



Change **MAKERS**

A MENTORING MANUAL
FOR NEXTGEN LEADERS

Changemakers

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NextGen Leaders*

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*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

Matthew 28:19

INTRODUCTION

This manual was written to help you develop a deeper understanding of who you are, *whose* you are, and what you are called to do. In other words, in these pages you will dive deeper into your identity, your arena of influence, and the impact you will make in this world in your lifetime.

As you gain a deeper understanding in these areas, **our prayer is that you will be inspired to be a changemaker for Christ**. Changemakers reflect Jesus in a way that transforms the lives of those around them. And sometimes that impact expands throughout the world, affecting the eternal destinies of multiple generations!

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus charged his disciples to make *more* disciples of ALL nations. We call this the Great Commission. Over 40% of the world’s population—3.23 billion people—have not yet heard the gospel. In Matthew 9:27, Jesus said to His disciples that the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Taking the Good News of Jesus where it is not yet known will require a new generation of bold changemakers who believe the Great Commission can be fulfilled in their lifetimes.

The question is, who will answer His call?

This book includes the contributions of seven authors who have answered the call of God on their lives to be changemakers, and they desire to pass the baton to you, the next generation. They share Bible stories, personal stories, and the stories of other young leaders to encourage you to discover and align with your God-given purpose.

One thing you'll notice throughout their stories is the power of prayer. Prayer precedes the work, prayer empowers the work, prayer sustains the work; prayer *is* the work. To hear what God has for you and be positioned where God has called you to be requires a lifestyle of seeking, listening, surrendering to, and obeying God.

May you pick up the baton. Be the changemaker God has created and called you to be, and run your race with endurance, so at the end of your race you'll be able to say (as Paul did), "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up 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 loved his appearing" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

Lesson 1:
YOUR TRUE IDENTITY
Josh Lebel

Identity is foundational in your faith journey – so much so that I would say that God cares more about who you are becoming than about what you are doing. Unavoidably, who you are becoming determines what you will be doing. God wants to walk with you through this process of discovering who He created you to be; He wants you to launch into your destiny and do what you were created to do. We are going to discuss what it looks like to move closer to God, and in return, you will begin to discover your true God-given identity. First, I want to share my story of how I encountered God and learned to move close to Him.

The Journey

My journey began in a sleepy little town on the coast of Maine. My mom, who had a deep sense of the Lord, dragged me to church every Sunday as a kid. I was not very fond of this. I didn't see the point.

My dad grew up as a nominal Catholic, only attending church on holidays or special occasions. I would frequently ask, "Why can't I stay home like dad?" But before I knew it, I would be sitting in a Sunday school class learning about the Bible. For me, it wasn't so much that I didn't like learning about God, it was that I didn't know why I needed to learn about Him. Throughout my childhood I defined religion as knowledge + works = relationship. I had a remarkable ability to navigate all the right answers, but when it came down to those answers being transformative in how I lived my life...that would be the ultimate problem.

When I was 15 years old, I began to get freedoms. A lot of

firsts were happening: my first car, first job, and first girlfriend. As I began to take on these new ventures, one thing became very clear: I was not spiritually mature enough to stand on my own.

At age 17, after experiencing a destructive relationship, a poor decision with money, and lots of alcohol use, my life truly began to crumble. I vividly remember when I hit rock bottom. Having passed out on the beach after a night of partying, I was beginning to wake up with a face full of sand and a headache like you couldn't imagine. It was dawn at the Atlantic Ocean. The night before was no different than most nights at that time in my life. However, as I began to reflect that morning, I knew I was broken. I had no real friends. I had spent all of my hard-earned money. Feeling empty inside, my heart sank as I began to reflect on my life and what I was creating for myself.

I remembered when I had heard people talk about Jesus and how He wanted to have a relationship with me (which I had always thought was impossible). "Have a relationship with a guy who we can only read about? That's ridiculous!" I would have said. But desperate and at the end of my rope, I whispered to God, "Are You even there?"

Immediately after uttering those words, the most life-changing moment happened. In a soft, gentle voice, I heard, "Josh, I love you. I have always loved you. I have much more for you than this." His voice reverberated through my soul like a thousand echoes traveling down a corridor. That is the moment something broke in me. It was like I had been on a journey looking for lost treasure and finally found it. My soul had longed to hear those words from the Father.

Now I realize He had been saying those words to me for years, but I had never been in a place to hear them. I had been on a journey to find out who I was. I searched

everywhere: in what I did, in who I knew, and through other people's affirmation. But all of that fell short of my true identity, which is found only in God.

As you continue on your journey, remember that God is on the journey with you. You don't have to have all the answers, but I hope to show you where you can go to find the One who does.

Three Spiritual Movements of Identity

Being—*Being is more important than doing.*

In one of the most famous lines, from one of the most prolific play writers of all time, William Shakespeare (in *Hamlet*) sums up the idea of life and death. "To be or not to be. That is the question."

What does it mean to *be*? I think Eleanor Roosevelt put it best. "The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for a newer and richer experience." Psalms 34:8 says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" To *be* is to experience God to His fullest, to know Him and to be fully known by Him!

Mary and Martha were great examples of this idea of "being" versus "doing." In Luke 10:38-42, Martha ran around frantically, trying to host Jesus perfectly. She made sure her home was in order and everything was just perfect for dinner. We see the opposite in Mary. She sat at the feet of Jesus, hanging onto every word He said. She simply received from the Master. One thing is sure in this story: Jesus would rather sit with you where you are than have everything perfect around you. He highlights how Mary received something that would not be taken from her. She chose the one necessary thing.

At some point in your journey with the Lord, you will be faced with the Martha and Mary dilemma. By that, I mean facing that your identity is not derived from what you do, but rather from who you are in Christ. Early in our walks with the Lord, we sometimes overwork, trying to pay Jesus back for what He has done for us on the cross. Unfortunately, this payback becomes a sense of identity and security as we grow accustomed to the accolades and validations that come with it. I'm not saying that actions shouldn't accompany our faith. But we can't work our way into intimacy with the Lord.

God delights when we take time with Him and listen intently to His words. This is where you will find your identity. This is where you will find hope, passion, and strength. This is the place where you can respond to the eternal lack in your heart and see it fulfilled. We must move from "doing" to receive our identity, to "being." If we continue to seek validation in our works and live for the applause of man, we will bypass the grace of God and find ourselves always frustrated, exhausted and on the verge of burn out. But if we can learn to lean into the Father and receive from Him, we will never lack.

From Rejecting to Receiving

Belonging—*You are created for God.*

The type of intimacy we originally had with the Lord (before we even had a choice) is described in Psalm 139:13-14. "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

When we understand to whom we belong, we can grasp who we truly are intended to be. Belonging indicates a sense of security; this is our Creator's intent. Once we accept that we were created by God, we realize we are still being crafted by

Him and will be made whole in Him. Often, our lives have been formed by a reward system, reinforcing the idea that our value flows from what we do rather than whose we are. So we begin to create behaviors around this system of thought. This can cause us to lose sight of our true self, which has been created by God for God. As we understand where our true value comes from, the truth and lies we have believed about ourselves become evident. Our false self, the imposter, is exposed, and we realize that our greatest joy is to be found in Him.

When we find ourselves in God, He can be found in us. God is faithful to make you whole, and your wholeness is what the world so desperately needs. We don't need another cookie-cutter version of someone trying to be someone else.

Jesus lays it out in Matthew 7:21-23 when He says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

God is inviting you into intimacy with Him. The word "knew" in Greek means the same thing as the word in Genesis 4:1 where Adam *knew* Eve. This word is describing intimacy between a husband and his wife. This is the same word Jesus uses as a standard for how He wants to know us. It's the highest level of intimacy. Not only is this what Jesus wants with us, but it's the very thing for which He created us. Pastor Robert Morris defines intimacy like this: "Into you, I see." In other words, it's allowing yourself to let your guard down and God in. This is where we move from knowing about God to knowing God.

Becoming—*You are made new through Christ.*

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."
—Deitrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Becoming is a movement into your true self. It is fully dying to this world and allowing Jesus to fully revive you; it's a life of being broken and willing to be used by God. Becoming can indicate a future tense, but I think we need to be reminded that Jesus has already paid the price for you to step into your true destiny as His son or daughter.

The Apostle Paul was very clear about this in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Becoming is going into the deep spaces of ourselves and bringing into alignment what we say we believe and how we live. The apostle Paul, in his benediction to the saints in Thessalonica, says this in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." The Hebrew translation of the word "peace" as used in the God of peace is "shalom," which can be translated as the God of "completeness" or "wholeness." May He make you complete and whole as well.

God wants to bring alignment to the true essence of your being. God's intention is to move you from being a slave to this world to being a complete and whole child of God. The image of what that looks like is found in Jesus. He is the prototype for what it truly means to become. In Him, you can find peace, joy, love, and reconciliation with the Father.

From Slave to Son

As we conclude, I want to leave you with this final thought. What if we were truly created to walk with the Father, in the cool of the day, as described in Genesis? What if we were created to simply be, belong, and become? I pray that you will ask the Father for your specific roadmap to become what He has always had for you. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways have I sought my identity through what I *do*?
2. Does God love me because of what I do, or did He love me before I did anything? Support your answer with Scripture.
3. How can I move from *doing* to receive my identity, to *being*?
4. How can I move from knowing about God to knowing God?
5. What areas of my life need to come into alignment with what I believe?
6. Will my life be transformed by self-effort or by allowing God to transform me?

Action Steps

1. Ask the Father who He says you are. Write down the words He speaks over you and shows you in His Word, and read them daily for at least a month (include the many things Ephesians 1:3-14 says about you).
2. Ask yourself if you genuinely believe these things about yourself. If not, ask the Lord to help you believe them. "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

Lesson Two:
THE POWER OF THE CROSS
Vivek Samuel

*"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."
1 Corinthians 1:18*

As Christians who long to live our lives *on purpose*, how do we really begin to truly walk in our identity and impact our world for Christ?

It all begins with an understanding of the power of the cross.

The cross is one of the most celebrated symbols in the world. But it is important to know that it is so much more than just a symbol. It's a spiritual phenomenon that takes you on a journey of Christianity. Jesus' cross draws all people towards Him and provides the way for their salvation. But why does the cross hold so much power?

The cross has the power to set us free.

Humans are inherently flawed. The cross enables us to look at those flaws and apply its power to correct them as we get started on the path of righteousness. People carry a lot of guilt in their hearts due to their actions and behaviors over the course of their lives. All people are guilty of sin and the universality of sin itself. The Bible says it this way: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3: 23; see also Romans 3:9-12).

Sin causes anguish, and people often try to find relief from sin's anguish through various unhealthy methods. They seek their escape in daily pleasures like alcohol, drugs, addictions, entertainment, or through denial of the sin itself; but none of

these things work for the long term. This is because all of these methods are false promises. The only true remover of guilt is the cross. The cross removes the root cause of the problem, which is sin itself. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Time and time again in the Bible we see how Jesus heals us of the effects of our sins, having paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. He doesn't provide excuses for them or justify them or even hide them. Jesus took on the sins of all people, and then offered up His eternal being as a sacrifice on the cross in order to atone for our sins.

The cross is a place where all our sins can be transferred, and we can be released from the guilt we have been holding within.

The cross has the power to create a desire for righteousness.

Christianity teaches us that we all need to walk on the path of righteousness. When we look at the cross, we are blessed in a unique way; its power can create in us a desire for things that are pure, good, and true.

The cross is motivation toward righteousness because it reminds us of the sacrifice Jesus made for us. We can see how Jesus suffered and died for humankind on the cross and delivered atonement in return. This knowledge awakens the desire and gives us the power to live according to His imputed righteousness made possible through the cross.

"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body

on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Peter 2:23-24).

The cross has the power to remind you of your own significance.

