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# A Word from Phil & Cathy

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*This time of year is a favorite around the Brassfield home. Trees are trimmed (multiple), lights go up, garland is placed on the tree and everything else that is sitting still, and on any typical evening a hot hickory fire burns in the fireplace, no matter what the temp is outside. We love the holidays - especially Christmas. It is when we celebrate the holy day that began it all. When I consider all that began with Mary's labor and as the shepherds gathered that first Christmas night, I am filled with wonder and amazement. Everything that we believe in and stand for as Christians reached a magnificent crescendo as Jesus Christ was born. With Christ's birth, a world reeling under the effects of sin and rebellion could find peace and purpose and a new beginning- a fresh start.*

*This edition of Destiny Magazine is always special for Cathy and me, and the entire staff at Destiny. It is filled with our love for Christ and for you. Our love for you is before our eyes and in our hearts continually through this season, and every other day for that matter. We pray that you will enjoy this edition of the Destiny Magazine and that it will serve to remind you that we are here for you. Our entire life and purpose is to serve you and to assist you in being all that God has called you to be!*

*Merry Christmas from all of us at Destiny!*

## In this Edition

- |           |  |           |   |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| <b>4</b>  | <b>LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP</b><br>JEREMY TYNER                             | <b>18</b> | <b>CULTIVATING A HEALTHY CULTURE<br/>IN YOUR STUDENT MINISTRY</b><br>TURNER SCHWARZ |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>3 COUNTER-CULTURAL TRUTHS<br/>FROM GALATIANS 6</b><br>LANDON GALLOWAY | <b>21</b> | <b>A HEART FOR WORSHIP</b><br>TAMMY TROUT   |
| <b>10</b> | <b>EMBRACE THE NEW</b><br>DR. ROB GRIFFIN                                | <b>22</b> | <b>DESTINY SAYS "GOODBYE" TO<br/>BISHOP JABO GREEN</b>                              |
| <b>12</b> | <b>THE MINISTRY OF THE MUNDANE</b><br>BISHOP JONATHAN SUBER              | <b>24</b> | <b>NOT ONLY, BUT ALSO</b><br>CHELSEA BRIGGS   |
| <b>14</b> | <b>MORE THAN A SEED</b><br>JORDAN BRASSFIELD DUNHAM                      | <b>27</b> | <b>GOD WITH US</b><br>DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD  |



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# Lessons in LEADERSHIP

FROM THE CHURCH AND CORPORATE WORLD



**JEREMY TYNER**

Walk into any bookstore, and search for resources on leadership, and you will have a plethora of options. Usually, you will see attention-grabbing words like *keys*, *principles*, or *steps* in the title. You can read fantastic books written by some of the most brilliant people.

You want to read about leadership or management? I invite you to step into my office, and check out a book. No deposit required; just leave your name, and return it in two weeks. Believe me, I have more books on this topic than I would ever like to admit.

I'm not a man of many talents, just a lot of hats. I balance my time between ministry at Oasis Church and leading the project division for my company. I'm responsible for creating sermon series content, while at the same time, being responsible for

leading teams to successfully bid and manage projects. To throw another ingredient into the mix, I also help coach and mentor churches/leaders alongside Pastor Jonathan Suber.

I would often ask myself this same question: "Could I lead these very different worlds successfully?" The answer is, "Yes!" I figured out that it doesn't matter where you're leading, every environment has one element in common: people!

The way you lead in the church can be the same way you lead in the boardroom. Before you stop reading, the answer is, "No." I am not trying to convince you that you should bring corporate ideas and strategy into the church. I'm also not trying to persuade you to bring church leadership strategies into the corporate world. What I am saying is that the same problems we face in the church are often replicated in the workplace. Here's what I've discovered in leadership:



## **TOLERANCE > WORDS**

You've been communicating with your teams about the importance of being on time, and they're just not getting it. My question to you is this: What are you tolerating?

We can be so desperate for help that we overlook key issues. As our desperation rises, so does our tolerance. We become so desperate that we allow our teams to rewrite the guidelines. We allow them to bend the rules, because it's more important to have positions filled than to correct a simple issue.

Your team may hear what you're saying, but they also see what you're tolerating. One of my mentors once told me, "It's not what you say, Jeremy. It's what you tolerate." To lead a healthy team, you must be willing to draw a line in the sand, no matter how desperate you might be. Otherwise, poor team performance will be the new standard. Tolerance will always win the battle against words.

## **TAKE OWNERSHIP**

Taking ownership is simple, but it requires courage. To stand up and say, "This is my fault. I am the one to blame," is not for the faint of heart. It goes against our own genetic code. Woven deep into our DNA is something I would like to call self-preservation. When things go wrong, we automatically want to disappear. Who wants to take blame? A perfect example of this is Adam in the garden.

Gen 3:10 ESV: And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

When we make a mistake or if parts of the church are not operating at the level it should, we cannot simply hide. The very first step in ownership is coming out from the bushes, ready to address the problem head on.

When God asked Adam, "Did you eat from the tree?" Adam said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate" (Gen 3:12 ESV).

Not only did Adam hide, but he blamed Eve for his mistake. When it comes to leadership, we must be the first to step out and take ownership. Great leaders will take all the blame and none of the credit.

## **DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE**

Earlier this year, I created a reward-based idea generator for my corporation, a platform where employees can submit an idea to the company that would help improve safety, efficiency, and teamwork. The employee is then rewarded based on how far the idea is implemented within the corporation.

The system is broken down into tiers, gold being the highest. If an idea reaches the gold level, that concept then is implemented throughout the entire region. When trying to budget for awards that the employees would receive, I projected we would have ten gold level ideas in one year. A gold level idea would change the way we do business! Even though we operate in 32 different states with over 1,500 employees, a gold level idea would be difficult to achieve, or so I thought. We did a month-long pilot test to ensure the program worked. After the second week of testing, and much to my amazement, we had five gold level ideas!

I made the most common mistake, one that many church and business leaders alike make routinely. I underestimated people! I knew I worked with talented individuals, but I still put them in a box. I still put limits on what I expected them to achieve.

Your teams at the office or in your church are filled with gifted people, employees or servant leaders who are sitting on the very solution to your current obstacles. I fully believe the answer to your dilemma is right in front of you. More than likely, it's hidden in the greeter who shows up each Sunday. It's buried deep inside the person who runs the soundboard. They just may have the answer to the very thing that keeps you awake at night. As leaders, it's our duty to cultivate and expose the greatness in people.

## **KNOW WHO YOU ARE LEADING**

Every person you lead wishes to be seen, heard, and understood. They want to be known by name, not by employee number or where they're serving. So, how do we do this? We learn their story.

Behind each name is an incredible story, where they've been and what they've done. It's the victories and defeats they've experienced before joining the team. To understand the team you're leading, you first need to get to the story.

Countless times, I've seen poor performance at work or a lackluster Sunday due to the right people being in the wrong position. Somewhere along the way, they were placed in that role based on need, not skill or talent.

When you know their story, you will know what drives them. You'll discover the "key" that motivates them or the "thing" that tranquilizes their progress.

Another quality of a great leader - they always put their team in a position to win. You focus on placing each person in a position where their talents shine the brightest. The only way to have this information is to see, hear, and understand your team. Start by truly knowing the person, not the position. Might as well, you are in the current chapter that's being written. You can have a major impact on the rest of their story.



