching being like theoretical school homework, it becomes the vital information for getting the job done. Instead of forced fellowship over a polite *"How are you?"* we become a *"Band of Brothers"* on a mission.

The worship must travel beyond the building - I still think we need a gathering point for robust corporate celebration, incarnating into the living sacrifice of lives laid down in service in the midst of a community. Such validation of worship engenders a deeper reality at the communion table – wherever that be manifested.

I'll share a few quotations to help underpin the paradigm of mission as the organisational principle of church.

"The Church, wherever it is, is not only Christ's witness to its own people and nation, but also the home base for a mission to the ends of the earth...I think that the deepest motive for mission is simply the desire to be with Jesus where he is, on the frontier between the reign of God and the usurped dominion of the devil." Lesslie Newbigin, A Word in Season.

"The Church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of its mission." Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

Mission may take us to the ends of the earth, to an unreached tribe in northern India, but it may also take us into the world of business, entertainment or sport.

As well as encouraging you, like Newbiggin, to have a deeper *"desire to be with Jesus where he is,"* let me remind you of the quotation from the matured wisdom of Kenneth Scott Latourette, which we read in our earlier chapter concerning "Business as Mission. He traces the role of the *"ordinary man and woman"* in the greatest adventure life has to offer – sharing the life of Jesus with the world! He mentions how *"Christian merchants, tradesmen,"* and persecuted Christians were often the most vital agents of bringing salvation and transformation to society.

Be you a hard working man, a traveller, a merchant, a tradesman, a missionary or a pastor, there's a world to win and such a world awaits your innovation.

Create, create, create.

Panga Wenam!

19 DESTROY – THE POWER TO PREACH

*"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."* Romans 1:16

*"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power** of God."* 1 Corinthians 1:18

*"The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy** the devil's work."* I John 3:8

I can still remember sitting excitedly in the cinema watching the first "Terminator" film. What a stroke of genius to play a muscle bound Schwarzenegger as a destroying robot. Do you remember the final scene? The heroine is running away from the pursuing cyborg killer. It seems that she cannot escape its grasping hand - she falls, and the metallic fingers, reaching out from the inside of a huge metal press, begin to squeeze her throat. Summoning up her last resources of resolve and energy, our heroine manages to stretch out and push a big red button which activates the metal pressing machine. A huge weight falls down on the head of the evil cyborg, crushing it completely. Slowly but surely, the callous red glow of hideous life dies down in the malicious eye of the monster. The murderous grip loosens and falls, the heroine finds her breath and exclaims victoriously:

"You're terminated!"

I'm tempted to make these words the title of this chapter, as they sum up the passion and power we have to destroy the devil's work through the proclamation of the Gospel. We may not be fighting against the fantasy of an "evil cyborg," but we are engaged in a very real war with evil.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."
Ephesians 6:10-12

If we neglect this spiritual warfare, our efforts to bring in God's Kingdom will be throttled. The embrace of intimacy, the innovation to create, must be linked to the aggressive power to preach God's truth and destroy the lies of Satan.

The "*Hesed*" and "*Shalom*" are awaiting another key word to make their victorious refrain complete.

So, right at the beginning of our chapter on the power to preach, I'm going to reveal to you our final word.

"Terminated!"

Well, not exactly.

Having giving you a couple of Biblical gems from the Hebrew Old Testament, I better re-translate our word into New Testament Greek to give it a bit more authority and clout!

"Katargeo" - καταργέω. To render entirely useless – to destroy!

It can also mean:

To abolish, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away, make of no effect, fail, loose, bring to nought, put away, vanish away, make void.

Let me add, "*terminate*" to the list so that you can go beyond the dictionary and dream of destroying evil cyborgs!

It comes from the two words "*kata*" and "*argos*". *Argos* is used in the parable of the eleventh hour workers when the master asks them:

"Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing? (argos)" Matthew 20:6

It is also used by Jesus when he talks about being judged by our idle words.

"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless (argos) word they have spoken." Matthew 12:36

Our battle is so often against the "*argos logos*" – empty, idle, words!

We need to look into our hearts and store up the "*good (agathos) treasure*" so that we can speak out the useful words, the "*agathos logos*."

"*Katargeo*" has been one of those key "*agathos logos*" for me over the years as I have tried to frame a practical Kingdom theology for my ministry. It has taken me beyond passive knowledge of the Gospel to a living understanding of its power to destroy the enemy's work and liberate the captives.

There are basically three ways of framing the notion of the Kingdom of God – the "*Kingdom*" being the place where our King Jesus reigns and exercises his loving, righteous authority.

The first sees this reign as being somewhere in the future. Today's world is under the power of the evil one who will grow in power until the second coming of our Lord who will overpower him and set up His Kingdom.

There are obviously key Biblical strengths and insights which confirm this futuristic vision of the Kingdom.

Also, experience tells us that there is still so much suffering and evil in the world today. Surely heaven is a future hope rather than a present reality?

This view can make us hopeful, but it can also make us "*passively pessimistic!*"

Rather than being a conquering church, we may choose to be a "*little flock*," hiding away from the pollution and rigours of the world, quietly awaiting the Lord's return. The world will get worse and worse, and we must flee the world trying to conserve the faith. A less generous way of putting this might be to see such a church as being like a visit to the hospital. We sit anxiously in the waiting room, dreaming to be called. The time drags so we read a few verses and sing a few songs to keep ourselves amused until our number comes up! This "*waiting room*" paradigm is obviously an unfair parody of some Godly expressions of Church – but may it be a gentle warning of the extremes that the future framing of the Kingdom might bring us to.

Many of the Central African churches I have worked with have inherited such a "*future framed*" view of the Kingdom. Many are distanced from the tragic realities of the society they live in. They have little impact in transforming their present situation which locks them into ever increasing poverty, while they sing every Sunday of a heavenly city paved with gold. It is a tragic, "*divine escapism*," preventing them from engaging with the misery and corruption of their daily routine. Church is reduced to a ritual, a preparation for heaven. Many of the Christians I have met are encouraged not to vote, build businesses or get politically involved as all these things are considered to be "*worldly*."

Such expressions of Church risk becoming what Karl Marx so aptly called,

"*The opium of the people.*"

I am conscious that I might be creating an unfair caricature that doesn't match with the sometimes very complex social situations on the ground. I am aware of the powerful attraction that a promise of future hope, comfort and prosperity brings to countries that lie in the grip of war and extreme poverty. Indeed, it would be wrong of me to criticise or belittle anyone's future hope. So many, with faithful eyes fixed on heaven, pray:

"May your Kingdom come."

Where? Only in a future heaven?

"On earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

The Kingdom of God must have some expression *"on earth."*

In reaction to the *"passively pessimistic"* and in an attempt to bring a tangible answer to the above prayer, other churches have adopted a *"Kingdom now"* framework. This sees the reign of Christ as being a very present and experienced reality. It emphasises the "now" authority of Christ to cast out demons, heal all sickness and bring worldly prosperity.