In the grand scheme of things, it's common to feel that we don't belong. Once we start believing we are insignificant, it doesn't take much for our lives to derail. We stop taking the high ground and find ourselves embroiled in carnal desires. When we close our hearts to the power of the cross, we find other immoral thoughts taking root inside our minds and acted out through our bodies.

That is where the cross comes in. The cross is a great reminder, assuring us that we are significant and we are loved. Even when the world is against us and tells us no one cares, the cross is there to tell us that Christ cares; He is there for us. "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

The cross is a constant reminder of the fact that God loved us enough to send Jesus for our salvation, and Jesus loved us enough to offer up His own life for us. It reminds us that even if no one else loves us, God does. God is looking out for us and He has a plan for each of us even if we may not be able to see it yet.

Because of the cross, you can experience new life.

Such is the power of the cross: everyone who makes space in their hearts for Jesus to enter experiences a change in their lives. People have described it as the feeling of a heavy burden being lifted from their shoulders; suddenly they realize

all their sins have been forgiven. Some have likened it to a feeling of stepping into new skin, like they were just given a new life from that moment forward. Many people, after inviting Jesus into their lives, feel they are finally reigning victoriously over the sins that had enticed them before. They talk about receiving God's strength to overcome bad habits that previously had a vice-like grip on them.

Looking at the cross, you can see how it teaches us so much. It reveals the Trinity to us: God the **Father** sent His Son Jesus to save the world, the **Son** submitted to the will of his Father, and the **Holy Spirit** applies the work of redemption to all the followers of Jesus.

The Bible without the cross would be a Bible without an eternal solution. As noted in 1 Corinthians 1:18, though viewed as folly by those who are perishing, the cross is the power of God to us who are being saved.

You may be asking yourself how you can participate in the power of the cross. As Christians, we believe our sins were crucified on the cross with Jesus. The cross goes beyond just representing the death of sin for us. It allows us to identify with Christ in His death and resurrection. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Not only did Christ die for us on the cross, but we also died with Him. Embracing Christ, we die to our old self and are reborn as a new creation. The cross allows us to become one with Christ and partake of His nature. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

The cross is a symbol of life as well as death. It is a testament to the hate of non-believers, but also to the love of Jesus' disciples. It teaches us about violence and peace, accusations and forgiveness, sin and purity, and more. What was once the symbol of the cruelest form of punishment is now a symbol of love, mercy, and provision.

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

In most other religions, people strive to communicate with the deity of their choosing through rituals and ablutions. Christianity is the only faith in which God Himself has reached down to us. Jesus died to provide a way for us to fellowship with God the Father and to give us the power to live our lives in the way God has purposed for us.

God poured Himself into the flesh and blood of Jesus. Colossians 1:19 tells us, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Jesus is central to our salvation. It is God's will that we reconcile with Him. Verse 20 goes on to say, "and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." The use of the word reconcile here shows us how a relationship that was previously based in hostility changed to one rooted in harmony. It shows us that humans decided to unilaterally break the relationship they had with God, and then God took it upon Himself to mend the relationship by sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins.

The Bible says in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." God could have easily left us the way we decided to leave Him. He could have abandoned us the way we decided to abandon His law. But He did not do so. Why? Because the love He has for us is

unconditional. He didn't want us to spend the rest of eternity separated from Him, leading unfulfilling lives without any rewards. He wanted us to live righteously and live lives full of His bounty. So, in order to reconcile with us, God took the first step, and that first step was sending Jesus to die for our sins.

"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). People often misunderstand this verse. They misinterpret it to mean that by the virtue of Christ's death on the cross, everyone is automatically reconciled with God. They think everyone is automatically going to achieve salvation because of the sacrifice made by Christ, but that is not the case. It just means God has taken the first step towards us, and now we must take the second step of accepting Him as our Savior. God doesn't drag people towards Him kicking and screaming. God has given us free will and wants us to come to Him by our own free will.

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

The Bible says we have to receive the free gift of salvation through Jesus in order to be reconciled with God. We must put our trust in Christ as our Savior. We need Jesus in our lives so we know how to live in a way that pleases God. His grace is sufficient for all our needs and His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Jesus died on the cross to provide the way for us to receive forgiveness from our sins. The Bible provides many details regarding this sacrifice of Jesus. As we study the Bible, we understand more and more of salvation and forgiveness. When we say, "Jesus died for our sins," we are saying that He died *because* of our sins. Sin leads to death (Romans 6:23). We were sinners who were walking the path towards our end,

until Jesus intervened. We had been consigned to death and there was no peace in sight.

When Jesus came into the world, He lived a perfect life, and hence death had no hold on Him. In His grace, Jesus chose to take the punishment for sin; punishment we had coming. He substituted Himself for us so we would have a chance to repent. Because of this sacrifice, God decreed that anyone who puts their trust in Jesus will have all their sins forgiven.

Through His death, Jesus gave us all direct access to communicate with God ourselves. In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Sin had separated us from God, but at the moment of Christ's death, the veil in the temple, separating the sinful humankind from the presence of God, was ripped in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Are you truly living in the freedom that comes from knowing Christ as your Savior? When you embrace God's free gift of salvation, grow in righteousness, understand your significance as a child of God, and experience new life in Him, your changed life begins to look very different to the world around you. You are the fragrance of Christ, commissioned by God, to bring the Good News of Jesus to a lost and dying world (2 Corinthians 2:15-17). Once you've experienced this freedom through the power of the cross, you begin to see your identity, influence, and impact through Kingdom eyes, and you won't be able to keep this Good News to yourself!

Reflection Questions

1. What does Jesus' death on the cross tell me about how He feels about me?
2. In what ways has the power of the cross set me free? Have I fully taken hold of those freedoms?
3. In what ways do I need to rely on God's power to defeat sin in my life, instead of relying on my own strength and willpower?
4. If God sacrificed so much so I could be forgiven, can I forgive the people who have wronged me?
5. How can I help more people see how the cross stands for the salvation of all of humankind who embrace Christ?

Action Steps

1. Think deeply about Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. Write down what this means for you personally.
2. Read, believe, pray, and memorize 1 John 1:9.
3. Look up Bible verses about "righteous" and "righteousness," and thank Jesus for His imputed righteousness made possible by the cross.
4. List some ways that your old self has died and you've become a new creation in Christ.
5. Tell someone that God loves them so much that He sent His only Son to die for their sins to give them new life now and eternity with Him. Do this often.

Book Resources:

The Power of the Cross: Putting it to Work in Your Life by Tony Evans

The Cross of Christ by John R.W. Stott

Knowing God by J.I. Packer

Discovering the Power of the Cross of Christ by Charles Spurgeon (Edited/Compiled by Lance Wubbels)

So the Next Generation Will Know: Preparing Young Christians for a Challenging World by Sean McDowell, J. Warner Wallace

Online Resources:

Three powerful things the cross of Jesus does for you:

<https://bibletalk.tv/three-powerful-things-the-cross-of-jesus-does-for-you>

The cross on which Jesus and our old self died:

<https://blog.bible/bible-engagers-blog/entry/the-cross-on-which-jesus-and-our-old-self-died>

Jesus is central to our salvation:

<https://ptv.org/devotional/jesus-is-central-in-salvation/>

Lesson 3:
UNLOCKING YOUR PURPOSE
Jen McQuay

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."

Psalm 139:13-16

One of the most asked questions in life is "What on earth am I here for?" I am sure you have wondered that very thing yourself more than once. "What is my purpose?" is a question we all ask ourselves, probably repeatedly throughout our lives. And as much as I would love to tell you three easy steps to finding your purpose, that's not exactly how it works. There are so many factors that are unique to you in knowing your purpose. I can't help you answer the question, but I can guide you in the right direction to help you discover your purpose, and then to unlock and walk in it.

One of the keys to knowing and unlocking your purpose is to discover who you are. What has God said about you? How has He created you? Accept those truths about yourself and embrace your personal identity. Something very powerful happens when you truly know who you are. It changes the way you walk. It changes the way you talk. It changes the way you live your life. Your perspective on your purpose changes, and you can confidently accomplish God's purpose for your life when you walk in the authority of knowing who you are and whose you are. A great example is found in the life of Moses.

Moses did not seem like the ideal person to lead the people of Israel out of captivity. He was actually a bit of a failure. You might be thinking, "A failure? Moses?" Yes, early in his life. When Moses was younger, he tried standing up for one of his people and ended up killing a man. He ran for his life and hid in the wilderness. For 40 years Moses found solace in the wilderness, far away from civilization, taking care of sheep and goats for his father-in-law, Jethro. One day Moses decided to lead them across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain, and he noticed an unusual sight: a bush was on fire, but didn't seem to be burning up. "This is strange!" he may have said to himself. "I'll go over and see why the bush isn't burning up." When God saw Moses coming near the bush, He called him by name, and Moses simply answered, "Here I am" (Exodus 3:4). But when Moses heard what God had planned for him, he immediately began to make excuses.

I'm not good enough. Moses asked, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11). He felt inadequate, and he was right to feel that way. By himself, he *was* inadequate, just as we are. Our purpose will always be bigger than ourselves so that we must depend on God to fulfill it. God's response to Moses, "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12), indicates it is important not just who Moses is, but who it is who calls him.

I don't know enough. Moses said, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" (Exodus 3:13). Moses was afraid the Israelites might ask him a question he couldn't answer. God answered, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Don't worry that you don't have all the answers. Whenever you feel like you're not smart enough or capable enough, remember that *I AM* is with you.

People won't take me seriously. I can almost hear Moses whining when he continued to give God excuses. "But behold,

they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'" (Exodus 4:1). God reconfirmed that they would believe him, but for those who at first wouldn't take him seriously, God gave Moses three powerful signs that would definitely cause them to believe.

I'm not good with words. Of all of Moses' excuses this is the most amazing to me. He's complaining to a talking bush that he can't talk. "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue" (Exodus 4:10). The Lord replied to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" (Exodus 4:11-12).

Moses had a lot of excuses in the beginning, but he finally accepted his identity. His identity unlocked his purpose, and his purpose gave him influence. Moses had more influence than anyone in the Old Testament. Think about it. Not only did he lead three million Israelites out of captivity in Egypt to the threshold of their Promised Land, but he was also responsible for creating their government structure and developing the Hebrew faith beyond just blood sacrifices. Yet he started out being extremely insecure. It wasn't until he embraced His God-breathed identity when he was able to do what he did through God's strength.

As with Moses, your purpose starts with acknowledging, accepting, and embracing who God created you to be. Nothing prepares you like knowing who you are in God. Most of us think our identity comes from who our parents are, our titles, or our jobs. We introduce ourselves by telling people, "I'm a teacher, lawyer, pastor, youth leader, or (whatever)." We often define ourselves by:

1. How other people see us (*the opinion of others*)

2. What we have done (*our past accomplishments and failures*)
3. What we do (*our present performance*)

Moses' job at the time was being a shepherd. So how did shepherding sheep give him the experience, strategy, and influence to lead millions of people? It wasn't his job that prepared him, it was who God created him to be. It would be a *big* mistake to allow what we have or have not done to define who we are! Our identity is not based on what we do. Our identity in Christ determines what we do. The truest thing about you is what God says about you. From heaven's perspective, the identity of the person comes first. Gideon was known as a warrior before he won a battle. David was identified as a king long before he wore a crown on his head. Jeremiah was a prophet for the nations while he was still in his mother's womb. Rather than your actions defining who you are, who you are defines what you do. So how do we recognize our identity?

1. **Find out what God's Word has to say about who you are.**

Here is a list to get you started, but add to it. Look up the verses below and others, write them and place them where you can read them every day. Read them until you believe what God says about who you are to your very core. When you acknowledge who God says you are, a godly confidence changes you. When you know who you are, the enemy can't make you believe the lies he has tried to use for generations. Instead, you can fight his lies with the truth of what the Word of God says about who you are!