*Jeremy and Nina Tyner are currently executive pastors at Oasis Church in Round Rock, TX along with Jeremy being the director of projects for the Townsend Corporation. They also assist Pastors Jonathan & Stephanie Suber in mentoring, encouraging, and coaching covenant pastors around the nation. For more information, contact: [jeremyt@oasistx.org](mailto:jeremyt@oasistx.org).*

# 3 COUNTER-CULTURAL TRUTHS FROM GALATIANS 6

## LANDON GALLOWAY

Paul's letter to the Galatians was prompted by a controversy over what someone had to do to be saved. In Acts 13 and 14, we read that Paul spread the Good News and planted churches in the region of Galatia. Evidently, some Jewish Christians had come after Paul left and attacked Paul's authority, denying that he was an apostle. They told these new believers that to be saved they must believe in Jesus and keep the Jewish law. They needed to be circumcised, keep the Sabbath, and follow the Jewish food laws. Paul wrote this letter to proclaim that the gospel is the good news of what God has done for us in Christ, not what we do for Him. We are saved by His grace, not by law; by faith, not by works.

This type of salvation leads to true freedom. Because the cross has once-and-for-all canceled our sins, our consciences are clean. The law that once condemned us now has no power over us. We are not slaves to guilt and shame. We are not prisoners of our past. We no longer have to live in fear of disappointing God, since He knows all the sin we are capable of and chooses to love us just the same. We no longer have to live in fear of falling short, but

can stand tall and live in FREEDOM through Jesus! We are totally and truly free!

As Paul concludes his letter, he then invites believers to walk in the freedom by keeping in step with the Spirit and gives some practical instructions on how to live free. We don't use our freedom to indulge the flesh; instead, we use it to serve and love others. The Apostle makes this abundantly clear in Galatians 6:1-10. He presents three counter-cultural truths that should guide the lives of freed believers. Because we have nothing to prove anymore, we are empowered to live radical lives that run against the grain of the world in which we live.

**Counter-Cultural Truth #1- In a cancel culture, we restore the fallen.**

**Galatians 6:1 (NIV)- Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.**

We are presented with a scenario of someone who is "caught" in sin. The word "caught" was sometimes used for an animal caught in a trap. It describes a believer who has been suddenly overcome by some temptation.

While it does not mitigate individual responsibility for sinful actions, we must realize that we have a real enemy who is always on the prowl.

He has several tried and true snares: **The snare of temporary pleasure** lures individuals with immediate gratification with no regard for future consequences. **The snare of the fear of missing out** deceives believers into thinking that saying "no" to temptation might rob them of an opportunity that they would really enjoy and might not get again. **The snare of secrecy** baits believers into engaging in sinful behavior by promising that no one will ever find out. As we have all witnessed over the last several years, Satan and his snares are effective. Otherwise, good people often find themselves in a trap.

Most of our attention focuses on the person who is trapped, but Paul's concern is on the response of believers to the trapped person. What will you do when you hear your brother, your sister, crying for help? Will you walk away? Will you condemn them? Will you say, "That's what they get?" Will you claim that you always knew something wasn't right about them? Will you go get others to come glare at them as they flail in the trap? Or will you come and help them?

Paul makes it clear what *spiritual people* will do. In a convincing rhetorical move, Paul defines the response of the spiritual. We generally associate “being spiritual” with being flawless, above reproach, and morally pure. We would then expect those spiritual people to respond harshly to the fallen. Let’s be honest- the most spiritual people we know aren’t always the most understanding people that we know. But Paul writes, “You who are spiritual, *restore* them.”

Spiritual people will restore the fallen, and they will do so *gently*. The word “restore” was used for setting a broken bone. If you’ve ever had a broken bone, you know how painful that can be. And if the doctor doesn’t treat you gently, he can make your pain much worse, even as he tries to help you heal. When a brother or sister is down, you don’t announce it to the world. You don’t try to ruin his reputation. You don’t cancel her. No, you go to his aid and do what you can to help him or her recover. **Build people up. Don’t beat people up.**

This verse ends with a stern warning. While we are helping, we should be careful that we don’t fall into a similar trap. I believe that Paul is warning against two threats here. First, the enemy might prey on the spiritual pride of the judgmental person. We should never be deceived about the extent of potential evil in our hearts. Eugene Peterson brings out this nuance in *The Message’s* paraphrase of Galatians 6:1, **“If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day’s out.”**

There is a second danger in restoring the fallen. When restoring others, we are sometimes tempted to minimize their sins and overlook their transgressions. “Yeah, he slept with her. But, men have needs after all.” “Yeah, she reacted toxically. But, she has to deal with so much.” Paul’s concern is that minimizing the sins of others usually leads to minimizing your own sin. The more you empathize with their plight, the more tempted you become to indulge in your own desires. You’re only human, after all! We live in a culture that loves to either

coddle or cancel. The counter-cultural middle ground is gently correcting and restoring the fallen. Because we have been freed by Jesus, we are available to bring His grace and mercy to those that need it the most.

**Counter-Cultural Truth #2- In an inwardly-focused culture, we bear the burdens of others.**

**Galatians 6:2-5, 2 Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. 4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load.**

The burden of this verse refers to an overwhelming load, baggage weighing you down as you stagger along the journey of life. The last few years have been heavy years. Pastors and leaders are all too aware of trying to meet the needs of others while also managing their own heavy burdens. Interestingly, Paul does not identify the nature of the burden or from where it might have come. What matters is that when you see someone staggering under a heavy load, you drop what you are doing and go help them bear that load. Instead of judging them, you help them by doing whatever you can for as long as you can.

This will certainly slow you down, which is quite discouraging if your goal is to get to the finish line first. But, if freeing the captive and helping the hurting is part of your understanding of Christian discipleship and leadership, then you will be quite content to delay your own journey, so that you can help someone else on theirs. When we help others, we fulfill the law of Christ, according to Paul. Theologians debate this verse, because, in this very letter to the Galatians, Paul has said, repeatedly, that we are not under the law. Yet, here, we are instructed to “fulfill the law of Christ.” We are not under the Law of Moses, but we are under the Law of Christ. The Law of Christ is summarized by Jesus’ words that we are to love God and to love others. Believers are constrained by the Law of Love. Because I love you, I can’t

look the other way while you struggle with a heavy burden. As a side note, I believe Paul is being a little sarcastic here. Paul has combated legalistic Judaizers who advocated keeping the Mosaic Law in order to curry the favor of God. Now he says: “Ok. You want to follow the Law? Fine. Here is a law you can follow! Not the Law of Moses, but the Law of Christ!”

I want to draw your attention to one other tension in these verses that I think is particularly relevant for those of us that lead in churches. We are supposed to bear others’ burdens (v. 2), but carry our own loads (v. 5). If everyone carries their own loads, then why would they need help carrying their burdens? The word for “burden” used here refers to an impossibly heavy weight, while the word “load” represents something that is difficult, yet manageable, to carry. Here is what Paul is teaching us. There are things that are too heavy for us to carry alone, and we need people to come alongside and help us carry them. There are other things that are light enough for us to carry alone, and we need to handle it without burdening others. Christian leadership requires us to help people carry their burdens, while teaching to handle their own loads.

Bearing someone’s light loads leads to codependency. “Can you pray for me?” “Yes, but you can also pray for yourself.” “Can you help me with my rent this month?” “Let me see what I can do, but are you willing to take a course on budgeting and stewardship?” “Can you call me this week? I need some encouragement.” “Absolutely, but may I ask what you are doing to encourage yourself in the Lord?” **I can help you carry your boulder, but you need to learn to carry your own backpack.**

Paul’s instruction, once again, runs counter to our current culture. Plenty of people ignore the plight of others, in the race to advance themselves. Plenty of others pamper others by blaming their inability to cope with life on a myriad of outside factors. Paul provides the counter-cultural middle ground. Carry the burdens of others. Carry your own load.