Again, there are many Biblical verses that can be cited - including the whole concept of "Shalom" in the Old Testament, to emphasise this now quality of the Kingdom. It has the credit of bring a faith challenge to the people of God who see themselves as dynamic agents of change rather than mere victims of chance. Hold on to the promise, stake your claim in the Kingdom and own it now!

This view can make us bold, and more optimistic, but it can also make us into *"tyrannical triumphalists."*

God has to turn up and work wonders on our terms!

It is almost as if Satan were offering the Church the same "*temple temptation*" – Matthew 4:5-7, in order to get the automatic miracle! In a programmed faith formula, God is re-made in our own capitalistic image and "*put to the test.*" He has to cough up the dollars, or the healing miracle in answer to our ritual. This is more like Baal worship or Shamanism than genuine Christianity. God is reduced to some cosmic vending machine where we insert our pennies, penance and proclamation in order to get "*our miracle*" in return.

Such a blindly victorious theology has the danger of distancing us from the truth of the human condition. Conversations in such churches veer away from failure and pain. There is an unwritten law, obliging everyone to be positive and prosperous. We are condemned to be the "*happy clappy,*" living a lie and unable to cope with the reality of life's failures. I'm amazed that the members of so many rich American churches can embrace the prosperity Gospel while their members - and nation, carry huge amounts of debt.

In the more extreme, "*tyrannically triumphalistic*" churches, I have witnessed the crazy, sad, hopes of people praying for a literal resurrection at a funeral ceremony. I have witnessed the mother of a wonderful teenage, Down's syndrome child, manipulated into believing that her "flawed" offspring might be suddenly "healed" and transformed into someone else! The African widow puts her last coins into the collection, galvanized with the promise of receiving a "*hundredfold*" in return. The next day, she wakes up poor.

When failure comes, it is often labelled as the fruit of a person's lack of faith, holiness, giving or prayer, adding an even greater burden of condemnation than that of the failure itself. Obviously, sins do have power to restrict our access to God, but on the whole, I find God "*a friend of sinners,*" able to understand and forgive our weakness, never slow to comfort and willing to answer our prayers.

Constant condemnation for unbelief and sinfulness creates a destructive legalistic spirit, sowing fear and preventing the proper growth of the flock. Such a church has missed out seriously on the intimacy of Christ. They have put all their energy and focus on receiving the gift rather than on loving the Giver.

Such "*triumphalistic tyranny*" can manufacture huge churches and events but, like the seed on rocky ground, it has no root. Once the hard realities of life begin to break in, the plant withers quickly. The arrow rises rapidly into the sky, but plunges swiftly to earth. What was promised as the gold of *faith* ends up being only the unrefined tin of *presumption*. As a pastor, I have sometimes gathered up such "*fallen arrows*" - people totally disillusioned and abused with superficial promises which never matched their personal reality with Christ. They were mere babies, dressed before their time in the gaudy garments of prosperity which they inevitably soiled. Such folks need to get re-programmed in intimacy with Jesus and reconnected with credible instruction from the Word of God.

There must be a better way than swinging from passive pessimism to tyrannical triumphalism - from a future hope to an imposed present?

Over many years of trying to find an appropriate framework for the Gospel message, I have tried to promote and build the following context which discards the unhelpful factors of the above definitions while retaining their strengths. The Gospel functions in a context of **both** future hope and present experience.

It needs the apparent paradox of the "*now, not yet*" - a Kingdom coming, but also being done. The Bible constantly speaks of two ages - "*aions*" in the original Greek. Ephesians 1:21, speaks of the power of Christ's resurrection and His authority to reign,

"Not only in the present age but also in the one to come."

He reigns in the present age, and the future. When Christ, in His perfect human stature, walked the earth he was able to say,

"The Kingdom of God is near!"

He proved it by exerting His Kingly power in healing the sick and casting out demons. He even endowed his disciples with power to do the same, encouraging them with such truths as,

"The Kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21

Does that mean that, like Christ, and now filled with the Holy Spirit we can always see the same dramatic deliverances and healings as Christ saw? Or, as some of the more triumphalistic among us might add, we *"will do even greater things."* John 14:12

Well yes, and no. You need the *"no"* to keep you sane!

Arguably, the greatest thing that Christ did was his *"kenosis."* Philippians 2:7-11 speaks of the very God-Head, *"making himself nothing"* (literally emptying himself – keno in the original Greek, κενόω) taking on human flesh, becoming a servant and humbling himself to death on a cross. Because he went so low, God exalted Him to the highest place and,

"Gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Such a sinless *"emptying"* of self has paved the way for the authority of the Kingdom. In Christ we reign. However, we cannot reign in the same perfection as Christ in this present age, clogged with our own sin and

with limited personal kenosis. Our "*greater works*" are not those of character or anointing but more probably our ability to add numbers to the church - multiplying "*miracles*" through history and sharing in a greater accumulation of collective culture and technical knowledge.

As we share in the "*kenosis*" of Christ, as we grow by grace in character, faith and anointing, we can also share in the authority of Christ's Kingship and "destroy" the works of the enemy. We can see the sick healed, the dead raised and the demons cast out. Yes we can, but not in "*triumphalistic tyranny*."

We must accept our limits in this present age where the power of Satan, a defeated yet ever present enemy, still reigns over hearts, minds and structures. We must pursue our personal "*kenosis*," humbly accepting the defeats which lead us to greater intercession, and yet persevering in the prevailing victory of the Kingdom. We know that "*it is finished*" and that Christ has total victory. We taste, hope and live that victory perfectly in the heavenly future, yet strive to see such a future become our now experience. We long to be those,

"Who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age." Hebrews 6:5

We want some of the "*future now!*"

We will not get perfection so let us stay humble, yet faithful. We must become "*optimistic realists*," accepting our present limitations, yet passionately seeking and expecting the Kingdom of Christ to manifest as we preach and live His Gospel.

It is this context of "*optimistic realism*" that I want to present to you three key, *katargeo* elements of the Gospel.

20 THE THREE KATARGEOS

In any war there are weapons. In the spiritual war that we fight each day we must not be ignorant of the *"devil's schemes."*

We have a glorious Gospel to proclaim in order to destroy – katargeo, the enemy's power. Let us look at three powerful *katargeos* that the New Testament offers to us. In the context of *"optimistic realism"* we press forward in power.

The power to overcome death

*"This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed (katargeo) death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."* 2 Timothy 1:10

Death is all around us. The evening news is full of wars, accidents, diseases and natural disasters which daily proclaim the seeming omnipotence and finality of death. Everyone it seems must bow at the dark altar of death.

One man, however, overcame death - Jesus Christ. On the third day he rose up from the grave, breaking free from death's cruel clutches and opening up a way of victory for all who would believe in him via the Gospel message. He broke the ancient curse inherited from the distant garden by,

"Destroying all dominion, authority and power. 'The last enemy to be destroyed (katargeo) is death. 'For he has put everything under his feet.'" 1 Corinthians 15:24,26

We no longer live under death's tyrannical reign, and we have this happy message to share with those around us. Remember this good news when we encourage the weak and pray for the sick and dying.