- a. I am God's workmanship. (Ephesians 2:10)
- b. I am a new creation in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- c. I am not condemned. (Romans 8:1)
- d. I am complete in Him. (Colossians 2:10)

- e. I am blessed. (Ephesians 1:3)
- f. I am holy and without blame. (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:16)
- g. I have received the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. (Ephesians 1:17-18)
- h. I have authority and power over the enemy in this world. (Luke 10:17-19)
- i. I am a joint heir with Christ. (Romans 8:17)
- j. I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves me. (Romans 8:37)
- k. I am an ambassador for Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- l. I have been given a spirit of power, love and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)
- m. I am part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. (1 Peter 2:9)
- n. I am the head and not the tail. (Deuteronomy 28:13)
- o. I am the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)
- p. I am redeemed from the curse of sin, sickness, and poverty. (Deuteronomy 28:15-68, Galatians 3:13)
- q. I am healed and whole in Jesus. (Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24)
- r. I am strengthened with all power according to His glorious might. (Colossians 1:11)
- s. I am salt and light to the world. (Matthew 5:13-20)
- t. I am a co-laborer with Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:9)
- u. I am a minister. (Colossians 1:25)
- v. I am chosen. (John 15:16)
- w. I am beloved. (Colossians 3:12)
- x. I am a friend of Jesus. (John 15:14)

The list goes on and on. Create your own list based on what you read in the Word of God. Knowing these truths will change the way you think about yourself, the way you talk about yourself, and how you live out your daily life. When you know who you are as God's child and the authority that comes with that, it changes your perspective and gives you boldness to be everything He has called you to be.

2. Discover how God uniquely created you.

There was God-breathed identity on your life before you could even take your first breath. It's time to stop longing for what other people have and give up trying to be anyone else but you. Looking elsewhere will stop you from being the person who God created you to be. Look at how God created you, how you've been intricately designed by the Creator, and gifted to fulfill your divine calling. God knew what He was doing when He created you like He did. He gave you the right intelligence, the right personality, the right temperament to do what He created you to do. Don't despise your design, for the Creator made you a certain way so you could accomplish a certain purpose. Take the time to figure out who you are, based on how God created *you*, because we are all different. Ask yourself...

- a. Am I an introvert or extrovert?
- b. Do I get lost in the details, or do I enjoy getting the details right?
- c. Do I forget the time when I'm studying, or do I constantly think about what else I could be doing?
- d. Do I get frustrated when people can't seem to make a decision and end up stepping in and helping them make it?
- e. Am I drawn to hurting people, or does the depths of someone's pain make me uncomfortable?
- f. Do I like coloring in the lines, or do I like to create my own lines?
- g. What was I passionate about as a child?
- h. If I could do anything I wanted to do, how would I choose to fill my hours?
- i. What makes me forget about the world around me?
- j. What do I talk about with my closest friends?
- k. What is the most rewarding thing I've ever done for someone else? Why was it so rewarding?
- l. How do others describe my impact on their lives?

I told you these three steps weren't easy, but they are worthwhile. Invest the time in getting to know who you are so you can accomplish what He has called you to accomplish. If your purpose was just a job title, you'd lose your purpose if you lost your job. If your purpose was just a title, it'd be too small to really make a difference as the world changes, and as you grow as a person. Your purpose is your impact on others. Your purpose is how you know you're changing the world. You're changing lives, one human at a time. Your purpose is the thing that keeps you going when life is hard. Ask yourself these questions, and you'll be able to unlock the purpose for which you were created. But remember, influence is not what you do, it's who you are while you're doing it that has impact.

3. Continually seek God for understanding of your purpose.

Your purpose is not wrapped up in a single event, it's an unfolding, lifelong process. You should continually seek God about your purpose, because part of your purpose may be seasonal, changing over time. Your purpose during this season of life may be different 20 years from now because the world will change, and you will grow as a person. You will grow in your character and your Christlikeness. You will grow in your skills and in your giftings. Life is not static; it changes, you change, your purpose will possibly change too. Continually seek God and you will find Him.

"But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

Trust me when I say there is so much freedom in being exactly who God created you to be. You don't have to be like other people. In fact, the world doesn't need replicas, they need originals. And when you stop comparing your journey to other people's journeys and acknowledge how our Father

uniquely created you, accept what His Word says is truth about you, and walk in it with authority, I truly believe you will be unstoppable and will accomplish mighty things for the Kingdom of God. Your purpose will be unlocked, and you will change our world.

Reflection Questions

1. Have I been dissatisfied with the way God made me? Do I believe God doesn't make mistakes? Does that include how He made me? Do I need to confess and repent of any attitudes about this?
2. Have I defined myself by what I do, what I have done, or how others see me? Does my worth come from a title?
3. Have I used similar excuses as Moses did for not stepping out of my comfort zone to pursue my purpose? What excuses have I used? What does God's Word say about those excuses?
4. Have I ever compared myself to others, wishing I had their skills, giftings, or ministry? Why is this not helpful?
5. Has God given me any gifts, talents, or abilities that I have not yet developed? How can this affect my purpose? How can I develop them and use them for God's glory?

Action Steps

1. Look up and write out the verses under **Find out what God's Word has to say about who you are.** Place them where you can see them every day. Read and memorize them so you will believe what God says about who you are. Use them to fight the lies of the enemy when he tries to make you believe differently.
2. Write your answers to the questions under **Discover how God uniquely created you.**
3. Write your answers to the **MISSION STATEMENT** worksheet in the Appendix of this book. Prayerfully

considering your answers to this and #2 above, write what you believe to be your Mission (Purpose) Statement, and ask the Lord to guide and empower you to fulfill it.

Lesson 4:
**BECOMING A MODEL OF THE ULTIMATE
CHANGEMAKER**
Keith West

Many years ago, a co-worker told me about a child he knew who received a blanket when he was an infant. The child quickly became attached to it and seldom went anywhere without it. Over the years, the blanket became discolored and frayed from its constant companionship to the rambunctious child. Eventually it began to have a unique odor that no amount of washing could remove. The child's parents knew something must be done, yet they didn't want to traumatize their son by depriving him of his security blanket.

Putting their heads together to figure out a solution, the parents came up with a brilliant idea. Every time they took the blanket from the child to wash it, they would take a pair of scissors and cut off a small portion of the blanket, causing it to slowly get smaller and smaller. Eventually, the child folded up the small remnant that remained and carried it around in his pocket, still gaining comfort and reassurance knowing that it was close by.

One day, my co-worker noticed that the little boy paused in mid-play to reach into his pocket and retrieve the small square of remaining blanket. He carefully unfolded it and began to gently rub it against the side of his face. In a minute or two, fully comforted and confident, the young boy lovingly re-folded the blanket and gently placed it back into his pocket. He then went back to what he was previously doing with renewed energy, believing all would be well as long as his faithful blanket was with him. That's an endearing story, isn't it? Our hearts go out to the little boy who simply couldn't part with a relic from his childhood.

Now imagine for a moment that I invite this young man to have lunch with me 30 years later. As we sit down and begin to scan the menu, the young man quietly reaches into his shirt pocket and lovingly retrieves that same tattered piece of blanket. He then unfolds it and gently rubs it against the side of his face for a minute or two before folding it carefully and putting it away. Imagine the look on my face! "Check, please!" What was endearing 30 years ago would be quite strange and concerning today. Why? Because emotionally and physically mature adults don't usually do that kind of thing. At some point, we all have to leave childish things behind in order to embrace adulthood.

The same is true of our spiritual lives. Spiritual immaturity is natural and sometimes endearing in new followers of Jesus Christ. When you have been in a personal relationship with Jesus for many years though, spiritual immaturity is concerning and unbecoming to a true disciple. The Apostle Paul once stated, "I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready" (1 Corinthians 3:2). Paul didn't find this lack of spiritual maturity endearing at all. In fact, he described the root of their immaturity as worldliness. He longed for them to grow up in their faith so they would live by the Spirit and model the character of Jesus Christ.

In Philippians 3:1-21, the Apostle Paul explains the process of growing in your faith to the point where you imitate Christ in the way you think, act, and communicate. Paul's desire was for all believers to become models of the greatest Changemaker the world has ever known, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Hope and Expectations

Paul started with a clear hope and expectation for himself. "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but

will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20). He was praying that he would continue to be a courageous model of Jesus Christ so Christ would be glorified in his life.

Paul then shared his expectations for members of the church in Philippi. It was actually a recurring theme in some of his other letters to various churches as well. Therefore, it is instructive for all believers in Christ.

Paul expected that:

1. **God would complete His work in them.**

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God never does anything halfway or in a haphazard manner. He always finishes what He sets out to accomplish. Father God has a goal and purpose for each of His children, and He lovingly orchestrates their spiritual growth and development with the ultimate goal of His children becoming models of Jesus Christ.

2. **Believers would live in a manner worthy of the gospel.**

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). Our conduct matters greatly to God. Our lifestyle is supposed to be worthy of the sacrifice Jesus Christ made on our behalf. Paul expects us to be accountable for the way we live, but doesn't expect us to do it in our own strength. That's why he refers to standing firm together in one Spirit. The Holy Spirit and the community of faith help us pursue a holy lifestyle that pleases God. Never forget that you are not in

this journey alone. God is with you and his church is here to help you live a life that makes much of Christ and points others to Him.

3. Believers would hold firmly to the gospel.

"...striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you" (Philippians 1:27-28). Maybe you have never been persecuted for the sake of the gospel. Or maybe you have often experienced direct opposition and threats for your faith in Jesus Christ. Paul encourages believers to not be frightened, but to pull together in unity to encourage and sustain one another as we all hold firmly to the gospel. God Himself provides strength to endure and stand firm in the face of persecution, even when it is coming from your own family who do not understand or accept your relationship with Jesus. He also provides a community of faith—a Christian family—to support you as you seek to honor Him with a steadfast life.

4. Believers would reach spiritual maturity.

"Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do" (Philippians 3:17). Maturity is a natural process in physical development. Infants become toddlers. Toddlers become adolescents. Adolescents eventually enter adulthood, where they take on more responsibility for themselves and others. They weigh their decisions more carefully in light of consequences and outcomes. The same is true of spiritual maturity. It should be a natural process as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and God lovingly works to complete the work He has started in us. Eventually this maturation should lead to us becoming models of Jesus Christ whom others look to as examples of how to live in a manner worthy of the gospel and how to fulfill the calling we have received from God.

Four Milestones to Becoming a Model of Jesus Christ

How do we know if we are becoming the kind of disciples Jesus came to create and mobilize? What does that journey look like? The answer is found in Philippians 3 as the Apostle Paul provides four spiritual milestones.

Milestone #1: Embracing Our Identity from Christ (Philippians 3:1-3, 9)

When you and I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, something wonderful happened: We passed from death to life (1 John 3:14). We became a new creation in Christ. "The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). In other words, we embraced a new identity in Christ. Our identity is who we really are.

Before we met Christ, we were all spiritually dead. "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit which is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show us the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:1-7).

Our true identity in Christ cannot be taken away. It is a gift from God. We were fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. Our hearts were made new by the Holy Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ. We are now "a chosen people, a royal

priesthood, God's special possession so that we might declare His praises" (1 Peter 2:9). We are forever His children and members of His household (Ephesians 2:19). You are a son or daughter of the King! Never forget that!

Milestone #2: Pursuing Intimacy with Christ (Philippians 3:7-11)

Our intimacy with Christ grows as we embrace our true identity in Christ. The Apostle Paul described this intimacy in three ways in this passage.