**Counter-Cultural Truth #3- In an inwardly-focused culture, we bear the burdens of others.**

**Galatians 6:6-10, 6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

Free people know how to both give and receive. They know how to *receive* the Word. They know how to *share* with the teacher. Someone who only gives and never receives is prideful. Someone who only receives and never gives is greedy. God's people should not share in all good things with him who teaches because it is good for the teacher. They should do it because it is good for the one who is taught and shares, and the principle of reaping and sowing demonstrates this. When you sow generously, you reap generously.

This doesn't just apply to your finances, but to every area of your life. A farmer reaps the same as he has sown. If he plants wheat, wheat comes up. In the same way, if we sow to the flesh, the flesh will increase in size and strength. Do not be deceived. Don't think that you can plant apple seeds and pray for a puppy.

Everything we do in life either sows to the flesh or to the spirit.

The admonition to not grow weary comes from the reality that we will experience seasons where it will seem like we are always sowing, but never reaping. We are always bearing others' burdens while having to carry our own. Always giving, but never receiving. Paul reminds us, though, that we will receive a harvest as long as we don't quit. This frees us to do good for *all* people. I can love someone who doesn't love me back, because I know that I will reap love from God if I don't give up. I can give to those who can never repay. I can serve those society has cast aside. I can afford to serve anyone and everyone, because my reward is coming if I simply don't quit.

Our culture has codes about who we are supposed to love and who deserves our good deeds. They say, "Do good to those who agree with you. Belittle those that differ from you." "Love your political candidate, but hate all of the other ones." "Give the benefit of the doubt to those who look like you, but denounce wrongdoings committed by those who don't." But, Jesus says in Matthew 5:43-45, 43 **"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor[i] and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

You have heard culture say, "'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,' but I say to you. Love your enemies. Pray

for those who persecute you. Do good to ALL people. So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." God, our Father, is generous and gracious to both His children and to His enemies. Both sunshine and rain were essential in a farm-based society. God did not just give rain and sun to those who followed Him, but He gave it to everyone equally.

But, you may ask, does God have enemies? Romans 5:10 states, **"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."** That's right. You and I were once enemies of God, but those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus have been reconciled to God by the Cross of Christ. But even while we were still enemies, God was good to us. He gave us rain and sunshine. He gave us breath and life. He gave us family and friends. He gave us shelter and safety. Most of all, He gave us His only Son, Jesus. God gave His greatest gift to those who were His enemies.

Jesus shows us that we can love and be generous to all people, even our enemies, because God is responsible for the harvest. If we keep sowing, we will reap. So, let us keep restoring the fallen, carrying the burdens of the weary, and doing good to all people.

*Landon Galloway is Destiny's Director of Education, and serves as a campus pastor of Grace Church in Tomball, TX. He is married to Sarada and they have two daughters, Vanna, and Zarra.*



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# EMBRACE THE NEW



## DR. ROB GRIFFIN

It's almost hard to believe that another new year is upon us, with all its uncertainties and possibilities. It's at this time that New Year's resolutions abound, said or unsaid, as people contemplate the fresh start that a new year tries to bring. At the same time, the idea of **new** can be unsettling. It is said that many people who take the DISC profile have some measure of the "S" personality type in them. This means that for many, the idea of **steady** is more appealing than the idea of **change**.

This can lead to some level of resistance when the possibility of **new** sets in. This may even become more prevalent as we get older. Change often becomes somewhat, (if not absolutely), negative. The point here is simple; not all change is bad, and not all change is good, which is a perplexing tension at times. This tension begs the question, "How can we **embrace the new** in our lives in a positive way?"

Perhaps a good place to begin is to recognize we often step forward looking backward. Every year, we bring much of the last year with us, (which, again, has this good/bad tension potential). In this, there are things that need to be kept, while there are some things that need to be let go of. That can be a challenge! Paul reflected on this kind of moment in Philippians 3:13-14, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Straining forward and forgetting behind is a concept that can be used in a lot of areas of life.

Because of this, I want to take a moment to examine some things that may help us **embrace the new!** I believe that it helps to start with a **NEW OUTLOOK**. New outlooks are intentional, although not always easy. Our outlook, (how

we view things), often determines our direction. Therefore, it is imperative to have a healthy outlook.

To do this, there are some things I'd like for us to consider.

For starters, a new outlook requires a **new focus**. It is easy to deduct that there are moments when we need to adjust our focus. Jesus specifically called out the issue of healthy focus in Matthew 6:22-23, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The expression here is clear; what we focus on is what we risk becoming, because our **outlook** determines what we internalize! For instance, if we focus only on the problem, the potential is to become negative. But if we focus on the promise, or even the solution, (while still recognizing the problem), we can maintain a positive mindset. This isn't ignoring the facts or distorting reality. Instead, it means that where we focus is instrumental in us having a better response to whatever reality we face. This reality ultimately reflects in our attitude, demeanor, speech, temperament, involvement, and actions! My point, what we choose to focus on, and how we allow that focus to affect us, is very important when it comes to how we think, feel and act!

Indeed, there are moments when we need to adjust our focus. We all have a paradigm, (shaped by our life experiences), which becomes our worldview. Things such as our family, experiences, and cultural environments shape this personal viewpoint. I have found it to be true that people can live in a community, eat and shop in the same places, maybe even live under the same roof, and still have completely different paradigms. But just because we all have a personal paradigm doesn't mean that it is always good or factual. There are times that a focus adjustment may help in seeing things in a healthier light. For me, listening to wise counsel and having a willingness to see things from a different perspective helps in the process of adjusting my focus in this healthier direction.

Another thing that can help us to **embrace the new** is to look for **new hope**. Paul said in Ephesians 1:18-19, "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength..." When we know our God has

the power to take care of us, we can stand firm in our hope that it is well. God's people can walk in their world with confidence, knowing that God will see them through!

Moving further, **new faith** can also help us **embrace the new**. I am reminded often of Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." New faith is holding on to the promise before we actually see the provision—while declaring God is and God does! But when there is a pessimistic or negative outlook, then it is very hard, (if not impossible), to have this kind of faith.

I should note that new faith is also **trusting** that no matter what the circumstance looks like, God can be trusted to bring the right outcome. Romans 8:28 states, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Here, the writer says, "ALL THINGS," not just the good things. This reveals that God can be trusted even in bad situations, diagnoses, circumstances, or experiences. He still works for the good to those who love Him and are called by Him for His purpose. The word here is *TRUST*.

Finally, in order to **embrace the new**, it helps to have **new dedication**. Think for a moment about New Year's resolutions. For many people, these resolutions are just talk, because there really isn't the kind of dedication that is needed to accomplish the goal. The resolution might be something desired, but the level of commitment to see it through might not be so strong. To **embrace the new**, a rededicated, committed life to God, His promises, and His Kingdom is vital.

As we step into this new year, my prayer is that God will give us the strength and ability to **embrace the new**, and that His blessing will rest on our lives, families, teams, ministries, and churches.



*Dr. Rob Griffin has been in ministry since 1986. He is the founding pastor of Triumph Worship Center in Glenpool, Oklahoma. He earned a Master of Divinity degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree at Oral Roberts University and is also an instructor for Destiny Leadership Institute.*



# THE MINISTRY

## *of the Mundane*

### **BISHOP JONATHAN SUBER**

One of the most haunting questions that I was asked years ago by a very wise mentor was, “Can you survive the ministry of the mundane?”