Jesus demonstrated this power in his ministry when he often broke the yoke of pain and death.

In Mark 5:21-43, Jesus showed his authority by healing the 12 years of a devastated past and resurrecting the future of a twelve year old girl. He stepped from eternity into our time and in a single day, a happy few hours, he destroyed the work of Satan, restoring health and life.

He refused to accept the invincibility of death. He ignored the ultimate finality of the death sentence, living in his own paradigm of life.

"Your daughter is dead, " they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

He found people *"crying and wailing loudly,"* but he refused to accept the substance of death. Death was only a passing, unsubstantial thing to the *"author of life."*

"Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep."

May the experience of Christ's vibrant life be our one true reality, may we shun the lying propaganda of this world's passing shadow. May we allow Christ to take our hands every day and lift us into life everlasting.

"Talitha kum!" Little girl, I say to you, get up!"

You may risk being laughed at, but persevere in developing a *"life perspective"* in all you say and do. Feed on the Gospel, proclaim the names of the glorious sisters of life - Anastasia and Zoe. These names are the Greek for resurrection and life! Perhaps I'm running ahead in my *"optimism."* Perhaps I need to get my feet back on the ground with a bit more *"realism?"* The ultimate reality is that we will all die someday.

And if you remain ill and risk dying? What then?

Well, in all circumstances, always hold on to the promises of life. If death still turns up, hold on to the "gain" which Paul proclaims.

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21

May we be spurred on to proclaim this wonderful Gospel message.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2
"Katargeo Death!"

The power to overcome the devil

*"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy (katargeo) him who holds the power of death – that is the devil** – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* Hebrews 2:14-15

We are born for battle in this life. Whether you like it or not, believe it or not, you have an enemy!

There is a future, total destroying of Satan:

"And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Revelation 20:10

But, as the Hebrews' verse states, that future is also an imposed "now" by the finished work of Christ on the cross and the inspired preaching of the Gospel.

The devil hates life and wholeness, wanting to keep humanity imprisoned in mediocrity and fear. His major weapon is indeed fear. Just for a moment, take a few minutes of quiet thought to answer this question.

"What would you do with your life if you had no fear?"

No fear of failure or pain. No fear of people or privation.

It would be wonderful to hear the answers. Is this place of "no fear" just a fantasy or can we really attain that authority that frees us from being slaves to our phobias? The Gospel destroys the author of fear. When Jesus took on flesh and became a man on a mission to destroy the devil, he opened up a way of freedom for all of us. So perhaps your "fear free fantasy" might just become a reality some day?

We are all on that discipleship road that leads us from fear to faith. Meditate deeply on the above verses from Hebrews so that you may hear a new message.

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."
Romans 10:17

Before Joshua and the Israelites could conquer the promise land, the Lord repeatedly encouraged them with the words:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

He encouraged them to meditate on the word of God in order to find such bravery.

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Joshua 1:8

If we want to enter into the land of our own promises we need to be saturated with the overcoming faith that comes from reading the truth of God's word and putting it into practise.

In the Gospel accounts, one poor father is confronted with the spectacle of his demonised son destructively throwing himself into fire and water. He tries hard and mobilises other key men of God to pray,

"But they could not heal him." Matthew 17:16

Fear and its close cousin unbelief strengthen their merciless grip on this man's soul. He comes to Jesus, the almighty Son of God, and bleats out a broken, enslaved request.

"If you can do anything? "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Mark 9:23

Wow! What an incredible challenge to move to faith – a challenge which most of us, bruised by life's fears and failures, find hard to rise too. I love the *"optimistic realism"* of the father's reply as he emerges from unbelieving fear to faith.

I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!" Mark 9:24

Yes Lord, we believe you have destroyed the devil, fulfilling the ancient prophesy of the garden by *"crushing his head"* at Calvary - Genesis 3:15. Help us now to overcome the fears that rise from the fruit of our negative experiences and the unbelieving words that crowd in on our hearts.

Fear fabricates flimsy religious fig leaves of ritual and spineless platitudes when confronted with the naked face of evil.

Faith, on the other hand, embraces the shed blood of the Lamb which clothes us in holy boldness, enabling us to confront and overcome adversity.

Be known in hell!

Demons and all occult activity bring Christians into fear and denial. Never fear demons – they feed on it. There is an exciting story in the book of Acts which speaks of seven ambulant exorcists trying to make themselves a ministry by copying the “formulas” of the Apostles. They had the words, but not the essential Christian character, and were beaten and stripped by the demonised man they were trying to help. There is an interesting quote from one of the demons in the story!

"Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"
Acts 19:15

The demons knew all about Paul – and feared him! But who am I? Who are you? You are the one who believes in the same Jesus as Paul, filled with the same Holy Spirit and who reads the same faith inspiring words. You possess even more of God's word, as the entire New Testament – added to the foundation of the Old Testament, is available to us today. We can even proclaim Hebrews 2:14-15!

Be bold and live in freedom from fear.

"Katargeo Satan!"

The power to overcome sin

*"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that **the body of sin might be done away with (katargeo)**, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."*
Romans 6:6

Sin is a nice old fashioned word.

Like many key words, it has lost a lot of its impact through ritualistic repetition and changes in culture. The original Greek word is "*hamartia*," which means "*to miss the mark.*"

Sin makes us miss the goal of life, preventing us from fulfilling the glorious, eternal destiny that God has planned for each of our lives. Sin separates us from God and enslaves us to unfulfilling mediocrity.

The Bible teaches us, in Romans 6:23, that the only reward that sin can give us is death.

"For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our lord."

The French priest, Michael Quoist, writes a moving poem about his own struggle with sin.

*"I have fallen, Lord,
Once more.
I can't go on, I'll never succeed.
I am ashamed, I don't dare look at you.
And yet I struggled, Lord, for I knew you were right near
me, bending over me, watching.*

*But temptation blew like a hurricane,
And instead of looking at you I turned my head away,
I stepped aside
While you stood, silent and sorrowful,
Like the spurned fiancé who sees his loved one carried off
by his rival.*

*When the wind died down as suddenly as it had arisen,
When the lightning ceased after proudly streaking the
darkness,
All of a sudden I found myself alone, ashamed, disgusted,
with my sin in my hands.*

*This sin that I selected the way a customer makes his purchase,
This sin that I have paid for and cannot return, for the store-keeper is no longer there,
This tasteless sin,
This odourless sin,
This sin that sickens me,
That I have wanted but want no more,
That I have imagined, sought, played with, fondled, for a long time;
That I have finally embraced while turning coldly away from you,
My arms outstretched, my eyes and heart irresistibly drawn;
This sin that I have grasped and consumed with gluttony,
It's mine now, but it possesses me as the spider web holds captive the fly.*

*It is mine,
It sticks to me,
It flows in my veins,
It fills my heart.
It has slipped in everywhere, as darkness slips into the forest at dusk
And fills all the patches of light.*

*I can't get rid of it.
I run from it, like the master of an unwanted and mangy dog, but it catches up with me, and rubs joyfully against my legs.*

Everyone must notice it.