1. Paul described the *surpassing worth of knowing Christ*. In other words, intimacy with Christ is priceless! Our personal relationship with Christ is of infinite value. No thing or person could ever compare to Him. Everything else pales in comparison.
2. Paul mentioned *being found in Christ*. In a marriage relationship, the Bible tells us that two people become one flesh. They are melded together as one person. You and I are no longer enemies of God as we once were before we placed our faith in Jesus. We have been reconciled to God through the sacrificial death of His Son, and we are now one with God through our relationship with Jesus Christ. We, "who were once far away from God, have been brought near through Christ" (Ephesians 2:13), and we can become as intimate with Him as we choose to be.
3. Paul reminded believers in the church of Philippi, that knowing Christ was not just a head knowledge but an experiential knowledge. Just like Paul, they could *know the power of Christ's resurrection*. They would *participate in His sufferings*, and they would eventually imitate Christ's death and resurrection through their own experience of leaving this earth. Everything Christ will ask of us, He has already done on our behalf. When we go through

suffering, pain, heartache, and eventually death, we will not be experiencing it alone.

Christ is with us, intimately fellowshiping with us and encouraging us all along the way, whether or not we fully realize it. God offers us an intimate relationship, not based on fear, but based upon His everlasting love for us. God loves you completely and desires for you to be close to Him.

Milestone #3: Attaining Maturity in Christ (Philippians 3:7-8, 12-16)

Spiritual maturity is built on the foundation of our identity from Christ and our intimacy with Christ.

The Apostle Paul expected believers in Philippi to eventually reach spiritual maturity as their lives were transformed by submission to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Their transformation would be displayed in their inner being as God shaped their hearts, minds, spirits, and wills to conform to the image of His Son. It would also be displayed in their relationships as they produced the fruit of the Spirit, lived gospel-centered lives, and served others with faithfulness and compassion. Paul shared some of the characteristics of spiritual maturity, such as knowing what to treasure (v. 7-8), knowing where to focus our lives (v. 12-14), and knowing how to live to please Christ (v. 15-16).

Spiritual maturity is natural, but it requires sacrifice and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:1-2).

Milestone #4: Living as Models of Christ (Philippians 3:17-21)

Being a model of Christ does not mean you have to put pressure on yourself to be perfect. If that were the case, even Paul himself would be disqualified. However, it is a big responsibility to live in such a way that others want to follow your example. Being an example who others will want to follow requires humility, self-discipline, accountability, and honesty.

Becoming a model of Christ is a natural outcome of embracing our identity in Christ, pursuing intimacy with Christ, and attaining maturity in Christ. As these foundational truths are synthesized, they produce four characteristics that will help you become a Changemaker.

Characteristics of a Changemaker

1. Changemakers have a discerning mind.

(Read Philippians 3:2.)

Paul exhorted believers to be watchful and alert for those who would seek to cause division and distort the good news about our identity in Christ. He also prayed for them to receive heavenly assistance. "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

2. Changemakers offer a surrendered life.

(Read Philippians 3:7-8.)

We cannot be a model of Christ if we haven't surrendered to His lordship. Surrender involves placing God's priorities and purposes for our lives above our own. It also involves

putting to death those thoughts, motives, sinful habits, and selfish ambitions that keep us from being absolutely surrendered to His will. We must be willing to count everything a loss for the sake of Christ. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:22).

3. Changemakers demonstrate a steadfast faith.

(Read Philippians 3:12-14.)

In God's infinite wisdom, He has chosen to refine our faith through testing. Faith is a spiritual muscle that must be exercised in order for it to grow stronger. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6), and few things please Him more than seeing believers being steadfast in their faith. Nobody wants to follow the example of a person who doubts all the time or shrinks back from persecution and trials. Other believers are inspired by stories of people just like them who chose to believe God and live courageously.

Paul exhorts all believers to demonstrate a steadfast faith. "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved - and that by God" (Philippians 1:27-28).

4. Changemakers possess a humble attitude.

(Read Philippians 3:3-4; 15-17.)

Believe it or not, Paul demonstrated great humility when he encouraged believers to "join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do" (Philippians 3:17).

According to Philippians 3, here's what godly humility looks like: boasting in Christ rather than in our own deeds and accomplishments, serving God by His Spirit rather than through our prideful flesh, embracing our true identity in Christ, and following the example of others who are farther along in the journey. And of course, the greatest example of humility is the ultimate Changemaker, Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Do you sincerely want to know who you are in Christ? Do you want to grow in intimacy with Christ? Do you want to attain maturity in Christ? If so, then there is good news for you! All of this spiritual growth is possible, but not in your own strength. The Holy Spirit abides in you to help you, and God has placed people in your life who are models of Christ. As you mature in Christ, you become a model others will follow as they seek to become mature in Christ too. You, then, become a changemaker in your home, school, workplace, community, and perhaps even the world!

Be encouraged. If you surrender your life to God, He will provide the power and resources for you to reach spiritual maturity. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Apply yourself to your spiritual growth, follow the godly example of mature believers, and rely on God to complete His work in your life. "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). God will help you become a model of Jesus Christ, the greatest Changemaker the world has ever known!

Reflection Questions

1. What of these is hardest to embrace about my identity in Christ? Why?
 - I am created in the image of God.
 - I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
 - I am chosen by God and belong to Him.
 - I am a new creation in Christ.
 - I am completely forgiven.
 - I am deeply loved by God.
 - I can become a model of Jesus Christ.
2. How am I currently investing in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ? What is hindering that intimacy?
3. Am I making significant progress in becoming spiritually mature? If not, what is stunting my growth?
4. Who do I look up to as a model of Jesus? What have I learned from this person? What can I do to learn more from this person?
5. As I reflect on Christ's death, resurrection, and future return, am I modeling a life of true discipleship to Jesus Christ? How could I set a better example for others?

Action Steps

1. Make it a daily habit to read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal its application to your life.
2. Ask the Lord what next steps He wants you to take to grow spiritually and obey what He tells you.
3. When you fail to do what you know you should do, or do what you know you shouldn't do, thank God for revealing that to you, confess it as sin, repent, and move on with confidence of your forgiveness.
4. Make appointments to talk with people whose walks with the Lord are solid, to ask them how they have grown spiritually and what they recommend for your spiritual growth.

5. Ask the Lord if there's anyone He wants you to mentor or disciple. If He brings one or more people to your mind, seek His guidance for how to best do that, and trust Him to bring about a good result as you trust Him to work through you.

Lesson 5:
LOVE IN ACTION
Vivek Samuel

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." John 15:9-13

The foundation of your relationship with Christ is believing that God loves you. It means believing in this fact even when you are going through trials and have nowhere else to turn. It means believing things will work out for you exactly according to God's intentions. Most of all, it means believing God's plan for you is inherently better than any plan you could make for yourself, and you can trust Him with your whole heart because you know He loves you.

We love because he first loved us (John 4:19).

Nobody in the world has loved us or will love us more than Jesus loves us. He loved us so much that He sacrificed His life for us. Jesus shows us how to love each other, just as He loved us, and empowers us to do so. Knowing Jesus' great love for us helps us look beyond our needs and desires to the needs and desires of other people around us. His love enables us to shed layers of selfishness, pettiness, jealousy, anger, pride, resentment, and anything else that stands in the way of His love. But most importantly, Jesus's love in us helps us rise above our human imperfections to a more transcendent state of love for our Creator and fellow humans.

"...having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

If you want to gauge the intensity of Jesus' love, just imagine going through intense pain and death to atone for the sins of people who you know will continue to sin. Would you be able to do it? I don't think anyone would be able to do it. And yet, Jesus did it. He not only taught us to love our friends, but also our enemies and those who have wronged us (Matthew 5:44). He told us to turn the other cheek and walk the extra mile for people who need our aid and assistance (Matthew 5:39).

If we want to love like Jesus, we must fully open our hearts and minds to allow Jesus and His teachings to reside and rule within us. When we do this, Jesus' love inside us softens our hearts and changes our minds, which may have previously been unbending. When Jesus touches our hearts, our minds can be renewed and our lives transformed.

How to Love Like Jesus

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34).

As we follow Jesus's example, we will be mindful of others around us and treat them with kindness. Day in and day out, we are surrounded by people who come from different walks of life. We don't know what has happened in their lives or what challenges they may be going through. We have no idea about the pain they might be carrying. Kindness, along with love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control is the fruit of the Spirit working in our lives (Galatians 5:22).

Jesus served others without expecting anything in return. There is a joy that comes only from helping others. Serving others is an opportunity to love like Jesus. It often also leads to conversations about Jesus and His love.

Jesus was full of grace and humility, and as we are filled with Jesus, His grace and humility is manifested through us. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

When we love others with grace and humility, it makes it difficult to relate to them in a judgmental way. Jesus did not pass judgment on anyone who came to Him, nor did He turn away people who others had cast out. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8).

Abiding in the Love of Christ

"So, we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (John 4:16).

Believing that God loves us causes us to want to abide in Him. Abiding in Him means spending quality time praying, reading our Bibles, and communicating with God throughout our days. Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

We are to abide, not strive. Only as you receive the love of Jesus, can you love like Jesus. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love" (John 15:9).

Jesus taught us to love each other as He loved us. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). When Jesus asked His disciples to do that, it may have seemed to them that He was asking them to do

the impossible. How could they love other people with the same intensity with which Jesus loved them? How could they make their love free from judgment or any other obligations?

Jesus knew all the shortcomings of His disciples, but He still commanded them (and us) to love one another. He wants us to show each other love through acceptance, forgiveness, and compassion, just like He has shown us. He wants us to look past each other's differences and everything that sets us apart. This kind of love is something rooted in selflessness and means putting other people's needs above our own.

In Life and Death and After Death

Jesus fully demonstrated His love for us through His life and death. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). He taught lessons of love and acceptance and enabled us to be in relationship with the Father. He served those who needed His help. He embraced those who had been discarded by others. He blessed children. And although He is King of Kings, He washed His disciples' feet. "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Not only did Jesus demonstrate His love for us through His life and death and provide a great example for us to follow, but He also now empowers us to love through His Holy Spirit who lives in those of us who have received Him as our Savior. In John 14: 18-20, Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:10-12).

Reflection Questions

1. Do I truly believe that God loves me? How does my life demonstrate that?
2. How do my thoughts and actions change when I begin to doubt God's love for me?
3. Can I earn God's love? Can I do something that would make God stop loving me? (See Romans 8:38-39.)
4. What does it mean to love like Jesus loved?
5. What are some practical ways I can serve others?
6. How can I daily abide in Christ?
7. Who empowers me to love like Jesus loved?
8. What should I do when I find it hard to love someone?

Action Steps

1. In your prayer time, ask for the following:
 - to fully receive Jesus' love
 - the ability to love others like Jesus loves you
 - to be filled with grace and humility
2. Take the next week to meditate on John 4:19: "We love because he first loved us."
3. Do a word study on the following words to learn more about how Jesus loved:
 - Kindness
 - Serve
 - Grace
 - Humility

4. List and study some other words that describe how Jesus loved.
5. Each night before going to bed, journal about the ways you experienced love from the Lord and from others, and ways you demonstrated love towards others you know and others you don't know. Thank God for these experiences and ask Him to prompt you to show love to others tomorrow. Do this for one month.
6. Write out 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 replacing the words "love" and "it" with your name. Post what you have written in a place (such as your bathroom mirror) where you will see it often. Ask the Lord to make those statements true of your life.

Book Resources:

The Pursuit of God (The Definitive Classic) by A.W. Tozer

Equipped to Tell the Next Generation by Donna R. Ryan

Experiencing the Heart of Jesus: Knowing His Heart, Feeling His Love by Max Lucado

The Passion Generation: The Seemingly Reckless, Definitely Disruptive, but Far from Hopeless Millennials by Grant Skeldon

Online Resources:

Love in Action: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/love-action-i>

How to love like Jesus: <https://www.symbis.com/blog/how-to-love-like-jesus/>

What does the Bible say about Jesus' love:
https://www.openbible.info/topics/jesus_love

Lesson 6:
**A CHANGEMAKER'S WORLD IN
PERSPECTIVE**
Keith West

The essence of visionary leadership is this: Look carefully, listen closely, pay attention. Tell others what you hear and see. At first glance, three of these activities may seem redundant. They are not. Rather they are distinct disciplines of spiritual leadership that must be properly honed to lead others toward God's eternal purposes (see Ezekiel 40:1-4).