I didn’t really understand at the time, because in my young mind, all I could see were stadiums, T.V. interviews, and traveling to exotic locals spreading the Gospel. It makes more sense now, because we’ve learned that the promises over our lives and ministries rarely include the process.

The very symbolism of Christian ministry should give us some clues that ministry is not glamorous. A towel doesn’t speak much to us about earthly success, and taking up a cross is certainly not a good sales pitch for the peddlers of prosperity and Insta- glam fame. The modern version of Western European-styled ministry viewed success differently than most of my

missionary friend colleagues, and especially different than my African mentors.

After 35 or so years of vocational ministry in a classical church setting, I can now say that one of the greatest ministry achievements of those of long-term fulfillment in life is the ability to embrace the ministry of the mundane - the ability to be faithful while fearful, hopeful while broken, encouraging while abandoned... the ability to still anticipate after years or decades of disappointment and, at times, the struggles of disillusionment.

This time of year, my mind always goes back to some of the greatest examples of anticipating a promise and practicing ministry faithfully in the routine of the ritualistic and the mundane. The nativity narrative and the aftermath that follows gives us such insight.

Luke 2:25-31 introduces us to an elderly man named Simeon.

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting (NLT-Eagerly Waiting) for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,

*According to Your word.*

Can you imagine? Simeon waited his entire life for the fulfillment of one Word from the Lord. He didn't just wait. He eagerly anticipated the promise of the consolation of Israel.

Maybe there's someone reading this article that only has one sure Word from the Lord. Maybe there's someone who has been waiting for so long that a promise and fulfillment, thereof, is now beginning to seem a little impossible.

Then, what about the Prophetess Anna?

Luke 2:36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Anna is one of my favorite examples in biblical history. From what we can find in the text and commentary, she simply lived her life praying, fasting and worshiping. She had no agenda, but to be in the presence of God in the temple day and night. It was to someone like this that the Messiah was revealed, yet the same revelation was hidden and rejected by kings and priests. It seems she had no agenda except to live in God's presence and will.

Yet, it's the Carpenter Joseph to me that is the classic example of surrendering a life to the discomfort and inconvenience of truly being chosen by God. Just an ordinary man with an ordinary life, engaged to an ordinary girl, yet given the most extraordinary task in all of history. Not only was Joseph asked to believe the literal impossible, but he was also tasked to yoke himself with a stigma that would follow him his entire life. I call it the stigma of the supernatural. The Savior of the world to the rest of us was simply called illegitimate when it came to Joseph. He didn't live to see the Resurrection. We can't find any historical proof that he even lived to see the first miracle of Jesus at the marriage of Cana. He lived and died with nothing but a promise, yet fulfilled one of the greatest tasks ever accomplished in history.

Matthew 1:21

21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

You see, if Joseph had not been willing to embrace the stigma, if he had not been faithful in spite of being fearful, there would have been no other man to name the child Jesus. Because of the Law and Jewish culture, only the father or the nearest male relative had the responsibility and the privilege to name the child. Mary would not have had the ability in her own right. If Joseph had refused the opportunity afforded to him by the Angel Gabriel, then Mary's father, grandfather, brother or uncle, whichever one was alive and the patriarch of the family, would have been given the task of naming the child. As far as we can see in history, Joseph was only a carpenter his entire life, yet he was the only man alive that was told the name that was to be above every other name. Only Joseph knew the name that would become the formula of salvation, healing, provision, and redemption for the entire world. According to the scriptures in Acts 4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Joseph lived his entire life to be positioned to say one sentence that would change the world. Can you imagine the years of wondering if he had really seen an Angel? Teaching the lad, Jesus, his skills, while all the while wondering if it was truly the Messiah of Israel he had been chosen to mentor. The years of just being faithful to the Word of the Lord...years of having other children and living, as far as we can tell, just an ordinary mundane life. But yet his life changed history, as well as our hope for eternity.

In what areas of life, ministry, family or career do you feel you are simply meandering through the maze of mediocrity and muddling through the malaise of the mundane? Could it be that in what you deem inconvenient, difficult, or in the least, ordinary is where you will find the fulfillment you have been longing for? In your anticipation for the future, this season of faithfulness in your now may actually be the catalyst to your next.

Lord, teach us to embrace and celebrate our seasons of the mundane that lead us to the revelation and the awareness of our Messiah!



Jonathan Suber began his itinerant ministry at the age of 14. He has been in fulltime ministry over 40 years and married to Stephanie Dawn for over 34 yrs. Together, they have ministered Jesus on 5 continents in over 45 nations of the world.

Jonathan has an earned M.Min and an honorary Doctor of Christian Missions.

The Subers have pastored 3 Churches and founded Oasis Church in 2016 where they currently serve as Sr. Pastors.

They have 3 children Alex, Alayna and Allister as well as 2 amazing grandsons.

# More than a Seed



**JORDAN  
BRASSFIELD  
DUNHAM**

There was a season in my life when I had nothing to offer but a broken vessel, an old wine skin, if you will. I was lost in addiction, but knew my life was meant for more. I knew the person I had become was not who I really was. I remember crying out to the Lord, "Why am I not getting better? I am trying all these things, but I always end up back in the same mess." I remember the Lord saying, "When are you going to get out of the way and stop trying to do what only I can do?" Have you ever been in a situation when you had done all you could? Tried all the ways you could think of to change your situation, but somehow overlooked the key ingredient, Jesus? Some things simply have to be surrendered to God and removed from your hands. At this moment, I needed to surrender my life.

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. -2 Corinthians 5:17**

Because of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus, by faith, our spirit man, which was dead, is now alive in Christ. Verse 18-19 goes on to say....

**All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

Catch that - God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. Old things have passed, and all things have become new. A clean slate. What a moment. In an instant, we are made new, and that is incredible, but what do we do with all the

stinking thinking that is still embedded in the depths of our soul? What happens to our mind when our spirit yearns for the things of God, but our mind can't wrap around the things of God?

We must begin a transformation process. This is where things get ugly and messy. This is where you have to unlearn some things. This is where relationship and discipleship come into play. The old wine skin is now made new. A new wine skin is created; now, the new wine must be made, and it starts with a seed being planted.

When I went into the recovery program, Daughters of The Other Side, there was a song called *New Wine* that we listened to almost every day in morning worship. I felt like the Lord was reminding me through the words of this song that this was going to be a process. Feeling things I had run from for so long, I would have to face head on. It would feel impossible, but He always reminded me that there was purpose in the crushing. He was making something new. These are some of the lyrics. Each morning as I sang them, they became an anthem - a daily surrender, a daily reminder God was up to something!

***"In the crushing, In the pressing you are making new wine. In the soil, I now surrender. You are breaking new ground. So I yield to You into Your careful hand. When I trust You I don't need to understand. Make me Your vessel, make me an offering, make me whatever you want me to be. I came here with nothing, but all You have given me. Jesus bring new wine out of me."***

What does this have to do with a seed you might ask? Well, much like my father, I might have the longest introduction and the shortest sermon!