*I'm so ashamed that I feel like crawling to avoid being seen,
I'm ashamed of being seen by my friends,
I'm ashamed of being seen by you, Lord,
For you loved me, and I forgot you.
I forgot you because I was thinking of myself
And one can't think of several persons at once.*

One must choose, and I chose.

*And your voice,
And your look
And your love hurt me.
They weigh me down
They weigh me down more than my sin.*

*Lord, don't look at me like that,
For I am naked,
I am dirty,
I am down,
Shattered,
With no strength left.
I dare make no more promises,
I can only lie bowed before you.*

The Father's Response

*Come, son, look up.
Isn't it mainly your vanity that is wounded?
If you loved me, you would grieve, but you would trust.
Do you think that there's a limit to God's love?
Do you think that for a moment I stopped loving you?
But you still rely on yourself, son. You must rely only on me.*

*Ask my pardon
And get up quickly.
You see, it's not falling that is the worst,
But staying on the ground."*

Christ has made it possible for us not to "stay on the ground," by doing away with sin. We have a wonderful message of freedom and forgiveness to proclaim in the Gospel. Sin weighs so heavy on man. In Christ, the burden is lifted so that the light of happiness can once more break into mankind's heart.

Many years ago, while working through a personal season of prayer, I received an inner vision. It was a very clear impression. I could see two people playing a card game. One of the characters was very malevolent and held many cards in his hand. I believed him to represent the devil. All the cards he was holding were the sins of my life – past and very present. He was laying them down before the other player, one after the other, with vindictive triumph. He seemed unstoppably victorious, holding all the *"aces of accusation."*

It slowly dawned on me that his opponent was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. They were playing for my soul. I couldn't see the face of the character who was representing Jesus, but I could just see his gentle hand, holding one humble little card.

"Oh no!" I thought.

"What good can one little card do against all the other cards laid down?"

I looked at the little card in Jesus' grip. It was white and well used with a blood-stained heart at the centre.

Suddenly, Jesus stood up and it was like somebody had opened a window, letting in fresh air and light. He raised the card high and sent it crashing down in windswept victory, scattering all the other cards off the table.

"It is finished!" he cried.

Grace had triumphed!

I could feel the power in the gesture of laying down the card. Something inside seemed to say.

"Do you know what that little card was in the Saviour's hand?"

I strained by inner ear in expectation of the answer:

*"It was **the grace card**. Never forget to play the "grace card" in your life."*

Satan must be so frustrated playing cards with Jesus! He always loses – his accusations always trumped by the grace card.

"But where sin increased, grace increased all the more."
Romans 5:20

I have never forgotten the impact of that divine gesture of laying down the grace card. I often do the gesture to my wife in the morning if she is looking a bit grumpy.

It works when I'm driving too. Instead of making the usual rude signs when I'm angry, I simply lift my hand high and signal the laying down of a card to my fellow drivers – they may not always get the interpretation!

It is much more than a cheap gesture. It reminds me of that ultimate grace card that was lifted up on the cross.

"Now the prince of this world will be driven out." John 12:31

The grace that prayed,

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," Luke 23:34

The grace that paid the full price for the penalty of sin.

"It is finished." John 19:30

Playing the "grace card" brings much happiness to our lives.

"Happy (or blessed) is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Happy is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit." Psalm 32:1-2

Sin is the gateway that invites death and Satan into our lives. All three form a kind of demonic trinity that enslaves humanity.

I remember the story I once heard of a man who was given a revelation of Christ's crucifixion. He could see a cross and a broken man upon it. As his gaze drew nearer, he approached the face. Expecting to see the bearded image of Christ, he was suddenly shocked at seeing his own face staring back at him from the cross. He experienced a powerful revelation that his *"old sinful self"* had - being intimately entwined with Christ on the cross, been put to death, destroyed and done away with.

The apostle Paul, blinded by revelation on the Damascus road, carried with him a powerful awareness of his co-crucifixion with Christ throughout his ministry.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

And what about yourself? Why not take hold of the powerful words from Colossians 3:3:

"For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

An awareness of our personal dying - the dying of our sinful nature on the cross, is a key revelation to lead us on the path of victory in our fight against sin. As Christ lifted up the communion cup filled with the blood of the new covenant, and as we drink deep in faith, we find forgiveness and freedom.

"Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:27

"Katargeo Sin!"

So here we have our three essential "katargeos." Katargeo death, katargeo Satan, and katargeo sin!

With these three Biblical, Kingdom truths nestling like arrows in our quiver, I need to give you our third prophetic action.

For about twenty years, I have been involved in establishing churches amongst the unreached Pygmy tribes of Central African Republic. It is wonderful to spend time living with them and sharing in their natural environment of the Equatorial forest. I have sometimes joined them on their hunts when they go looking for animals armed with their bows and arrows.

Come and join me on a hunt – not for animals, but for the works of Satan!

Your "bow" is your heart and mouth:

"If you confess with your mouth...and believe in your heart." Romans 10:9

Your three arrows are the above "destruction" verses from 2 Timothy, Hebrews and Romans.

You need to be ready to shout. Ever since the taking of Jericho, Kingdom victories have often been about raising a clamour, a shout of victory. In a world of negative voices, may we find the shout of the Kingdom in our midst.

"No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel."

*The Lord their God is with them; **the shout of the King** is among them.*" Numbers 23:21

Make the mime of pulling back an arrow on a bow. Hold it for 3 seconds and then release with the loud cry,

"Katargeo Death!"

Do the same again, hold for three seconds and cry,

"Katargeo Satan!"

Do the same again, but this time point the arrow to your own heart rather than outwards. Hold for three seconds and cry,

"Katargeo Sin!"

Do this triple cycle three times in a powerful proclamation of the Gospel's power to destroy the works of the evil one.

21 PLAYING THE GRACE CARD

Jesus entered into the "*hospitality*" culture of his time, making the most of long hours of relationship building around a meal. Luke 7:36-50 describes one such gastronomic teaching session.

Jesus is "*reclining at the table*" – no quick self-service here, in Simon the Pharisee's house. The cold eyes of the religious establishment are upon him, watching his every move to see if it conforms to the Law. Everything seems nicely "*kosher*" until, like the proverbial fly in the soup, a woman appears in this man's world.

And not just an ordinary woman – a notorious harlot,

"Who had lived a sinful life in that town."

All the religious alarm bells start to ring. The society of pure separation has been invaded by an "*unclean*" incarnation. One can almost hear the bouncers at the door coming to chuck her out!

Jesus doesn't choose his religious friend's strategy of exclusion. Instead, he receives the woman and offers her true intimacy.

Her lips kiss his feet. Think about that for a minute. Her tears fall on his flesh and her long hair dries divine toes. The honest, manly purity of Christ heals years of fleshly abuse by men, redeems physicality and elevates heartfelt love above legalistic dogma.