Spiritual leaders who are visionaries must keep in mind the source of their perspective. The credit is not theirs to claim. God is the one who creates the vision, decides when to reveal it, and chooses to whom He will entrust that vision. Changemakers are chosen stewards of God's creative and redemptive vision for a world in desperate need of His guidance and deliverance.

Ezekiel was a young changemaker who inspired others with a God-given vision. He was a Jewish priest in Jerusalem whom God called at the age of 30 to be a prophet. Ezekiel's name meant "God strengthens," and God would indeed use Ezekiel to strengthen the hearts of His people in the most difficult times. Let's take a few minutes to look at the setting surrounding the life and ministry of Ezekiel.

Times Were Hard

The nation of Israel had been besieged by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of the Babylonian Empire. Life became extremely difficult, as the city of Jerusalem held out as long as it possibly could against their siege. Eventually, the city was captured and most of the people were taken captive and led away from their homeland to the city of

Babylon. This disaster had been foretold by God's prophets; they warned God's covenant people to turn away from their sin and rebellion and repent in humility before God.

Instead of heeding God's invitation to repent and return to Him, they chose to rebel even more and harden their hearts against His warnings. Eventually God brought about the destruction and captivity that His wayward people deserved. It broke God's heart to discipline His people, but it was just and necessary for them to reap the consequences of their systemic obstinance and rebellion. For 70 years, God's chosen people would be enslaved and alienated from their homeland. It was definitely a low point in the history of Israel.

Ezekiel had been forcefully captured and led away to Babylon with the others. As God's servant, Ezekiel was doing his best to obey God, encourage God's people, and patiently endure God's discipline because He trusted in God's enduring love and faithfulness. Being God's prophet was especially hard for Ezekiel. God required things of Ezekiel that he asked of no other prophet.

Ezekiel trusted God and obeyed every instruction, regardless of how it affected his reputation, because he knew that God was speaking through his words and actions in order to communicate with His people and give them hope of a better future. God required much of Ezekiel and entrusted him with visions and insights that He gave to no one else.

Hope Was Scarce

The nation of Israel had been torn apart by war and captivity. Their culture and former way of life had been virtually destroyed, and they were forced to put their lives back together and move forward with little hope of ever returning to their old way of life. Their world had been forcefully disrupted and permanently altered, which led to a grim

acceptance of the permanency of their circumstances. They would be outcasts and aliens, forced to adapt to a culture that was worlds apart from their own. From their perspective, God had abandoned them and left them with little hope of things changing in their lifetimes. Trust in God's deliverance was at an all-time low. After all, they had been warned repeatedly by a host of God's prophets, yet had refused to listen. Each difficult day reminded them they had done this to themselves and were now reaping the consequences they deserved.

The Future Was Uncertain

Those in exile were informed through God's prophets their exile would last 70 years. When they first heard this, they had been in exile for 25 years, which meant they had 45 years of captivity remaining. It meant that young adults would spend their whole lives in Babylon. Small children might one day live to see their homeland, but they would have little memory of their former way of life. The nation of Israel was basically serving a life sentence in captivity and had no idea what the future held for its civilization. Would the people of Israel be mistreated and eventually exterminated by their conquerors? Would their children and grandchildren be assimilated so deeply into Babylonian culture that their language, religion, and traditions would eventually be forgotten? No one really knew what the future held. It was a big question mark in everyone's minds.

Does all this sound familiar? In the midst of global health crises, political upheavals, wars, famine, and natural disasters, which have brought about major disruption and anxiety on almost every level, much of our world is suffering. Life is hard, hope is scarce, and the future is uncertain. Just like the nation of Israel in Ezekiel's time, we desperately need God's intervention. Will God choose to act? If so, how will we know that He is intervening on our behalf?

God Responded

In the midst of national hopelessness and uncertainty, when faith and optimism were at an all-time low, God responded. He had not turned His back on His people, nor forgotten His promises. His love had never faded, and His plans and purposes would not fail. Ezekiel 40:1-4 reveals at least five distinct ways God responded to His people in the midst of their distress.

1. God raised up a spiritual leader.

When Ezekiel the priest was 30 years old, the word of the Lord came to him, and the hand of the Lord was on him (Ezekiel 1:1-3). God took the initiative by selecting a spiritual leader who He knew would respond in faith and obedience. God would make Ezekiel a changemaker by placing His word in Ezekiel's heart and His hand on Ezekiel's life. Through the Holy Spirit, God would show Ezekiel visions that were meant to rekindle hope, inspire repentance, and restore intimacy between God and His people.

2. God created a spiritual milestone in that leader's life.

From where Ezekiel sat, the world didn't look so good. Evil seemed to be prevailing over good. Wickedness appeared to be the norm and righteousness the exception. Religious pluralism was deeply imbedded in the culture of God's own people; they continually bowed their knees and offered their hearts in worship to idols and false gods, while God's temple lay in ruins. Civilization lacked a moral compass and spiritual leaders did nothing to help. In fact they were major contributors to the apathy and moral decay of society. It was a bleak perspective indeed.

Then God did something extraordinary. Ezekiel described the exact moment in his life when God gave him a whole

new perspective. "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me to the city. In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain..." (Ezekiel 40:1-2).

What Ezekiel described is a spiritual milestone that God erected in his life. This precise moment would be a special marker for him to look back on in times of difficulty and discouragement. When people rejected Ezekiel and failed to heed the words God entrusted to him, he would remember exactly where he was and what he was doing when God called him and showed him great and mighty things.

As a changemaker, make note of the spiritual milestones when God has spoken clearly to you. Never forget them! Anticipate and record the future markers He will show you as well, as you continue to faithfully follow Him. Cling to the hope they provide when the challenges of leadership tempt you to waiver in your faith. These markers are gifts from God, and they are meant to remind you of how God raised you up and singled you out for His eternal purposes. They will help you recall the words He spoke to your heart and the vision He entrusted to you.

3. God provided spiritual empowerment to his leader.

Ezekiel wasn't going to face the challenges of leadership alone. God empowered him with a message, a mission, and a clear vision for what God intended to do on behalf of His people. The source of this power in Ezekiel's life was the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel described the moment when God's Spirit entered his life. "And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. And he said to me, 'Son of man, I send

you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me ...” (Ezekiel 2: 2-3).

Ezekiel wasn't alone. God's Spirit empowered and equipped him with everything necessary to fulfill the mission God entrusted to him. God's Spirit will empower and equip you as a changemaker too.

4. God took his leader to the mountain top.

Ezekiel had a limited perspective from his own vantage point. God had to take him to new heights and show him the bigger picture. Have you ever climbed a tall tree, looked out of a tall building, or scaled a high mountain? The view is quite different from up above. Objects on the ground are still visible, but they are no longer obstacles to seeing what is beyond you. Your new position gives you a wider perspective and a more encompassing understanding. God gave Ezekiel a clear and compelling vision of the future and the mighty work He intended to do on behalf of His people.

5. God gave his leader specific instructions.

Once the Lord placed Ezekiel on the mountain top, God's messenger appeared and gave Ezekiel very clear instructions. Here is how Ezekiel described it: "And the man said to me, 'Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel'" (Ezekiel 40:4).

Let's think about these four instructions for a moment.

Look carefully. This brings to mind the phrase "head on a swivel," which is often used in military or sports terminology. In other words, don't just focus on what is right in front of you. Have a 360-degree gaze that takes in

everything going on all around you. Let nothing escape your gaze.

Listen closely. It's as if God is saying, "Ezekiel, I'm only going to say this once, so hang on to every word. Don't just hear Me. Listen intently to My words, My inflection, and the tone of My voice. You may never hear anything more important than what I am about to tell you, and you don't want to miss anything."

Pay attention. The purpose of this command is to encourage Ezekiel to remove all other distractions, be fully in the moment, and ignore everything else. As you read this book, you may also be chatting with a friend, scanning social media platforms, eating something, listening to music, or watching your favorite movie. If so, you may be giving these words some of your attention, but you are not giving them your undivided attention. There is a difference between multi-tasking and being fully engaged in one pursuit. God is telling Ezekiel to clear his mind of everything else right now and focus completely on what He is about to show him. Nothing else matters in this moment but God's presence and His words.

Tell the people everything you hear and see. Here is the main purpose of the other three commands. If Ezekiel didn't look carefully, listen closely, and pay attention, he would miss something important that God wanted him to communicate. God didn't take him to the mountain top for him to keep the good news to himself. He was to go back and inspire God's people, encouraging them to hope again. God wanted them to know that what he showed Ezekiel was not how things presently were, but how things would one day be.

"Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the

east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple" (Ezekiel 43:1-5).

Before the vision God gave Ezekiel would become a reality, God promised to do two things:

First, He would renew His covenant with His people. God had not broken the covenant. He had kept every promise He had made to the nation of Israel. It was the people who had repeatedly violated their part of the covenant. God would take the initiative to forgive them and renew what had been broken.

Second, God would transform their hearts. God told Ezekiel, "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). God would be faithful to do for them what they were incapable to do for themselves. They served a gracious, loving God who, although He allowed them to feel the painful consequences of their rebellion, would be faithful to forgive and restore them to intimacy with Himself. Ezekiel had the privilege of relaying this message of redemption to God's people.

Changemaker, by faith I believe that there will come a day in your country when God uses your inspired leadership to put a new heart and new spirit in His people, filling churches with His glory and spreading His radiance throughout your land.

A Blessing

I would like to pronounce a blessing over you as you seek to fulfill God's vision within your current sphere of influence and as He expands your influence.

May God raise you up as an Ezekiel for this generation. May you walk in obedience, devote your life to God's service, communicate His truth with conviction, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

May God take you to the mountain top to show you a glimpse of His mighty plan, and may you inspire others with what you hear and see.

May you look closely, listen carefully, pay attention, and tell others everything God shows you.

As challenging as your present circumstances may be, don't lose heart, young Ezekiel! There is a grander vision for you to embrace if you stay the course and trust God's plan.

Ezekiel was a young changemaker who willingly allowed God to expand his limited perspective. May you join him in the courageous journey of seeing the world differently, obeying God courageously, and inspiring a new generation to place its hope in God.

Reflection Questions

1. Do I look carefully? Listen closely? Pay attention? Tell others what I see and hear?
2. Do I give God my full attention when I read His Word and pray?
3. Am I living for my own desires, or for God and His purposes?

4. Has God given me a vision of what He wants to do through me? If so, am I moving forward in that vision? If not, am I seeking His plan for my life?
5. Am I willing to obey God if people mock me or won't listen to what He wants me to tell them?
6. How have I seen God respond during difficult times in my life?
7. Who am I trusting to fulfill God's plan for my life – the Holy Spirit or my own strength, wisdom and will power?

Action Steps

1. Take some time to reflect on spiritual milestones in your life and write them down. Use them to remember how God has moved in your life and in the life of others through you.
2. Take a higher view of your life to this point, and notice patterns of consistent leadings and responses. Repent, if necessary, and recommit to obeying with God's help and power.
3. Personalize the blessing at the end of this chapter as a prayer, and pray it often.

Lesson 7:
INFLUENCING CULTURE
Dr. Shannan Crawford

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

Experiencing the Authority of Jesus

Standing in front of an angry audience, addressing a crowd of regional leaders in an area under Sharia Law, I was completely alone.

With a throbbing migraine, nauseated, and dripping sweat from extreme heat, my mind was foggy, making it difficult to complete the talk I had been invited to give, providing training on trauma counseling. The conference was hosted in a large area in a school building, and yet, crammed with incensed educators with no air conditioning, it felt cramped and stifling.