**What's in a seed?** You can't tell a seed by its cover. The seed has no resemblance

to what it will be, what it's designed to be; only the sower knows what he has planted. I am reminded of Peter. He was passionate and reckless. In John 18:10-11, Scripture tells us that, **"Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave. But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?"**

In Matthew 14:28, Jesus calls Peter to Him, but as Peter steps out onto the water, he panics and begins to sink. Jesus catches him, but chastises him for his doubt and lack of faith. And probably the most remembered story of Peter is when He denies Jesus, not once, but three times. To add insult to injury, Jesus had told Peter what he would do, and Peter replied, "NEVER!" But what I want to bring to your attention today is the moment of revelation. In Matthew 16:15-20, Jesus speaking... **"But what about you? He asked. Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Jesus replied... "And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."** Before Peter ever

*Jordan Brassfield Dunham is 38 years old. She is married to Scott Dunham and they have two amazing sons, Riley and Cooper. Jordan works as Administrator and Care Coordinator for Daughters of The Other Side and Social Media Manager at Destiny Ministries. This Christmas she and her husband will complete Destiny Leadership Institute. Jordan has a heart for the recovery ministry after spending many years in addiction herself. Her hope is to inspire and encourage those who are lost and without hope to experience the transforming love of Jesus that radically changes a person's life.*



fulfilled his divine destiny, Jesus called him by name and spoke a promise over him. A promise of purpose.

You, as a child of God, have a purpose! Before you were ever created, you were imagined with a future. Every weak moment, every disaster, every celebration was designed to bring forth fruit for the glory of God. Though you may be questioning your value or potential, God has declared you are, **“A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light,” 1 Peter 2:9.**

**The Cost of life is death.** During the six months I was in DOTS (Daughters of The Other Side), I was in the fight for my life. Just before we went into lockdown, I had relapsed. Thinking it was all over and I would have to start again, God reminded me that He was pulling weeds. I dusted myself off and got back up, determined this would not be the end. I had been given extra time to my recovery; I couldn’t be trusted, and I felt alone. I knew God was still with me. Like Peter’s epic failure, he thought he would never deny the Lord, but even after he did three times, Jesus never mentioned his failure. Jesus simply asked, “Simon Peter, do you love me?” I knew I loved the Lord, and I would keep moving forward. Every feeling, every failure, and every fear I had surrounded me in a sea of darkness. Like the hard shell of a seed, I had to fight for truth - fight to break down all the lies I had believed, years of lies. I had to trust in Jesus to fulfill His purpose.

In the springtime, Covid had just broken out in America, and it hit us hard. We were in lockdown and spent months in quarantine. Some wondered why the recovery home stayed open, but I am thankful it did. During that time, we planted a garden, and I was to help care for it. I look back and laugh at how God orchestrated such an unforgettable teaching moment. I have a BLACK thumb. Plants see me coming and surrender, because death is a better fate than me. But this time, it was different. I was committed.

Several of us dug countless holes, planted hundreds of seeds, sprayed for bugs, fertilized, watered, and waited. I made this my focus, because life was very different in these weeks. We hadn’t seen our family in a month, but on the day we had our first visitation, I noticed the seeds had sprouted! I was so excited! Finally, life had broken through! Both in the natural and the spiritual, I felt a change had come.

In worship the day before our families came, we sang the song *He Knows My Name*. I heard the Lord say, “You know you have sprouted!” I cried with joy! Later that day, my director called me “Sprout” because of my seeds that had sprouted; she had no idea what God had called me earlier that day. God was reminding me of the life that was growing on the inside of me.

I heard a quote once that said, “You thought you were buried, but really, you were just being planted.” When you are in the seed stage, you allow the truth of God’s word to take root. He will give you

strength you need for breakthrough. My original graduation date was given back to me, and just to show you how God is in the details: My original date was May 23rd. 21 years prior, on May 24th, I lost my mom at age 36 to addiction, and here I am about to graduate at 36 years old, free from addiction! When God restores, He doesn’t do things halfway.

When we look at the life of Jesus and all He endured, we have hope. He understands the pain of loneliness, disappointment, abandonment, and betrayal. He has been there and overcame! What a joy we have in knowing that it doesn’t end here. We have been buried beneath the soil, but in Him, we are given new life! Are you reading this today in need of a breakthrough? Are you in search of your identity, your value? Maybe you don’t even know who God is... Let me tell you, He knows you. **Luke 12:6-8 says, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”**

I submit to you today, that though you may feel alone, in the dark, and hopeless, if you surrender your heart to the Lord, let Him be Lord over your life, trust Him with all that you are and all that you have, that the time will come when you will rise out of the darkness, growing in strength and purpose to fulfill the plan the Creator of The Universe has destined in you for the Glory of the Most High God. You are more than a seed! You are a child of the King!



# IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR DESTINY MEMBERSHIP 2023

It's time to renew your Destiny Membership for the year 2023. Renewing your membership has two dimensions. First, there is the annual Certification Fee of \$75 for Ministry Ordination or \$50 for General Ministry License, and then, secondly, making your monthly financial commitment to support Destiny Ministries throughout the year.

Over the years, Destiny has relied on the faithful support of our members to serve the Christian Leaders and churches we love so much. Every day we are engaged in the efforts to provide pastoral care for five-fold ministry leaders, to provide life-giving resources for our members, missions outreaches and opportunities, support for church planting efforts, and training disciples and leaders for ministry service both here and abroad.

**RENEW ONLINE NOW AT [DESTINYLEADERS.COM/RENEW](https://destinyleaders.com/renew)**



## HAVEN'T JOINED DESTINY YET?

By joining Destiny's Church and Minister's Network, you can expect the kind of encouragement and honest input that all successful leaders need, as well as the connections and support to help make your dream become a reality. This takes resources and we are committed to providing as many of the necessary elements as possible to ensure your success, from Ministry Credentials and outstanding missions opportunities to helping you prepare yourself and those you lead for Christian ministry.

**FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BECOMING A MEMBER AT [DESTINYLEADERS.COM/MEMBERSHIP](https://destinyleaders.com/membership)**



YOUR  
LOGO  
HERE

# START AN INTERNSHIP IN YOUR CHURCH!



**LANDON GALLOWAY**

I wear a few different hats in ministry. I am the Director of Destiny Leadership Institute, a pastor at Grace Church in Houston, TX, and a Ph.D. candidate.

As a pastor, I recognize the need for identifying and training new leaders. As someone in the academic world, I also recognize that much biblical and ministry training is too abstract for those who are involved in boots-on-the-ground local church ministry.

So, about a decade ago, Dr. Phil Brassfield and I developed Destiny Leadership Institute, a two-year ministry training program that offers academically sound bible, theology, and leadership courses. These courses are entirely online and are designed so that students can immediately apply what they are learning to their lives and leadership.

Now, we are directing our efforts to work with pastors and churches to start their own white-labeled in-house bible colleges or internship programs using DLI courses. Yes. White-Labeled. That means you can name it whatever you'd like. You're not promoting Destiny Leadership Institute to your congregation, you're promoting something with your church's name and brand. For example, our friends at Vibrant Church in The Woodlands, TX are calling their DLI-powered internship program "Vibrant College." At my home church, Grace Church in Houston, TX, we have "Grace Leadership Institute."

We provide the online academics and the back-end administration. You get to do all the fun stuff like pouring into and mentoring the next generation, while reaping the benefits

of energized and trained leaders pouring themselves into the mission and vision of your church.

Our model is based on three simple principles:

**LEARN-** Students complete their courses online.

**LIVE-** We will show you how to add a "live" component through a class or small group, where you can impart your distinctive visions and values to them.

**LEAD-** We also will help you give your interns an opportunity to "lead" by plugging them into formal mentoring relationships with serve team leaders.

And, as always, students can transfer at least 18 credit hours to Southeastern University where they can then complete an associates or bachelors degree through SEU's online program.

The DLI side of the program is incredibly affordable. It's only \$1500 per year per student, which is a fraction of the cost of similar programs. Some churches may wish to charge more to cover their expenses. We can accommodate that!