The generously poured out perfume reminds us of the holy temple sacrifices, a fitting epiphany, illustrating the inclusiveness that Jesus brought to the world via his living temple - his intimate, physical body.

His body is still alive and well today, reclining where he is invited and receiving, as a friend, the humble sinners who choose to kneel at his feet.

The Pharisees were not happy and were blind to his fulfilling of their law with sacrificial love. Their *"separation mentality"* couldn't handle the *"touch"* – the living incarnation of God in skin.

"If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is – that she is a sinner."

Jesus takes the opportunity to teach Simon a lesson.

With our present Capitalist model of society in crisis, a parable about lending money and forgiving debt seems quite appropriate. Two men owe money. One owes about 3,000 euros and the other 300,000 euros – a denarius was worth about a day's wages. Both men have their debts cancelled. Which of the two men will love the money lender the most? Simon answers correctly saying the,

"One who had the bigger debt cancelled."

How big is your own debt?

Thinking back to another story about seeing the speck of dust in our brother's eye but being blind to the enormous plank in our own, we seem to have a tendency to not see our own faults. Religious blindness is perhaps the worst kind. Religion can invite Jesus into the house, but he often gets a less than warm welcome by those who seem to need little forgiveness.

No genuine "water" of repentance is poured on his feet, no "kiss" of grateful, intimate relationship, no "perfume" of genuine prayer and worship.

The problem for Simon was that he had forgotten how big his debt really was.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
Romans 3:23

If I had been the only person in the world, Jesus would still have had to die the same painful death to pay the price for my sin. We have all been forgiven much.

We all have a big debt!

This is actually quite good news because,

"He who has been forgiven little loves little."

Don't fall into the temptation of loving little. May you experience a fresh revelation of grace as you consider the "painful power" which overcame sin. Meditate on all that Christ has paid for you on the cross. Let us be inspired towards a more passionate, intimate celebration of our love for him.

Refuse to believe the lie that you are a pretty decent sort of person who's trying, day by day, to be a little better. The truth is,

"You couldn't be worse!"

We all need Christ to pay our 300,000 euros.

Accept the free gift of a perfect sacrifice that's does indeed make you righteous.

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21

May you find joy and hope. May you recline at Jesus' feet, enjoying fellowship with him and overhearing his voice saying:

"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

22 DANCING WITH RONALDO

As I said in the last chapter, I have spent a lot of time in Africa. In April 2012 I lived a challenging and stimulating couple of weeks in the heart of the equatorial forest living with the Pygmy peoples of Central African Republic. I had the personal challenge of proclaiming the Gospel in power.

The following story gives a small testimony to the reality of the power to preach and destroy the work of the enemy. Come with me now as we walk through the dense foliage to discover a vibrant encampment together.

Life in Africa is dangerously vibrant, hungry and aggressive like the myriad bugs which swarm greedily on any exposition of white flesh! Vulnerable youngsters lie comfortable and butt naked in the dust, inventing their own world of play, basking in natural communion with the clay that fashioned them.

As the full moon casts its midnight shadow over the leafy igloo dwellings, smoke rises like incense from the Pygmy fires and dignified mothers, ageless in fecundity, offer their breasts to waiting infant mouths.

Food is also hunted and gathered with the same ritual gestures that have outlasted the centuries. My own pampered Western teeth are no match for the scaly skin of water lizard, and the oozing sustenance of fat caterpillars, trickling down the throat, makes yoghurt look tame!

One of my old friends, Yang Ga Da - it means the "gate" in his native Baka language, greets me wearing a ragged Manchester United football shirt. The name privileged enough to be draped over such noble Pygmy shoulders is none other than "*Rooney*."

To celebrate my thirty years in Christian ministry, the Baka people organise a midnight session of dance and drums around a huge fire. They also initiate a football tournament called the "*Robert Reeve*" cup! Unfortunately, "*Rooney*" doesn't seem to be among the star players as they scamper barefoot over the hillocks and grasses which make up what is called a pitch, watching out that no one is bitten by any intruding snakes.

Although no famous people were planned in the programme, one of my long-term friends from Central Africa, Jean Serge Bokassa, decided to visit me on that day. He also happens to be the minister for youth and sport in the nation. So, it was with great satisfaction and joy that the very minister of sports was able to hand over the "*Robert Reeve*" cup to proud pygmies in the anonymous forest.

Some stuff is weird in Africa - especially everything to do with witchcraft and sorcery. Materialistic, Western eyes remain blind to a world inhabited by ghosts and demons, where the hidden spiritual world integrates seamlessly with the activities of everyday life.

On Good Friday, after fasting and praying for several hours, a mixed band of black African Christians, made up of Bantus and Pygmies, headed for a local village known for its violence and powerful magic. They told me that a renown local witch doctor had been paid to come to the village. This so called sorcerer specialised in calling up thunder storms in order to kill people with lightning bolts!

So, armed with nothing more than my Bible as a lightening rod, I joined my enthusiastic black African band of brothers to take part in the anarchistic fray of the village. Around 11 o'clock at night, they asked me to speak to the gathered crowd of about 300 - more or less the whole village. Depending heavily on my lively translator, I improvised an impassioned plea for folks to see the love of Christ emblazoned on the cross.

Speaking from the gospel of John, chapter 12, I proclaimed:

"Now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

Something seemed to grip the atmosphere, and on that Good Friday night, Jesus was indeed lifted up afresh and about 50 spiritually hungry men and women literally rushed forward, almost trampling me in their enthusiasm to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour into their hearts.

And then, the moonlit sky clouded over and great, thunderless, mysteriously silent bolts of lightning began to illuminate the village.

While my Western theology and worldview was being shipwrecked on the ocean of African experience, my brothers and sisters rose to the challenge, breaking out in a wild crescendo of prayer, praise, shouting, dance, drums and singing.

Lightening and rain drops rained down upon us as we stood our ground, proclaiming that now the *"Prince of this world"* was indeed cast out. Fists and hands raised to the sky, we prayed long into the night. Was this utter madness? A group of nutters shouting at the thunderlit sky? All I can say is that I have never experienced a "natural" storm like that. In the midst of one particular close lightning flash, I could sense in my spirit some kind of malevolent personality.

Around 2-o'clock in the morning, something seemed to give. A loud voice rebuked the evil in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the storm receded back into the night.

All heaven broke out amongst us!

Rejoicing welled up as if from the very ground itself, using the polyphonic voices of the Pygmies, the warrior drums and the dancing of a beautiful African bride under the star filled night, to celebrate the ultimate victory of this very African Jesus!

I joined in the traditional circular dancing around the drums and found myself behind a wonderful Pygmy lady whose inherited natural rhythm made my own movements look clumsy. I followed her joy, gratefully led by a new sound and dance. She too was wearing a ragged old football shirt. I traced the dark letters printed on the back of the soiled white shirt. Ronaldo danced before me. Never have I been so happy than to have danced with Ronaldo under such open African skies.

Back at the Pygmy encampment, the Easter Sunday service was packed as villages from all around gathered to worship the Risen One. The collection is often the centrepiece of the African service. I'm always amazed that those who are so poor can boldly give so much - and with such exuberance, dance and joy.