The conference leaders found the principal's office for me to wait in while they had their midday prayer. My brain felt like it was going to explode. I was miserable. Laying in the principal's office in the dark, seeing no hope of things improving, my mind flooded with thoughts like, "This is pointless. It's not working, so why bother? Who do I think I am? I'm too insignificant to make a difference. They're not listening. I should just leave!" Thousands of scenarios of how I could abandon the situation altogether flooded my mind.

The Holy Spirit reminded me of a friend who prayed for me before the trip. She said, "I see you, talking in front of a crowd, wearing a headscarf, and the glory of God is shining around you." I suddenly knew that *this* was that moment and a spiritual battle was trying to stop the glory of God from shining in this place. The Holy Spirit also revealed that while

the enemy brought the migraine and negative thoughts to try to get me to leave, God caused the leaders to place me in the principal's office, which represents a place of regional authority.

Awakened to this new perspective, I stood and began marching around the principal's office, declaring the glory of Jesus in the region. As I worshipped Jesus in the place of authority, the migraine suddenly left and was replaced by a supernatural joy that instantly rejuvenated and strengthened me.

Completing their time of prayer, the leaders returned to collect me to finish the second half of the training. The first half of the day, the region was spiritually closed, causing the conference attendees to be agitated and aggressive toward me. After claiming Jesus in the place of regional authority however, the shift was swift and truly miraculous.

During the second half of the day, the attendees were gracious and honoring, literally hanging on every word I said. By the end of the training, the attendees swarmed to get photos with me as if I were a celebrity, when hours prior they had been disdainful of my existence.

That evening, I had dinner with brave nationals who moved to this closed region to be undercover missionaries. Sitting at dinner, I was struck by the high stakes of the day. A covert Christian told me that I was the first outsider to speak in this region because the leaders are suspicious of outsiders. He said if I had left in the middle of the talk, I would have dishonored them, and it would have confirmed their mistrust of all outsiders.

He said he had a job interview scheduled for the upcoming week to be an educator at that school. He sensed that if I had offended them, their hearts would have hardened, and they

would have closed the door of opportunity for outsiders—including himself and other covert missionaries—from being able to enter positions of influence in this region.

I was struck by the insidiousness of the enemy's attempt to try to get me to leave, and thus offend my hosts, as a way to close the door against those whom God was preparing to be influencers in this region.

May we be aware of the ripple effect of how our choices so directly affect others.

I thank God for my friend's prayer of encouragement; it prepared me for when the enemy flooded me physically and mentally. The Holy Spirit used it to help me realize this was no ordinary migraine or audience; this was a spiritual battle, being fought in the heavenly realm over the spiritual authority of the region.

In the natural realm, nothing changed that could account for the supernatural shift in the conference attendees' attitudes. And yet, by claiming Jesus' authority over the spiritual atmosphere, everything changed! Scripture teaches that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

By the end of the day, the leaders gave me a plaque with their regional crest, much like a key to the city. This was the beginning of the Holy Spirit teaching me the importance of Christians needing to claim the high places of authority.

Missionaries Influencing Culture

As a five-year-old, I remember being convinced of two things: Jesus is real, and I am called to be a missionary. I put my

“calling” in a box and it never crossed my mind that it could look differently than what I assumed. Have you ever placed your calling in a box?

I thought being in ministry meant being on staff in a church. While some are called to serve in church, God is calling many of us into secular industries: to be covert missionaries as leaders in business, government, media, arts, entertainment, education, and the family.

I was completely shocked when God directed me to go to university to earn a doctorate in psychology. As someone with learning disabilities who struggled in school my entire life, I felt insecure, unqualified, and confused about how being a psychologist could be part of being a missionary. Even when it didn't make sense, with wobbly faith, I said yes to His plan.

God cares about people. He cares for the hurt, lost, and broken people of the world. God directed me toward higher education to be an ambassador of compassion for those who are hurting. The region I wrote about earlier was overcome by years of violent civil war, devastating natural disasters, and pervasive domestic abuse. The regional leaders sought out a psychologist to train trauma counselors. If I had submitted a visa application to enter that region as a missionary, it would have been denied. But as a psychologist, they expedited my visa and opened a closed region to a covert missionary.

Seven Mountains of Culture

In 1975, Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission, Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (later called Cru), and Francis Schaeffer, theologian and founder of L'Abri, each separately received a vision from the Lord about how to advance the Kingdom of God in this generation. They were shown that Christians need to reclaim places of leadership in each of the major spheres of culture.

God is inviting us to be fully surrendered to Jesus so He can trust us to disciple nations in the highest places of influence.

The seven mountains that influence how a society functions are Government/Military, Education, Arts/Entertainment, Business/Economy, Media, Family, and Religion. Jesus came to redeem lost, hurting, and broken people. Historically, Christians have focused on claiming the religion mountain, while leaving the other six mountains of culture to be influenced and controlled by the world. No wonder so much of our culture is corrupt, perverse, and hopeless.

"When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2). When Christians do not step into spheres of cultural leadership, darkness fills the high places, which creates an oppressive spiritual atmosphere in schools, hospitals, court rooms, news stations, film studios, etc. You are called for such a time as this; called to be a changemaker in one or more of these mountains of culture.

It's Already in You

God knit you together in your mother's womb, placing in you everything you will need to fulfill your Kingdom assignment. God was highly intentional in choosing your gender, the region of the world in which you live, the timeframe of your life, your experiences, your sphere of influence, and your family background. He created you with specific talents, spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and desires. Every detail was intentional because He has a specific plan for you to fulfill, and it is much larger than you could ever imagine or accomplish on your own. Your desire to make films, music, to become an athlete, or be a politician may very well be from the Lord.

Discovering Your Vision

You can start to discover your God-given vision and calling in these four ways:

1. **Ask for vision.** I notice I am connecting with God's plan for me when my heart feels stirred, my eyes tear up, and my head doesn't understand why. I write these "heart leaps" in a binder so I can talk to Jesus about them. To clarify, just because we have a desire, does not mean that we will do that exact thing. But it is a great place to start a conversation with the Lord.
2. **Look for clues.** I see these "heart leaps" as clues God is using to reveal my Kingdom assignment. God may reveal your clues differently. Do not disregard your desires as "worldly," rather talk to Jesus about everything and see what He tells you. He wants you to know His plan for you and will be faithful to reveal it.
3. **"Write the vision; make it plain"** (Habakkuk 2:2). Write down the dreams in your heart and ask Jesus if He would like you to do anything to walk toward those dreams. He may direct you to act on some dreams now, while others are for a future season.
4. **Surrender it.** It is not our responsibility to make the vision happen. We do not want to presume and run ahead of God. Nor do we want to bury our talents. Be willing to obey God's leading each step along the way, even when it doesn't make sense to your finite mind. When He leads you to act, do so in His strength, at His perfect timing.

Strength in Weakness

The enemy will accuse you of your weaknesses, telling you

you're the wrong age, the wrong gender, you have the wrong motives, you're lacking in talent, experience, finances, connections, etc. Every anointed person in Scripture had weaknesses that disqualified them too. All that matters is that **YOU ARE GOD'S CHOICE!**

The Lord told the Apostle Paul that He would not take away the thorn in his flesh saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). May we learn to say with Paul, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses..." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Do not be surprised when you feel unqualified. God is placing you in positions where His strength will shine powerfully through your weaknesses. All you have to do is daily walk with Him. Like Esther and Joseph in the Bible, you may be the person God chooses to be in a position of influence to protect the lives of many people!

Stewardship

Everything in the Kingdom of God is about stewardship. God has given you talents. You may have a talent for music, math, leadership, acting, encouraging, painting, research, advocating for justice, etc. Do not bury your talent by waiting until you have a recognized position before using it (Matthew 25:14-30).

Rather, be faithful where you are currently planted. You do not need to be a leader to serve God faithfully in the day of small things (Zechariah 4:10). Joseph did not wait to use his gift of administration; he used his gift while in slavery and while in prison (Genesis 37). As Joseph was faithful with little, the Lord knew he could be trusted with more (Matthew 15:23). Look around you. What is already in your life with

which you can practice being faithful? (Luke 10:30-37).

Surrender Expectations

In completely surrendering to Jesus' call on your life, learn to release expectations and preconceived ideas. It is important to remember that Jesus is the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Lay aside the expectations you have placed on yourself and stop trying to live up to others' expectations of you. Stop looking to the right or to the left at what others are doing or have done. The Lord is the voice behind you directing *your* path (Isaiah 30:21). Your path is unique and will require great faith, surrender, and trust to walk forward as a changemaker into dark, mountain-of-culture places that need the light of Jesus (Matthew 5:16).

Some people may not understand your calling. While I was selecting my major for college, someone warned that if I studied psychology, I would lose my salvation by my junior year of college. I highly valued this person, so I seriously prayed. After much prayer, I felt strongly that Jesus was calling me into psychology. So, I chose to follow Jesus above trying to keep the approval of humans. Not only did I *not* lose my salvation (see Romans 8), but I grew more in love with Jesus and in awe of His creation. Moreover, as a psychologist, I have the privilege of serving as a covert missionary in dark areas that desperately need God's light.

I do not believe we should foolishly disregard counsel, because Jesus does speak to us through humans. We should always take everything back to Jesus, though, and keep Him and the truth of His Word—not human approval—as the ultimate authority over our lives.

Call to Action

The world is growing increasingly dark. Yet, that is not the

end of the story, because God made *you*. It is often darkest right before the light breaks forth. Daniel 11:32 says, "...the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action." When you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you accepted your role in the Kingdom of God to disciple nations by advancing His Kingdom on earth through your spheres of influence.

You are called and positioned to be part of the great unfolding of God's plan. Jesus is looking for those who will say, "Here am I Lord, send me" (Isaiah 6:8). By saying yes to God, you agree to be His representative everywhere you go.

You are called to be light in the world (John 17:14). As you serve with excellence in your existing sphere of influence, God will cause your gifts to make room for you, and to open doors that will bring you before great men (Proverbs 18:15-16). Like Esther, Joseph, Daniel, Deborah, David, Nehemiah, and so many others who were strategically positioned by God, you can be a changemaker in business, government, media, arts, entertainment, education, the family, religion, or wherever God places you.

May you ask God to open your spiritual eyes to see and understand (Proverbs 20:12) so you will know how to apply His authority (Matthew 28:18, Matthew 16:19), to claim the high places, and unlock the spiritual atmosphere over people and regions. Once you take the high places, the spiritual atmosphere remains open for others to become decision makers in government positions to positively shape the laws in the land, in business to improve the economy, in the entertainment industry to produce Holy Spirit inspired creativity, in news and radio to honestly share world events, or as His ambassadors in many other fields of service.

Reflection Questions

1. Has there been a time when I've experienced spiritual warfare? How did God bring victory at that time?
2. In what ways have my good choices or bad choices affected the lives of others?
3. To which "mountain of culture" do I feel most drawn?
4. Am I willing to follow the Lord's leading when it doesn't make sense or seems way beyond my ability?
5. How does knowing that the Lord's power is perfected in my weaknesses give me boldness when I'm afraid to do things the Lord asks me to do?
6. What talents has God given me? How can I use them for His glory?
7. Who is telling me that I'm not qualified to do something the Lord is asking me to do? What does the Bible say about this in Philippians 4:13?
8. Which is more important to me – the approval of God or the approval of humans? How do my decisions and actions reflect that?

Action Steps

1. Study what the Bible says about spiritual warfare, and prepare yourself for when (not if) it will happen. Know who your enemy is, recognize attacks, arm yourself with God's armor, and use His Word to defeat the enemy's schemes; his schemes try to prevent you from fulfilling God's plan for you and for others through you.
2. Ask the Lord to give you His vision for your life. Write down the dreams and desires in your heart. Ask Jesus, "What makes my heart leap? What about this do You want me to notice? Is there something You would like me to do in response to this?"
3. Ask The Lord to show you how He would like to use you to advance His Kingdom where He currently has you, and write what He reveals to you.