Perhaps, you have had a promising young leader go away to bible college, seminary, or some other training institution and never come back. We want to help you build your own program so that you never lose another young leader again!

***For more information and to schedule a call to help you set this up, please email [dli@destinyleaders.com](mailto:dli@destinyleaders.com).***



# CULTIVATING A HEALTHY CULTURE

## *in Your Student Ministry*

### **TURNER SCHWARZ**

The best companies, sports teams, churches, and ministries all have very unique and defining aspects of their culture. I find it fascinating when a football team finishes a season with a poor record, fires their coach, and makes a splash new hire. Sometimes the new hire comes in and has an immediate turnaround. Other times, it takes a few years, then the victories start coming. Sometimes, your favorite sports team gets stuck in a cycle of changing their head football coach every four years. What I described sounds like the life of a Nebraska Cornhusker fan, of which I am one of the biggest.

Fortunately, for both of us, this article isn't about the Nebraska Cornhuskers. It's about student ministry! I believe there are defining aspects of your student ministry culture that must be implemented in order to sustain a healthy culture or grow a new one. It's my belief that, oftentimes, student ministries try to be so counter-cultural, so much so, that they're missing

the mark on reaching students. Instead of partnering with schools, we cry and lament about how there's no more prayer allowed in school. Instead of serving the local sports teams or band directors, we complain about how those extracurriculars pull students away from our ministries. What kind of student ministry is constantly fighting against the places our students are frequenting the most?

Now, don't get it twisted; by no means should we be celebrating or highlighting things that are not biblical truth. "The standard is the standard," as we say in our student ministry. The Bible has never changed, is not changing, and will never change. Therefore, the standards don't change either.

No matter what your current student ministry culture looks like, it can change instantly. If you feel like you're going through a rough season, keep your chin up! If you feel like you're crushing it, keep going! Here are some things that I believe shape a healthy student ministry:

### 1. A DESIRE TO DO GOOD WORKS

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to tell us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.”

God has planned good works for our students to accomplish long before they were ever born. As youth pastors, we have to create opportunities in our student ministries for students to accomplish those good works! Pastor Craig Groeschel talks about how there are two main factors that help turn students into lifelong church members: If they served in the church at a young age OR if they attended a mission trip as a youth.

If you want to see healthy culture in your student ministry, you have to create opportunities to serve and do good works!

### 2. YOU HAVE TO BE WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE.

When the disciples were learning how to pray, they asked Jesus to teach them. And instead of giving them a long sermon on prayer... Jesus modeled it! He said in Matthew 6:9-13, “Here’s how you pray... Our Father, which art in heaven...”

A common example I hear all the time is when youth pastors say, “Man, I really wish my students would invite their friends to church.” Well, the counter to that statement is, “When was the last time YOU invited one of your friends to Sunday morning church?”

Your students won’t be evangelists if you aren’t evangelizing. If you want to SEE evangelism, you have to BE an evangelist. If you want your students to raise their hands in worship and experience the presence of God, then YOU have to be worshipping in that way. Culture doesn’t just happen. You have to BE what you want to SEE!

### 3. NEVER TAKE THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR GRANTED.

Matthew 4:4 says, “But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Our very being is only sustained by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Your student ministry wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for His Voice, His Word, and His Presence. That’s a humbling reality, but it also provides freedom for us both. We can do everything in our own power (gift card giveaways, pizza nights, game nights). But if the presence of God isn’t with your ministry, it won’t work. You have to cultivate the presence of God in your ministry daily - Bible reading, faithful prayer for your students, and an emphasis on worship in your meetings. And please, youth pastor, please... If you are blessed to have a move of God in one of your youth group meetings, DO NOT cut it off. Parents will understand if you go a bit long. That’s why we do what we do! Let the Holy Spirit sweep the room!

Someone asked me one time, “Turner, if your student ministry was ten times bigger than it was right now, would your city look any different?” If those three cultural things are cultivated in our ministry, the answer to that is, “Absolutely, YES!” I believe revival can happen to any city, because I believe that what you do in your student ministry is making a huge difference! You are just a few simple changes away from creating an amazing culture in your student ministry, all while uplifting your community in a massive way. You’ve got this!



TURNER SCHWARZ AND HIS WIFE, CESALLY, HAVE BEEN THE STUDENT PASTORS AT CALVARY CHURCH OF FORT WORTH FOR ALMOST 4 YEARS. THEY RECENTLY WELCOMED THEIR FIRST CHILD INTO THE WORLD, AND THEY LOVE BABY STERLING SO MUCH.

*For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

ISAIAH 9:6



# a heart for WORSHIP

## TAMMY TROUT

"I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10, NLT).

What??? When I'm weak, I don't feel strong...I feel weak! I feel vulnerable and tapped out.

Over 20+ years ago, I lost my voice... literally. Although, it was probably a blessing to my family, I was devastated. I couldn't sing.

We were in the middle of preparations for a huge Easter production, and I got sick. I tried to sing through the illness. I went to the doctor. I started on antibiotics, and I thought I was fine. We got through the Easter production, but shortly thereafter, I found I would sing on a Sunday morning and have no voice for Sunday night. It would take me all week on vocal rest to get enough voice to get through a Sunday morning again. This went on for weeks. I finally realized I needed to find out what was going on.

After seeing a specialist, I found out I had nodules on my vocal cords. I remember wrestling with God about this. I remember praying and telling God, "I haven't been out singing in night clubs and bars. Why would you do this to me?"

I was put on complete vocal rest for three months. I remember the first church service after my diagnosis, going to the piano and realizing the mic had been removed so I wouldn't be tempted to try to sing. I broke down and sobbed. I felt

handicapped. I felt like I could no longer worship. I felt abandoned by God.

I won't tell you it was instantaneous, but I began to discover things I never knew before: I had to rely on others. I began to feel God's presence in a way I had never experienced before. I discovered God works best in environments where we recognize that He is our only source of peace, power, and strength in ALL situations! God is in control even when we struggle, suffer, and go through trials. Recognizing that in the great scheme of things is what gives us hope.

After three months of complete vocal rest, I had to go through vocal and speech therapy. I found a therapist in Philadelphia who had worked with several well-known singers. I worked with her for two weeks before discovering that she had been diagnosed with cancer. Throughout the three months that she and I worked together, my husband and I were able to be a witness to her and lead her to Christ. My final session with her was the first time I sang in six months. The song I chose to sing for her was Steven Curtis Chapman's HIS STRENGTH IS PERFECT. When I tell you the power and presence of the Lord swept into that little studio in Philadelphia, it was amazing. I felt like I had a glimpse into what it must've felt like when the presence of God moved into the temple during the dedication.

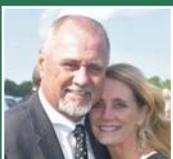
God restored my voice! "That I might sing praises to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever!" (Psalms 30:12 NLT) Worship matters. It matters to God, because He is the only One ultimately worthy of all worship. It matters to the Church,



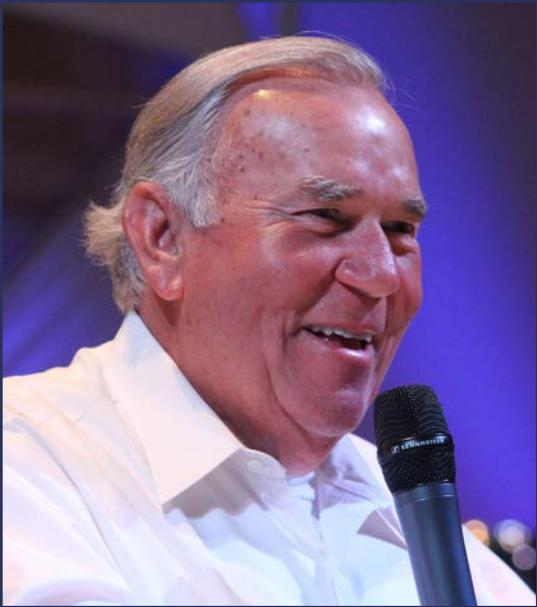
because worshiping God is the reason we were created in the first place. It matters to us, as worshippers, because there is no greater privilege in this life than to help create and lead people into an atmosphere to encounter the greatness of God.