Virile, muscular arms beat impossible rhythms on the drums as bodies swayed forward to make their offering. Beautiful big African ladies, clad in their immaculate coloured dresses, danced towards the altar. Many were bringing so much more than simple money. Huge bunches of bananas bounced in harmony on the head of one lady, while a squawking chicken said his last prayers as he was carried mercilessly forward.

I looked down into the collection basket again. And there, nestling securely and shining brightly in the sun, as if reflecting some prophetic truth, lay a gun cartridge. A cartridge in the collection! This said it all about African Christianity.

Wild and wonderfully dangerous!

Beautiful and aggressive. Simple and yet so profound, reaching back into the longings of primal man, yet emerging as an explosive force on the threshold of history.

May we know a cartridge of Gospel power in our own hearts as we take hold of the power to preach and destroy!

23 WHEN IT DOESN'T WORK

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Psalm 22:1

I'm aware that my *"optimistic realism"* can be quite challenging to those who are in pain, suffering and failure. I do not want to dismiss lightly the very real contradictions that life on this earth - and in the church, confront us with.

What do you do when prayer seems to go unanswered?

Here are a few simple lessons that I have gleaned from my own life based on some thoughts from Psalm 22.

God's promise and perspective:

My early Christian beginnings were nourished in the victorious context of a prayerful missionary movement. I fed on the nectar of such Biblical promises from Matthew 7:7 and John 14:14.

"You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

My guiding principle was:

"Prayer means answer."

With such a prayer theology, how do I handle the shuddering, God forsaken cry that comes from a broken man?

"O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer." v.2

What do you do in face of failure? How do you handle a cross? Jesus spent a lifetime resisting the devil's promises to answer prayer.

The last temptation of Christ was to come down from the cross:

"Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"
Matthew 27:40

Theologians come up with two useful phrases that help me understand God's apparent failure and weakness. *Kenosis* and *Epistemological distance*. The first is based on the humility of the incarnation, the fullness of deity *"making himself nothing."* Philippians 2:7

The second speaks about a necessary limitation on the knowledge of God in order to protect our freedom to love. God doesn't write his name high in the sky or play miracles to the crowd in order to impose Himself. He hides in humility - and sometimes pain, waiting to be discovered by those who long for true intimacy.

Perhaps my own prayer struggle may also be a sharing of these same principles of humility and limitation? I am not a "prayer superman." I do not have a simplistic, telephone hotline to God. I need the discipline of learning obedient sonship. Like Solomon, in the face of the prayer promise of 2 Chronicles 1:7, I also need to learn the art of asking for more wisdom.

Sometimes, the discipline and seeming disappointments of prayer lead us to question, and even abandon the prayer promises? Never give up!

My experience is always less real than God's Word and promise. In the face of transient non-answer and pain - hang on! Be a limping Jacob, refusing to let go of the promise:

"I will not let you go unless you bless me." Genesis 32:26

In the Psalm, the suffering hero appeals to the Sovereignty of God and decides to praise Him anyway, whatever the circumstances. Can we not do the same?

"Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel." v.3

Other's testimony and my experience:

Are you sometimes overwhelmed by the victorious testimony of others compared to your meagre experience of victory? Psalm 22:4 speaks of the testimony of history where *"Fathers"* trusted and were delivered. Others,

"Cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed."

We wonderfully rejoice in the victory of our friends. Hallelujah, but what about me?

"I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people." v.6

There seems to be a glaring contradiction in the heart of intimacy. The bridal delight of *"Hephzibah"* in Isaiah 62:4 seems to have been perverted into the restrained *"delight"* v.8, of God towards his servant. I should be a glorious Bride, but I feel like a worm! Kenosis and distance are again at work.

What can I do? Appeal to destiny.

Throw yourself into the ultimate purpose of God.

"Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even from my mother's breast."

From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God." v.9-10

Demonic oppression, yet victory in His presence:

Bulls, lions and oxen speak of the fearsome reality of the demonic opposition let loose upon holy servants. Hearts turning to wax, being "*poured out like water*" v.14, are experiences of many burnt out, fearful - yet faithful, men and women of God. The "*piercing*" v.16, of hands and feet points us to Christ's passion, but it is the same physical and mental torment shared by many of his people throughout history. Only the presence of the Almighty can give us strength in such times:

"But you, O Lord, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me." v.19

The apparent contradiction of the opening "*abandon*" finds a deeper answer of intercession in the ultimate Presence.

"For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help." v.24

My testimony: Intercession, prayer, praise and proclamation.

"I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you." v.22

My mission:

Geographical: *"All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations." v.27-28*

Social:

"All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him-those who cannot keep themselves alive." v.29

The whole social structure from the rich to the "dirt poor" will be impacted by such intercession from his Church.

Generational:

Our lives of faith, prayers and sufferings lay a solid foundation for those who are to follow. Nothing is wasted. Can you believe that part of your mission is for the yet "unborn?" Those who sow in tears can be encouraged by this long-term perspective.

"Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn – for he has done it." v.30-31

Our very suffering can be moving us into a greater place of identification and authority. It builds into us the character and capacity to be intercessors and witnesses for Christ.

Let's move on to see a bit more of the mission that God has for each one of us.

24 MESSAGE, MISSION, MOTIVATION

"And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14

How do you survive in difficult times?

Whenever you take a look at the television or internet, it seems that we are never too far away from tragedy and discouragement. We see wars, famines, earthquakes and evil crowding in on us with ever increasing momentum. Never have we been so exposed and inundated with such an overwhelming quantity of information.

Someone has claimed that the weekday edition of *The New York Times* contains more information than the average person in 17th-century England was likely to come across in a lifetime. This personalizes the oft-cited estimate that more information has been produced in the last 30 years than in the previous 5,000. Around 1,000 books are published internationally every day and the total of all printed knowledge doubles every 5 years.

Even with all this rapid, added knowledge, we still need to come back to an old, slow, orally received text which Jesus spoke over two thousand years ago. This divinely inspired, prophetic missive still speaks to our day and is recorded in Matthew's Gospel.

Jesus warned his disciples about difficult times. The apostle Paul, when mentoring his young friend Timothy, also echoed this sobering reality:

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days." 2 Timothy 3:1

Jesus spoke of all these "*terrible*" things that would happen in future days. Counterfeit religion, wars and natural disasters.

"Watch out that no one deceives you...You will hear of wars and rumours of wars...famines and earthquakes in various places." Matthew 24:4-8

He warned his disciples that they would be betrayed and persecuted. He broke the difficult news – even more unpalatable in today's world where we all crave to be liked, that they would,

"Be hated by all nations because of me." Matthew 24: 1-14

He talked about an increase in "*wickedness*"- from the Greek "*anomia*," which literally means without law or moral restraint. As the old moral codes are broken over the world and men and women throw off all restraint the hearts of the loyal – like faithful Lot in Sodom, are also under pressure to lose their love. It's *agape* versus *anomia* in the final round!