4. Pray this prayer (or something like it):

Father God, please forgive me for putting You in a box. Help me remove all expectations; I come to You like a child, truly seeking first Your Kingdom and righteousness. Give me a heart to desire friendship with You above all else. Give me Your vision for my life; help me recognize when You reveal clues about my destiny. Give me radical faith to trust You and follow You wherever You lead. Give me courage to wait when You say wait and go forward when You say to move ahead. Help me submit to Your process so I can be trusted in high places. Help me reject fear, insecurity, and small thinking. Help me be faithful in the places of humble beginnings. Help me use my influence for Your glory and honor. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Resources:

Invading Babylon: The 7 Mountain Mandate by Lance Wallnau and Bill Johnson

The Seven Mountain Mantle: Receiving the Joseph Anointing to Reform Nations by Johnny Enlow

The Seven Mountain Prophecy by Johnny Enlow

Shifting Atmospheres: Discerning and Displacing the Spiritual Forces Around You by Dawna de Silva

Kingdom Business Leaders:

<https://www.kingdombusinessleaders.com>

Hollywood Prayer Network:

<https://hollywoodprayernetwork.org>

Female Business Leaders: <https://4wordwomen.org>

Christian Counselors Association: <https://www.aacc.net>

Lesson 8:
THE PRACTICE OF CHANGEMAKING
Jordan Francis

I remember what it felt like being a successful university student on the outside, but dead on the inside. I had no idea how to fix what I felt. If there was a God, I knew I was going to be in trouble when I died. Fortunately, Jesus grabbed me out of that darkness in January 2010. Since then, my life has solely been about His mission in our world.

Because of this, I spend much of my time with young people, helping them prevent what happened to me from happening to them.

My hope for this chapter is to give you practical insight on how to be a changemaker for good.

The Next Generation

Your generation has been shaped by injustice. You have seen the tragedy, frailty, and superficiality of our world and you want something more. You want to make a difference, and not just in your neighborhoods, towns, and cities...but also in the world.

"The locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank" (Proverbs 30:27). A person can come up with an idea, post it on social media, and watch as it's shared all over the world. Others then get behind it to produce social action. Social media is an incredible tool that can mobilize people in hours.

The Genesis of a Changemaker

By God's grace, you have been uniquely created and shaped to bring about the very change you desire to see. But the real

questions are: How? When? And maybe most importantly, Why?

Why?

What is it that compels you? How has your story shaped you and what you care about? Knowing why you do something is essential to sustaining the effort it will take to accomplish what you set out to do for God's Kingdom.

How and When?

Once you have discovered why you want to do something, the how and when become clearer as you seek the Lord's guidance and are ready to step out in the ways He leads you.

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Proverbs 16:3). Whatever is in your heart to do, you must first give it all to God and He will direct your steps.

Leaders Give

As a changemaker, you can benefit from the wisdom of leaders who have gone before you. Without it, you will likely make many more mistakes. You will spend too much time figuring out what they have already discovered. Their experience will make that discovery process easier for you.

"Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance" (Proverbs 1:5).

For example, you can spend your whole life trying to learn how to build a business from scratch with no help. Or you can learn from someone who has already done that, saving yourself time, frustration, and hardship. You don't have to agree with everything experienced leaders say and do, but you can learn from their lives.

Learning from leaders and developing relationships with them are good investments of your time. Pray and look for leaders who exude the right kind of values, and follow them.

Look for leaders who will:

1. Give Power

You will recognize leaders who are serious about your generation because they share the power they have been given. They will give opportunities to lead, speak, disciple, learn, and grow.

2. Give Resources

If you believe something is important, you will invest in it. Find leaders who are willing to invest in you as part of the next generation. They will share their resources to help you succeed.

3. Give Time

This may be the most important thing you need from leaders. People who are willing to spend time with you are giving you something they can never get back: time. This means a lot and should be taken seriously. They may not have the other two values mentioned, but if they are willing to give you time, they deeply care about you.

Changemaking

We must not forget that changemaking is a process. Here are some practical steps and questions you can ask as you continue in your commitment to fulfill the Great Commission in the way in which God has called you.

Pray

“Prayer is asking God for His resources to accomplish His mission.” —Dr. Michael Goheen

If we truly want to see a change in the world, we know it must start in prayer. We need God Himself to lead and empower us in whatever endeavor we are to embark upon. He will give us what we need when we need it.

What are the injustices around you?

As you pray, reflect on what is happening where you live that breaks the heart of God (and breaks your heart too). You are probably already aware of what is happening in your community, but take the time to watch, listen, and reflect. Talk to people in your community; ask them what they see and what needs to change. You will see some common themes arise.

What are you passionate about?

Our Father gives us gifts, and one of those is passion. There are things in this world we all deeply care about: things we want to see change, things we want to improve, things that need to be torn down and rebuilt. Pray and listen to what makes you burn with anger, or jump with joy.

It is important to note here that your passions may or may not be ministry related. I love soccer and I am extremely passionate about it. I do a lot of work in sports settings, and this opens doors for me to share the gospel. The passions that you have in life can open doors for the gospel.

Write down everything that comes into your mind and heart. The Holy Spirit will bring clarity as you daily yield yourself to the Lord. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Where do your passions and the injustices you see meet?

If we will pay close enough attention, many times we discover that the things we care about intersect with the injustices we see around us. This is important, as just jumping in and fighting the fight for a good thing may not sustain us long term. If we can fight the good fight in a way that fuels the passion inside of us, we can run that race for a lifetime.

How can you use your passion to expand God's Kingdom?

I spend a lot of time on high school campuses talking with students. One day, I was having a conversation with a young man who loves Jesus and is passionate about American football. I had not seen him in a while, so we embraced each other, and he let me know he had some really good news!

"What is it?" I asked anxiously.

"I got offered football scholarships to kick in college!"

He then proceeded to tell me he was going to take the scholarship from the lesser program at a Christian school because he felt called to "ministry."

I said, "Brother, one of the biggest regrets in my life is quitting soccer to pursue ministry when I became a Christian." I continued, "No one ever taught me that my life is ministry no matter what I do for a living. I could live for Jesus anywhere." Finally, I said, "Imagine the people you could reach if you went to the other school and made it to the NFL (National Football League)! You could make so much impact and it would open so many doors for you."

The idea that living for God only means becoming a pastor is

not true. Jesus was not a professional pastor, and yet He changed the world and commissioned us to do the same through the power of His Spirit. God can use you wherever you are, doing whatever you are passionate about.

With whom can you do these things in community?

"Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, 'For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?' This also is vanity and an unhappy business. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:7-12).

Solomon has an incredibly important lesson for us here. He tells us that going it alone is foolish and ultimately, vanity.

Going on this journey with other people is essential. That may or may not mean they are doing the same thing as you. But it will mean they will encourage you, love you, and admonish you on the journey. Their prayers will help hold you up when the fiery darts of Satan come against you.

Be Patient. Anything that is going to bring about real change takes time. This is the work of the Kingdom.

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

"He put another parable before them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it

has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

He told them another parable. 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.'

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable" (Matthew 13:31-34).

Jesus used two stories to help us understand how change-making takes time. The Kingdom of God permeates slowly, but surely it transforms, it redeems. The work of Jesus sometimes seems slow. Everything in our world is getting faster and faster, and if we are not careful, we will lose sight of our Master.

Whatever work God is calling you to do, give your life to it. Be prepared to go through the highs and lows. When you look back on your life, you will not regret being committed to the work God gave you to do.

Remember, God does not just want to do something through you; He also wants to work in you. This also takes time.

I trust that God has put this book into your hands at the right time for the right reason, and He will guide you as you create change in the world around you.

My Prayer for You

Father, I pray that You would empower my brothers and sisters around the world to be changemakers for Your Kingdom, to be led by Your Spirit to make lasting, positive change in their neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, regions,

nations, and the world. Give them the resources they need both spiritually and physically. Speak to them and empower them in ways only You can. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflection Questions

1. What is my *why*? What is it that compels me? How has my story shaped me and what I care about?
2. What injustices do I see around me?
3. What am I passionate about?
4. Where do my passions and the injustices I see meet?
5. How can I use my passion to expand God's Kingdom?
6. With whom can I do these things in community?
7. In what ways has my life influenced others so far?

Action Steps

1. Daily, "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Proverbs 16:3).
2. Reach out to one or more leaders you admire to schedule time to learn from his or her experiences, and begin forming relationships with them. Record what you learn from them for future reference.
3. Pray and listen to what makes you burn with anger, or jump with joy.
4. As you pray, reflect on what is happening around you and in the world that breaks the heart of God (and yours too). Research what is being done to help in these areas, and ask the Lord if there's something He wants you to do about them.
5. Start small and start now. Ask the Lord what He wants you to do each day and step out in faith to do it, depending on God's empowering and perfect timing. Be willing to obey what He asks you to do whether or not you understand the benefit of doing it. Record these acts of obedient faith as a journal of God's leading, grace, and provision. Some

things God directs you to do will change you; other ways He directs will change others through you, and many will change you both.

Lesson 9:
YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS AND THE GREAT COMMISSION
Dr. David Shibley

The awesome account of the advance of the Christian faith is essentially the story of how God uses young people. These young people describe themselves as “tech savvy,” “entrepreneurs,” “sensitive,” and “curious.”

Each day, these young heroes are writing new chapters of bravery. Now, with the finish line in sight of “a church for every people group and the gospel for every person,” God once again looks to His “first choice” runners: young men and women with a passion to honor Jesus Christ among the nations.

God is scanning the earth right now looking for those whose hearts will beat with His. “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him” (2 Chronicles 16:9). This very day, God has His eye on you. The torch is being passed to you. Are you ready to run with the gospel?

When God Wants a Big Job Done

God conscripts people of every age into His service, but His eye is especially on teenagers and young adults. Throughout the Bible, when God had a big job to do, He often called on a young man or woman. When it was time to silence a blaspheming giant, God chose a teenager named David. When God wanted to literally cut off idol worship at the knees, He chose a young man named Gideon (who had to be convinced by an angel that he was a “mighty man of valor”).

¹ www.dictionary.com//e/video/5-words-describe-millennials.

When a nation needed prophetic guidance, God tapped a no-compromise young man named Daniel. And when it was time for God to put on skin and send His Son, He chose a willing teenage virgin named Mary.

Yes, God often reserves the really great assignments for young men and women. It's not hard to understand why. Most young people have greater faith than those who are older. The venom of unbelief hasn't poisoned their spiritual bloodstream. God is currently fashioning many willing young people into leaders who will carry His cause in this tense hour of history.

Many qualities go into the making of a leader. Some of those qualities may be beyond your control, but the biggest quality of Christian leadership is totally in your power: Only you can choose how much and how radically you will believe God for great things.

Young people are often willing to defy the status quo. That's good! There's a lot that needs changing. Young Hudson Taylor met with stiff resistance from older missionaries when he bravely chose to adopt Chinese habits of dress and diet. Yet his far-sighted strategy was decades ahead of his time. It allowed Taylor to capture the hearts of the Chinese more than other missionaries had done.

By necessity, young people are often risk-takers. One reason why God so greatly uses them is that they simply don't know what the limits are! If there's a huge assignment, they just do it and find out it was "impossible" later! No doubt this youth-fed vision helped enable Reid Hoffer to launch LinkedIn at 35, Reed Hastings to start Netflix at 30, and Martin Luther King, Jr. to lead the civil rights movement throughout his thirties.

Another reason God uses young people is because so many have been hurt so deeply. Violence, fractured families, and

demolished dreams have left many young people with lots of pain. They may put on a brave front, but if others could see inside, they would find wounded hearts. God can take those hurts and use the wounded to be wound healers, bringing hope and restoration to many broken hearts.