Being a true worshiper is not figuring out what songs to sing, how to get along better with others, getting parts right, or even getting feedback from the church.

The most important thing is what we bring every time to the platform...our heart. We've got to love God more than anything else. Matthew 23:37..."You shall love the Lord your God with all your HEART and with all your soul and with all your mind." That doesn't mean you can't love anything else, but you can't love anything in the right way unless you love God more.



*Tammy has recorded 5 solo projects during her career and was a Dove Award nominee. She has done various workshops and clinics nationwide helping worship leaders, singers and musicians to excel in their roles and know the importance of worship in their lives. She continues to serve as a leader of worship at The Pentecostals of Dover, DE, where her husband, Anthony, is Pastor.*



THE DESTINY FAMILY SAYS "GOODBYE" TO

# Bishop Jabo Green

JULY 18, 1937- OCTOBER 5, 2022

THE PRESBYTERS PAGE

Our beloved Bishop Green has returned to the Lord. Bishop Green founded and pastored Spring Tabernacle (later Champion Life Centre) in Spring Texas. It was the only church he ever pastored. He was married to Sister Polly Green for 65 years, had four amazing sons who each serve in ministry, and many grandchildren and great-grand children who are following in his footsteps, serving Christ, and serving others.

There's no way to measure the impact Bishop Green has had on the vision and development of Destiny Ministries. Here are a few words from our Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Phillip Brassfield:

"Bishop Clarence G "Jabo" Green believed in me from the beginning, though, when I initially told him about my dream to establish a ministry dedicated to serving Christian Leaders, I don't think he really understood (neither did I, for that matter). But he believed anyway. In a conversation about our plans he once said, "I don't completely understand... but I believe in you". For me, a young, inspired visionary, that was enough. And he did believe in me. He shared wisdom, insights, and a wealth of knowledge and experience on topics from evangelism and discipleship to leadership and faithfulness. He taught me about business and character and demonstrated what relentless hard work can do. He opened doors of opportunity and introduced me to key relationships that remain fundamental to our lives and ministry to this day.

Relationships evolve. Ours did. We began as friends almost 30 years ago, he developed into a mentor over time, and eventually a Spiritual Father, and I, a Spiritual son. There are several qualities that he embodied that made him so special:

**1. HIS VOICE.** He had a deep, Texas tone that made him a local radio hit in the Houston area for 18 years. His voice was fatherly, deliberate and determined. When he spoke to me, I listened. I will hear his voice in my head for the rest of my life.

**2. HE LOVED PEOPLE.** For him every endeavor in life, be it ministry or business, had at its heart, people. Relationships were his goal, specifically as they created witnessing opportunities. I always admired his love for the lost; whether it was a wayward soul or an orphaned son, he was always reaching.

**3. HIS SIMPLE WAY OF LIFE.** He was brilliant; his aptitude for relationships, clear communication, business, and success was legendary, yet he packaged this in simple direct terms and concepts that were easy to understand. They were life changing for me.

**4. HE WAS A TEACHER.** He was always teaching through words, ideas, and actions. He was open with his secrets to success and what he believed was true about God, people, and life, and he shared them generously.

**5. HE LIVED WHAT HE PREACHED.** Bishop Green showed what he believed by the life he lived. For him, beliefs about God, people and business were not merely ideas with which to contend, but actions to be lived out, forming a way of life to be followed.

**6. HE WAS CONSISTENT.** With him you always knew what you were going to get. It made a straight path to follow. Not that it was easy, but it was clear. He was married to the same wonderful woman, Polly, for 65 years, planted and pastored one church throughout his entire ministry, and was a giant in business his entire adult life.

I could go on and on, but suffice it to say, I loved Bishop Jabo Green and always will. He changed my life and loved me back.

*Dr. Phillip Brassfield*

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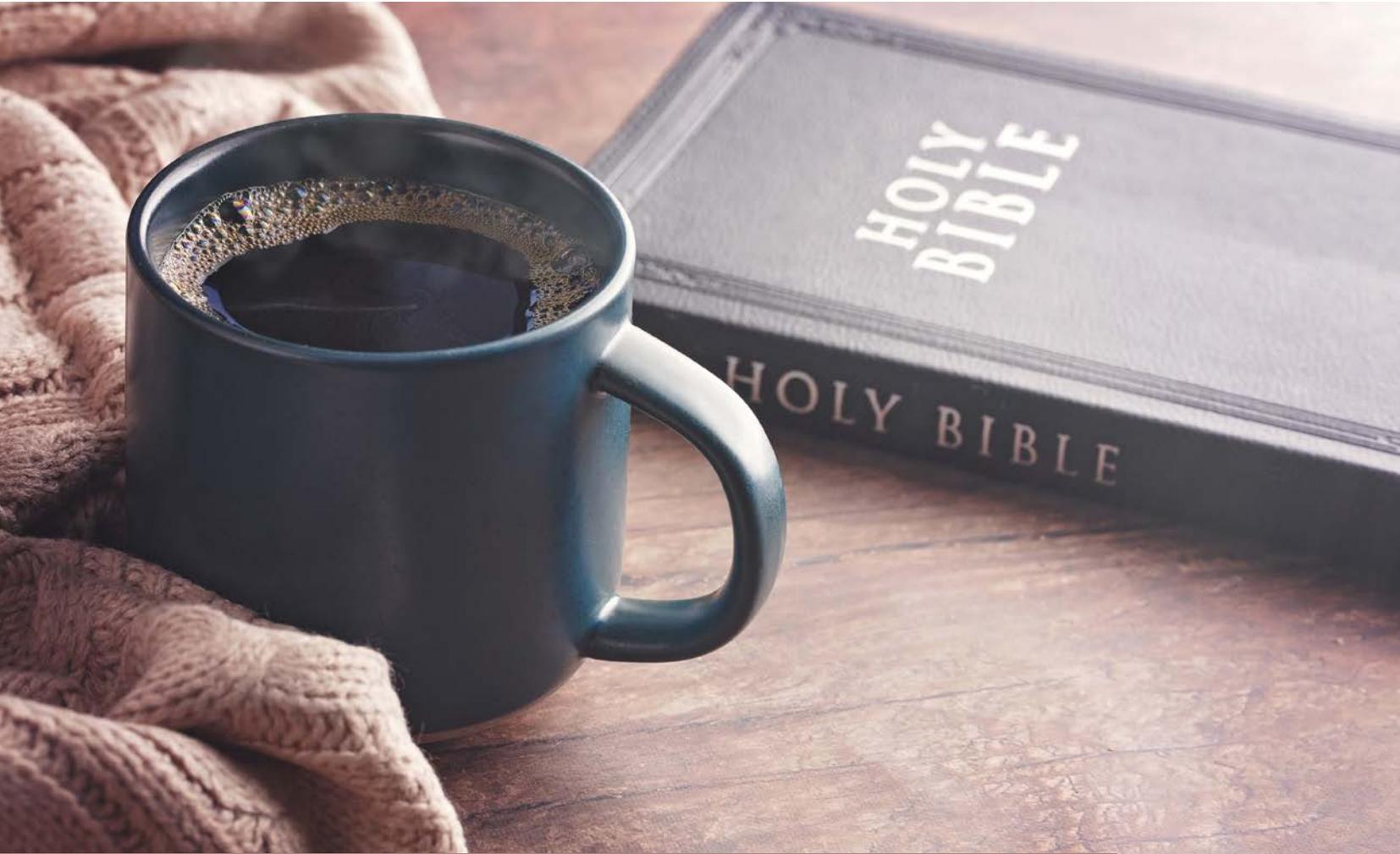
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# NOT ONLY, BUT ALSO