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold." v.12

Will the majority really go under? How can I keep my heart on fire in the midst of this litany of blatant bad news?

In the face of bad news there is only one option. Good news!

The only way to stay safe in difficult times is to put all your energy into preaching the "good news."

A Message

We have the Gospel message to share with all nations.

"And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world." v.14

It is the one positive event of the end time scenario. It has God's backing and mandate, putting wind in the sails of the Church as she floats on the raging waters of this present world.

History seems to be a battle between two mandates. Both of these mandates are based on the peoples of this earth, the separate ethnic groups which the Bible calls "*nations*" – "*ethne*" in Greek.

God's mandate – which is the subject of this book, is all about bringing life and reconciliation to the world through the Gospel.

However, there is another force working against this which has been in operation throughout the world's sad history.

It is a Satanic mandate of destruction for the nations which we find in Matthew 24:7.

"Nation will rise against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom."

Ethnic cleansing versus ethnic evangelisation! Matthew 24:7 or Matthew 24:14?

This is one of the reasons that the Church must embrace the task of mission seriously – for in so doing she pushes back the dark forces of destruction over a nation.

World evangelisation, when it is done in the humble, culturally sensitive spirit of Christ, is one of the most potent forces to combat hatred, division and tribalism.

We do indeed have a glorious message to proclaim. In embracing this message, and taking active steps to be a herald of this Gospel, we will retain our joyful passion and be successful in *"terrible times."*

As we have seen in the previous chapter, it is a message of authority - a Kingdom missal, exalting a King. It destroys the Satanic mandate by proclaiming the *"katageo"* of death, Satan and sin, through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A Mission

"A testimony to all nations." v.14

These words echo the powerful commission that Jesus gave his disciples before leaving the earth.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

It is often called the mandate of the four "alls" – **all** authority to disciple **all** nations by teaching **all** (everything) of Christ with **all** his presence.

Jesus didn't just make up these words. They were part of his long Jewish history, stretching right back to the promise that God gave to Abraham.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:2-3

We only find one little "all" here, but it is linked to the promise of blessing "**all** peoples."

In a nutshell, Israel was blessed to be a blessing. God blesses us - not for our selfish satisfaction, but so that we can be a blessing to others.

This notion of a double missionary blessing is found throughout the Old Testament.

The inspired King David understood this well as he expanded the ethnocentric priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 to include "**all** the peoples."

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you...God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him."
Psalm 67

The prophet Isaiah understood the "blessed to be a blessing" principle:

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles (nations), that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

Let me tell you a story about a fish.

There is a particular tropical fish that grows to the size of the container in which it is placed. If you put this fish into a small goldfish bowl it will grow until it reaches the glass confines and then stop, happily passing the rest of its life swimming around in restricted circles.

If you put the fish into a larger aquarium it will grow bigger until it reaches the walls of its watery prison. A large aquarium is better than a fish bowl, but it still leaves the fish a long way from reaching its fullest growth potential.

If, however, you throw the fish into its natural habitat of an unrestricted large lake it will grow and become a giant sea monster bigger than a whale. Well, not really! It will grow to its natural size of 2 metres or more.

What tank are you in? Does your ecclesial environment limit you to only local and personal blessings? Perhaps you do a bit of outreach from time to time are slowly growing to the limits of an "aquarium" confine?

Let me encourage you to throw yourself into the large lake of Biblical mission vision. See the world around you. Don't just pray "*Bless me,*" full stop. Make the full stop a paused comma and move beyond into a vision for the nations.

"Bless me, so that I can bless the world."

It is indeed "*too small a thing*" to live in a fish bowl. Break the bowl and reach your true potential in Christ by launching out into the lake of world evangelisation.

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles." Acts 13:47

The world is a rapidly changing place and missions have changed with the most vibrant part of Christianity now being in the non-Western, Global South nations of Latin America, Asia and Africa. However, we still have an unfinished task. The once "*Christian*" nations of Europe are losing their Judeo Christian inheritance and sliding into hedonistic materialism. Nearly a third of the world remains basically unreached with the Gospel, especially in staunchly Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim areas. For a more detailed analysis of the Biblical base for mission, I encourage you to read my book "*Open Heaven*."

We dare not disengage from these realities for fear of losing our passion in these testing years to come. We all have a mission.

A Motivation

"And then the end will come."

In 1887, a sickly young man called Albert Benjamin Simpson, prone to bouts of devastating depression, but confident in God's healing power, launched a mission movement based on the conviction that all the unreached nations needed to be reached in order to speed Christ's return. Dr. Simpson rose up to launch an entire denomination and missionary movement centred on this goal of reaching all peoples with the gospel. The driving passion of his life was to see the Great Commission completed so that Jesus could return.

He coined the phrase:

"Bring back the King!"

This phrase encapsulated his world-changing vision.

Basing his life on the promise of Matthew 24:14, he exhorted the Church to,

"Do her best for the evangelization of the world," in order to bring back the King.

"The work of missions will hasten as nothing else the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It appears to be the one yet unfulfilled condition of preparation. It marks on the dial of the ages the hour when the clock of destiny will strike and sound the knell of the old dispensation and the advent of the new.

"The Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." If then we would be in the line of the providence and purposes of God, the line of opportunity and emergency, the line that leads up to the marriage supper of the Lamb and the Kingdom of our God and His Christ, let us be and do our best for the immediate evangelization of the world."

We all long for that day when Christ will come to right wrongs and dry the tears from every eye. Although there is a veil over the exact time and date of his appearing – *parousia*, we can take up an active part in hastening his return through our commitment to mission.

We long for the day when all the beautifully diverse nations of the world will come together, uniting their cultures in Christ, to celebrate the world's greatest symphony of eternal worship.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes

and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Revelation 6:9-10

The commitment to this vision is surely not just some dour order from on high, but rather a loving call from our heavenly Bridegroom to prepare the way for the wedding feast.

There are many reasons that inspire us to the sacrifice of missionary and evangelistic service. However, returning to our opening *"Embrace"* - power of intimacy paradigm, it seems that the desire to speed our uniting with the beautiful Bridegroom remains a major – and noble, source of motivation.

The book of Revelation speaks about the coming wedding of the Lamb:

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)" Revelation 19:7-8

Surely some of that *"linen"* stands for the righteous missionary endeavour throughout the ages.

The New American Bible Translation of Song of Songs 1:4 beautifully captures the passionate longing of a Bride wanting to work and partner with her beloved in order to hasten the honeymoon!

Perhaps, we might be able to add a bit more intimacy to the energetic phrase:

"Bring back the King!"

We look at the diverse and eager nations ready to give their lives in passionate sacrifice for World Evangelisation, and we cry,

"Hasten the honeymoon!"

Drawn by love we proclaim our Gospel message, growing to our full stature in our mission to the world, motivated by the return of our King.

"Draw me after you and let us run together! The king has brought me into his chambers. We will rejoice in you and be glad; we will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you." Song of Songs 1:4

25 OUR FINAL PRAYER

We have shouted out *"Help"* in our desperation to embrace the power of intimacy, whispered *"How?"* in an act of creation. Both of these prayers have been an invocation to the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with His presence and power.