A number of years ago, I was with three other presidents of missions organizations. As we shared our backgrounds, we discovered that each of us had experienced a family tragedy when we were teenagers. God uses broken-hearted people. Why? Because they feel the pain of a fractured world separated from God. Nobody can identify with the wounds of young people better than they can themselves. They are natural evangelists to their friends.

Most young people also have a keen sense of injustice. When I was a teenager, T.L. Osborn, the late great missionary evangelist, gave me a copy of Oswald J. Smith's classic book, *The Passion for Souls*. I'll never forget reading Dr. Smith's gut-wrenching challenge set against the backdrop of the Western church's indifference: "Why should anyone hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once?" That inequity lit a fire in my heart. And it is this same deeply-felt wrong, coupled with the unbridled evangelistic passion of youth, that can produce a new, massive spiritual harvest.

God has not overlooked this unique generation of young people. You have been singled out for great things. Teenagers, college students, and young adults, so battered and victimized by the sins of earlier generations, are being raised up by God to seize the ripe global harvest of humanity. As a young person, you can be a history maker.

Leading the Charge

As a young person on fire for Jesus, you are following in a noble train of faith that is centuries long. In fact, the advance

of the gospel throughout church history has generally been on the backs (and backpacks) of young people.

The average age was 27 at the Moravian meeting at Herrnhut on August 13, 1727. At this communion service, the presence of Christ was so overwhelming that it launched a prayer meeting that continued nonstop for 100 years!

In the first era of missionary advance, God sent William Carey, not yet 30 years old, to defy a complacent church and challenge Christians to see a bigger world. This young pastor dared the Christians of his day to “expect great things from God and attempt great things for God!” God is putting that same impassioned faith in the hearts of His young firebrands today. That’s why this book has been published. All of the contributors believe you can light a missions fire that could become a global blaze. *You* can expect great things from God and attempt great things for Him!

In the second era, it was again 20-somethings, including Hudson Taylor, David Livingstone, and Mary Slessor, who made the difference in their generation. As the third era of missions dawned, young, fresh thinkers such as Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran again changed the course of missions.

The golden chain of the gospel’s global advance has always been forged by young Christians, many (if not most) of them in their twenties and thirties. Nikolaus von Zinzendorf was ten years old when he determined his lifelong purpose would be to preach Christ to the world. When he was 16, Zinzendorf joined with five other teenagers to form a school prayer group in Germany in the 1720s. It grew into a revival prayer movement that swept Europe! Youthful Baptist pastor Charles Simeon challenged Cambridge students in the 1790s toward missions and launched a student movement that has impacted the campus to the present day.

The Haystack Prayer Meeting at Williams College in 1806 was the spark that lit the missions movement in the United States. Samuel Mills, one of the students at that prayer gathering, galvanized a student missions movement that reached 70 colleges. Mills died at age 35 off the coast of Liberia, but not before he had helped form America's first missionary agency and the American Bible Society.

David Livingstone was a teenager when he heard a missionary to Africa, Robert Moffat, say that at dusk he could look inland and "see the smoke of a thousand villages without the gospel." Livingstone changed his life's focus and determined to get the gospel to at least some of those villages.

In 1850, teenager Hudson Taylor committed his life to serve Christ in China. In 1854 he left England and would later create the China Inland Mission. The influence of Taylor's life continues throughout China today.

Also in 1858, Luther Wishard suggested a summer conference for college students to evangelist D.L. Moody. Wishard's sister prophesied there would be 100 missionary volunteers from the conference. The next year, the first-ever student missions conference convened at Mount Hermon, Massachusetts. After missionary A.T. Pierson's challenge to "the evangelization of the world in this generation," exactly 100 students pledged their lives to become missionaries. That conference was the match that lit the flame of the Student Volunteer Movement, which would eventually see over 20,000 young people go as missionaries.

A missions fire hit Cambridge when D.L. Moody preached there in 1862. Among those who committed their lives to Christ at Moody's meetings was a young athlete named C.T. Studd. He gave up his large inherited fortune to finance his missions work and later began the World Evangelization Crusade.

Missions embers were stoked again in 1936 by students at a summer retreat in North Carolina, resulting in the Student Foreign Missions Fellowship. A decade later, Jim Elliot would lead the SFMF chapter at Wheaton College. In 1956, 29-year-old Elliot and four other young missionaries would die from poison-tipped spears in their backs in an attempt to plant the gospel among the remote Waorani tribespeople of Ecuador. The cover story of their martyrdom in *Life* magazine helped spur hundreds of young people to volunteer to take their places. That North Carolina meeting spawned other student missions gatherings, including the far-reaching Urbana Missions Conference, which still attracts some 20,000 college students each year.

Youth-lit fires for missions continued to spread. Billy Graham (then in his twenties) and Torrey Johnson (then in his thirties) formed Youth for Christ in 1944. Campus Crusade for Christ, now called Cru, grew out of a 24-hour-prayer vigil at UCLA in 1951 led by a 20-something seminary student, Bill Bright. Dawson Trotman got his vision for The Navigators from prayer times with other young people. Operation Mobilization was born out of an all-night student prayer meeting at Moody Bible Institute. Youth With A Mission began as a fire in the heart of Loren Cunningham when he was a 24-year-old youth pastor. The Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s swept thousands of young people into the Kingdom. Many of the "Jesus People" were already committed to radical living, and many of them still ardently serve God today.

God continues to call out a committed company of teenagers, college students and young adults to represent Him and enact His will.

Passing the Torch

Many of us who have served the Lord in ministry for decades are products of the Jesus Movement, but our age is now

limiting us. However, the Holy Spirit has His eye on a new generation. He's looking at you and many like you – young people who are passionate for Christ and His Kingdom. Our Lord's final message before ascending to heaven was a challenge to all believers for hands-on involvement. Turn His foes into His friends, and turn His friends into His faithful followers and ambassadors. We often call this parting challenge from Jesus to His followers *the Great Commission*. This missions mandate is found in some form in all four Gospels and in the Book of Acts.

Have you considered this mandate Jesus left His followers? He ordered us to get the gospel to every person on this planet! He commanded us to turn every people group on earth into His devoted disciples (Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:19-20). God did not make a mistake when He determined that He wants *you* to represent Him in this crucial hour of history.

So, as this book comes to a close, I want to *affirm* you. As a man now in my 70s, it's an honor to pass the torch of world evangelization to you and other fired-up young Christians. You are the new radicals for Jesus, often in stark contrast to the painless Christianity espoused by too many in my generation. We owe you a cause great enough to live for and, if need be, to die for. I believe you are looking for just that. You will take nothing less. Thank God, you're forcing a tougher (and more biblical) faith walk on the church.

I want to *stretch* you. The self-destructive philosophies rampant even among many Christians should not go unchallenged by you. Your generation is used to in-your-face confrontations. So, I'm calling you to a total life redirection. No more "cookies and colas" Christianity! It's time to be all in for Christ as His sold-out follower!

And I want to *challenge* you. You need to hear how and why Jim Elliot and John Allen Chau never saw their 30th birthdays.

Elliot was barely out of his teens when he scratched in his journal some of the most profound devotional writing of his time, including, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." You need to be reminded that Mary Slessor was transforming the entire social and spiritual landscape of West Africa when she was still in her twenties. You need to be encouraged that Chinese teenagers are leading underground churches of thousands, and that in the last several years tens of thousands of Indian and Korean students have committed their lives to penetrating unreached peoples with the gospel.

Around the world a new company of the committed are deeply devoted to Jesus and His commission. They aren't perfect, but they are passionate for His cause. They refuse to tolerate halfhearted commitment in themselves, and they cannot understand it in others. Anything less than absolute abandon to Jesus is too boring to impress them.

Too often we have robbed your generation of a global vision large enough to sink your teeth into for the rest of your lives. But now, I'm issuing the same challenge to you that Francis Xavier gave to the students of his day. He called on them to "give up their small ambitions and come eastward and preach the gospel of Christ!"

My message to Christ-following young people is to go ahead and overturn the materialistic "tables" that my generation and others have built. Challenge me-centered Christianity. Call us to account for spending so much on ourselves and so little on a world in need of Christ. Light fresh fires for fulfilling Christ's Great Commission!

The Grand Prize

God is fashioning new leaders for this new season: called-out young people who possess anointing without arrogance,

boldness without brashness, and power without pride. I'm honored to stand by your side in the quest to make Jesus Christ known, loved, and worshiped by redeemed people from every tribe, language, and nation.

Well over 100 years ago, the visionary missions statesman, John R. Mott, made a prophetic declaration about today's young people. He wrote, "The worldwide proclamation of the gospel awaits accomplishment by a generation which shall have the obedience, courage, and determination to attempt the task."² With all my heart I believe he foresaw your generation. Among today's young people are those who have the obedience, courage and determination required to break open the final frontiers.

By God's grace, I'll never diss a young person's dream or douse the flames of evangelistic passion with the waters of doubt. Until I go to heaven, I will cheer and champion all gospel carriers, particularly younger men and women.

One reason God chose Mary as His instrument for the revelation of God's Son was because of her dangerous, self-sacrificial faith. Not only did Mary believe for great things, she also believed the word of the Lord for something that had never happened before. Never in history had there been a virgin birth, but a teenager named Mary said yes and believed.

Never in history has there been actual fulfillment of our Lord's Great Commission. God is once again looking for (and finding) maverick young people who will say yes and believe. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

² David Shibley, *A Force in the Earth* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1997), 85.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some reasons why God tends to use young people in such profound ways?
2. What exactly is the Great Commission? How does it apply to me?
3. What are some qualities necessary for impacting culture with the life and light of Christ?
4. Do I expect great things from God and attempt great things for God? When is a time that I have done that? What were the results? Am I willing to do that habitually?
5. Am I willing to give what I cannot keep to gain that which I cannot lose?
6. Am I willing to trust God outside of my comfort zone and follow Him outside the box of "normal, acceptable" Christianity?
7. Will God ever call me to do something that He won't enable me to do? Have I been limiting God's work in my life by thinking too small? Is anything too difficult for God?

Action Steps

1. Memorize the following Scriptures:
 - 2 Chronicles 16:9
 - Matthew 28:19
 - Mark 16:15
 - 1 Peter 2:9
2. Read more about the lives of several of the people mentioned in this chapter. Be encouraged, motivated, and strengthened by their examples.
3. The Great Commission is a command...not a suggestion. It comes with Jesus' promise, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Regularly ask the Lord how He would have you to obey this command, and boldly follow His leading in His power.

Appendix

CREATING YOUR MISSION STATEMENT

Pray and ask the Lord to guide you through this adventure of self-discovery.

What is most important in my life?

What gives my life meaning?

What kind of person do I want to be?

What contributions do I want to make?

What character qualities do I value and want to see exhibited in my life?

What do I feel are my greatest strengths?

What strengths have others who know me well noticed in me?

What do I deeply enjoy doing?

Who is the one person that has made the greatest positive impact on my life?

Why did that person have such a significant impact?

What have been my happiest moments in life?

Why were they happy?

If I had unlimited time and resources, what would I choose to do?

What do I wish I had the ability to do?

What are the three or four most important things to me?

What activities do I consider to be of greatest worth in my work life?

What activities do I consider to be of greatest worth in my personal life?

What can I do well that would be of worth to others?

What talents do I have that no one else really knows about?

What are some things I feel I really should do that I'm not currently doing?

What does God's Word tell me about who I am?

What does God's Word tell me about my purpose in life?

God has uniquely created me and gifted me with talents, abilities, experiences, strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, personality, drives, and passions. He has placed me on this earth in this particular location at this particular time in history.

As I **PRAY** and review my answers to this MISSION STATEMENT worksheet, along with passages from His **WORD**, what is God speaking to my heart?

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