Our final prayer - linked to the *"power"* to preach, is also a deep longing. It is a cry to the same Holy Spirit, the Bride's cry to her beloved Bridegroom. A prayer for revival and for the return of the Lord – a double *"Come!"*

"Come Holy Spirit!"

"Come Lord Jesus!"

This mighty prayer, *"Come,"* covers both the vertical and horizontal dynamic of our Christian life. The heavenward, loving focus on Christ, coupled with the vision to see mankind transformed and empowered by a spiritual revival.

It takes us back to the very roots of our Christian faith, as one of the most ancient recorded prayers of the early Christians is the Aramaic phrase,

"Maranatha!"

It is transmitted in Greek at the end of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Depending on how you juggle with the word it can also mean,

"The Lord has come."

Rather than being a contradiction, I see this as simply emphasising the *"now/not yet"* tension of the Kingdom we spoke of earlier. Most translators agree on the invocation of the Lord to *"come."*

"Come, O Lord!" 1 Corinthians 16:22

Another beautiful, prophetic passage from the Song of Songs captures this twofold dimension and gives us another text to pray from:

*"Awake, north wind and **come** south wind!*

Blow on my garden that its fragrance may spread abroad.

*Let my lover **come** into his garden and taste its choice fruits."* Song of Songs 4:16

The first "come" of the Beloved is addressed to the "wind." It is actually addressed to two winds which has a prophetic significance for our present prayers for revival. Let me give a very simple explanation.

At the beginning of the century the "northern" nations had about 75% of all Christians. In the wave of successive revivals - especially the Welsh revival of 1904, they sent out missionaries who successfully evangelised the continents of Africa, Asia and South America.

Today, the northern nations are in decline, having only about 25% of the world's Christians. The "Global South" - as we now call the emerging nations, contains the remaining 75%. The centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted dramatically. The warmer winds of the South are bringing their exotic breeze to the world. Korean churches in Paris, Nigerians in London, Brazilians in Spain. All of this may indeed cause the northern wind, like some aged Caleb, to awake once again to take up a long lost missionary inheritance.

The result of the "awakening" and the "southern coming" may well be a fresh "blowing" of Holy Spirit revival over the garden of this world. A new "fragrance" of grace, released to the unreached nations of the world where the light of the Gospel has rarely shone. A revival wind with the power to embrace, create and destroy.

Ezekiel, who we have already mentioned in our "two

witnesses" chapter, also made a powerful plea to the wind – a cry for the resurrection and revival of a nation.

"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Ezekiel 37:9

We are not *"ashamed of the gospel,"* knowing that it has the power to save. We see the spiritually slain around us, sheep without a shepherd, and we long to see them brought to eternal life. Human strength and ingenuity cannot bring this life. Even our best efforts at evangelism will produce scant fruit if we do not have the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. May we find faith for a fresh prophetic cry as the church, like some "collective Ezekiel," prophesies again to the breath, sobbing out a heart rending *"Come!"*

"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army." Ezekiel 37:10

Will you believe with me for this to become our experience? A multicoloured, many faceted wind of revival, creative, dream-redeeming, empowering and compassionate, that will sweep the earth preparing for the second coming of Christ.

This brings us back to pursue the passionate prayer, the second *"come,"* of our Beloved.

*"Let my lover **come** into his garden and taste its choice fruits."*

Jesus mentioned to his disciples, as he was sharing in their last supper, that he would not,

"Drink again of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:18

He is longing to return and savour once again the sweet communion of His Bride, sharing in the new wine of the Kingdom. Here again we discover a "now/not yet" tension, as we can already invite the Lord into our own intimate garden, sharing the sweet fruits of fellowship with him, and yet there is a greater garden that still awaits his return and its total redemption.

Man sinned in the first garden, but if the first chapter of the Bible describes how God made the world, the last one, in Revelation, shows how he will remake it – a new "Genesis."

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away..."I am making everything new" Revelation 21:4-5

He is coming back to his garden to root out the ancient curse of death and restore paradise.

"And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse." Revelation 22:3

This wonderful scenario is mysteriously and quietly unleashed in our present lives and actions as we strive and sigh towards it. Our lips and heart agree with the Holy Spirit as we cry,

"Come!"

"The Spirit and the Bride say "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life...He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:17,20

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

EPILOGUE

If you have a few years under your belt like me, you may remember that at the end of an evening's viewing on BBC they would put on the epilogue. Some strange person would then proceed to give you the most boring, moralising lecture to send you off to bed.

I hope this epilogue - it actually comes from two Greek words, "*epi*" and "*logos*," meaning the final or covering word, will not send you off to sleep, but equip you for action.

The dust has settled on our African song. We have sung out our three "*pangas*" and seen them expressed in the embrace of intimacy, the innovation to create, and the preaching of gospel truth which destroys the works of Satan.

We have learnt the three covenant words of "*Hesed*," "*Shalom*" and "*Katargeo*," linking them to three prophetic actions which involved embrace, birthing our dream and hunting down the devil's work.

You may feel stupid, but can I encourage you to do these actions on a regular basis as they will remind you of the teaching and be a powerful expression of faith.

Why not stand up and find some space now? Are you with me?

Give yourself a big long hug. Do it slowly and think back to our different images of intimacy with God. Think of a loving Father's secure embrace. Imagine the arms of your beloved bridegroom Jesus.

Now, as you hug yourself, slowly and deeply speak out the word,

"*Hesed*."

May each long, clasping hug correspond to the strong speaking out of the word "*Hesed*."

Give yourself three "*Hesed*" hugs and receive the power to know God intimately.

Now stand up, and clap your left hand to your left ear with the loud proclamation,

"Shalom!"

Do it as if you were making a clap, but instead of meeting your right hand you touch your left ear. After this, use your right hand to tap your tummy with another loud proclamation of "*Shalom!*"

"Shalom!" Clap your ear. *"Shalom!!"* Clap your tummy.

Now do this double Shalom action three times.

"Shalom, Shalom! Shalom, Shalom!! Shalom Shalom!!!"

Your creative eggs are hatching! Transformation is on its way. Redeem your dreams. This is the power to innovate.

And finally, make the mime of pulling back an arrow on a bow. Hold it for 3 seconds and then release with the loud cry,

"Katargeo Death!"

Do the same again, hold for three seconds and cry,

"Katargeo Satan!"

Do the same again, but this time point the arrow to your own heart rather than outwards. Hold for three seconds and cry,

"Katargeo Sin!"

Do this triple cycle three times in a powerful proclamation of the Gospel's power to destroy the works of the evil one.

It wasn't that bad. Was it?

And don't forget our three prayers.

"Help!" Our prayer for the knowledge of God - Embrace

"How?" Our prayer for innovation, and transformation - Create

"Come!" Our prayer for revival from the power of our preaching – Destroy

Let me know how you get on.

You can go to bed now.

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