**CHELSEA  
BRIGGS**

It was a late summer night, and traffic was zooming by us as I drove on the interstate. My four-year-old son was whining, asking for a certain toy from a sea of toys behind my seat. I kept reaching in the dark hoping eventually I would grab the right one, all the while hearing over and over, “No, not that one, not that one!” After several attempts, I finally got the one he wanted. Then he said, “Mommy, you didn’t know what I was understanding!” I wonder how much God understands that we could know if we would just pull over and turn on a light. Perhaps the greatest thing God wants us to know right now is that **we cannot be effective lights if we, ourselves, have dim souls.**

As a Christian leader born and raised in the church, I am overly versed in the “die to yourself daily” and “put others first” mentality, almost so much so that I find myself more often than not rejecting the popular self-love/self-care ideologies. I have rolled

my eyes, claiming these movements are the polar opposite of the gospel, and recently heard myself say, “The world is teaching us to be our own gods.” My perception is in large part due to the fact that I see Jesus as zero percent self-serving. At times, I’ve even used **Mark 10:45** as an anthem to justify the “give my life” kind of burnout. *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

If you haven’t taught a message on servant leadership yourself, you’ve at least listened to one, or more likely many, that emphasized the attitude of Jesus — *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4).”* May we believe it and may we teach it, but may we not live it with a morphed attitude of

“not at all my own, but only others.” I have been guilty of being the creator of my own dark seasons because of that mindset. Maybe today God is trying to say to you, **“not only others, but also yourself.”**

I think about my kids when they were smaller, rolling out Play-Doh as wide as they could until it eventually broke. I showed them that the more playdoh you add to the ball, the wider it can stretch. What a thrilling concept, because now the width possibilities are endless (as long as Mommy buys more Play-Doh)! The same is true with us. We cannot reach any wider than we are willing to grow deep. If we try to do the reaching without the growing, we, too, will snap. Remember that old Sunday school song, “Deep and Wide?” The depth comes first.

I love The Message paraphrase of **Matthew 11:28-30**, “*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.*”

Sometimes, we live under the impression that God will just reward us with rest in return for our labor (serving others), but **there is no such thing as passive rest; rest requires action.** These actions sound like personal depth— *come, get away, walk, work, watch, learn, keep company.*

Who better to look at and learn how to do this from than the master of servant leadership Himself? **Jesus practiced healthy rhythms, so that He could fulfill His calling from a place of rest instead of a need for rest from His calling.** His responsibilities were far greater than any we’ll ever assume, so if rhythms were important to Him, they should be to us, all the more. Even science shows us the value of rhythms, proving that if our natural circadian rhythms are out-of-sync, it can affect our ability to survive. What are some “**also yourself**” rhythms that Jesus exemplified for us?

HE SET BOUNDARIES. “*Now is not the right time...*” **John 7:6**

HE RETREATED. “*...He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.*” **Matthew 14:13**

HE PRAYED. “*But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*” **Luke 5:16**

HE CONNECTED. “*Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat.*” **Mark 6:31**

HE FORGAVE. “*..forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.*” **Luke 23:34**

HE WALKED (almost everywhere He went, even on water). “*Jesus came toward them, walking on the water.*” **Matthew 14:25**

Maybe our lives need some parameters, causing us to prioritize and make sure not every yes on our calendar is a yes to something we don’t want to do. Maybe our schedules need some margin for solitude, allowing us to really sit and listen for what God might be trying to say to us. Maybe our prayer life needs more time and place, consistency, praying out loud, and journaling— releasing and unloading our cares to make room for His rest. Maybe our souls need more safe, meaningful friendships and deep connections beyond our families and those we serve. Maybe our spirits need some more joy, no longer allowing other people’s choices to rob us of it. And maybe our bodies need to get outside, move, walk, and perhaps slow down and not be in such a hurry.

We practice these “not only others, but also yourself” rhythms not to avoid burnout, although it’s a nice byproduct, but to get closer to Jesus and grow deep before we reach wide. **Imagine the span of darkness we could illuminate if a bunch of “little lights” shined brighter tomorrow.**

“*I’m writing to encourage **you** to fan into a flame and rekindle the fire of the spiritual gift God imparted to **you...**”* **2 Timothy 1:6**



**CHELSEA HAS BEEN MARRIED TO MARCUS BRIGGS FOR 13 YEARS, AND TOGETHER THEY SERVE AS LEAD PASTORS OF RIVERPARK CHURCH IN SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA. SHE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT BEING ON GOD’S MISSION IN EVERY SETTING, FROM KIDS’ SCHOOL EVENTS TO SOCCER FIELDS TO HOME WITH HER HUSBAND AND THREE INCREDIBLE CHILDREN.**

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# God with Us

## DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD

Matthew 1:22, *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: v23 "Behold the Virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us".*

God is with us... what a comfort in these troubling times. He came to us because He loved us. He came to us because He didn't want us to face life alone. He came to us because we needed a savior, and what a Savior He is!

Immanuel! God with us! What does it really mean?

He is a God who is present. Think with me for a moment.

One of the divine qualities we ascribe to God is omnipresence. *Omni* comes from the Latin meaning *all*. This means God is everywhere, literally. There is no place where God is absent. There are a couple of theological concepts that we affirm as a result of God's omnipresence. The first is a concept called transcendence, the second is immanence.

Let me briefly explain:

Because God is omnipresent (in every space, in every time and every dimension), He, therefore, transcends the limitations of any dimension. Scientists have identified some 13 dimensions of reality, but God created them all, is Lord of them all, and present in them all. He transcends and supersedes any governing laws of nature, man or science, and rules absolutely and simultaneously in every existing domain. Therefore, we say He is immanent. This means that

He cannot be escaped, ignored, or dismissed. He is present; He acts within our lives, outside our lives, and beyond all possible dimensions of existence. He was before time began, measured, and established the boundaries of the universe, and He will remain constant when time is no more.

How powerful was it then, that the Angel of the Lord specifically said when Jesus was born, *"they will call His name Immanuel, God with us"* - God, Present! Jesus said later, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you but go with you even to the end."* Knowing the importance of a name, God specifically chose to be known as a God who is always present. In the Old Testament God was called Jehovah Shamma, 'God who is present'. But in Jesus, He is not only present, but "with us". No matter where you go, God is present and with you! He is there when you need Him, He never takes a vacation, He is never unaware, and He is never distracted. And when you call out to Him, He always responds, "PRESENT" and "I'm with you"! In other words, "I've got you!" In your moments of greatness or moments of suffering and sorrow, He is there. When you win or when you lose, He is with you. Regardless of your circumstance you are not alone!

What a promise that came to us at Christmas! What a gift! What a God! What a name! What a comfort!

*He is  
Immanuel!*



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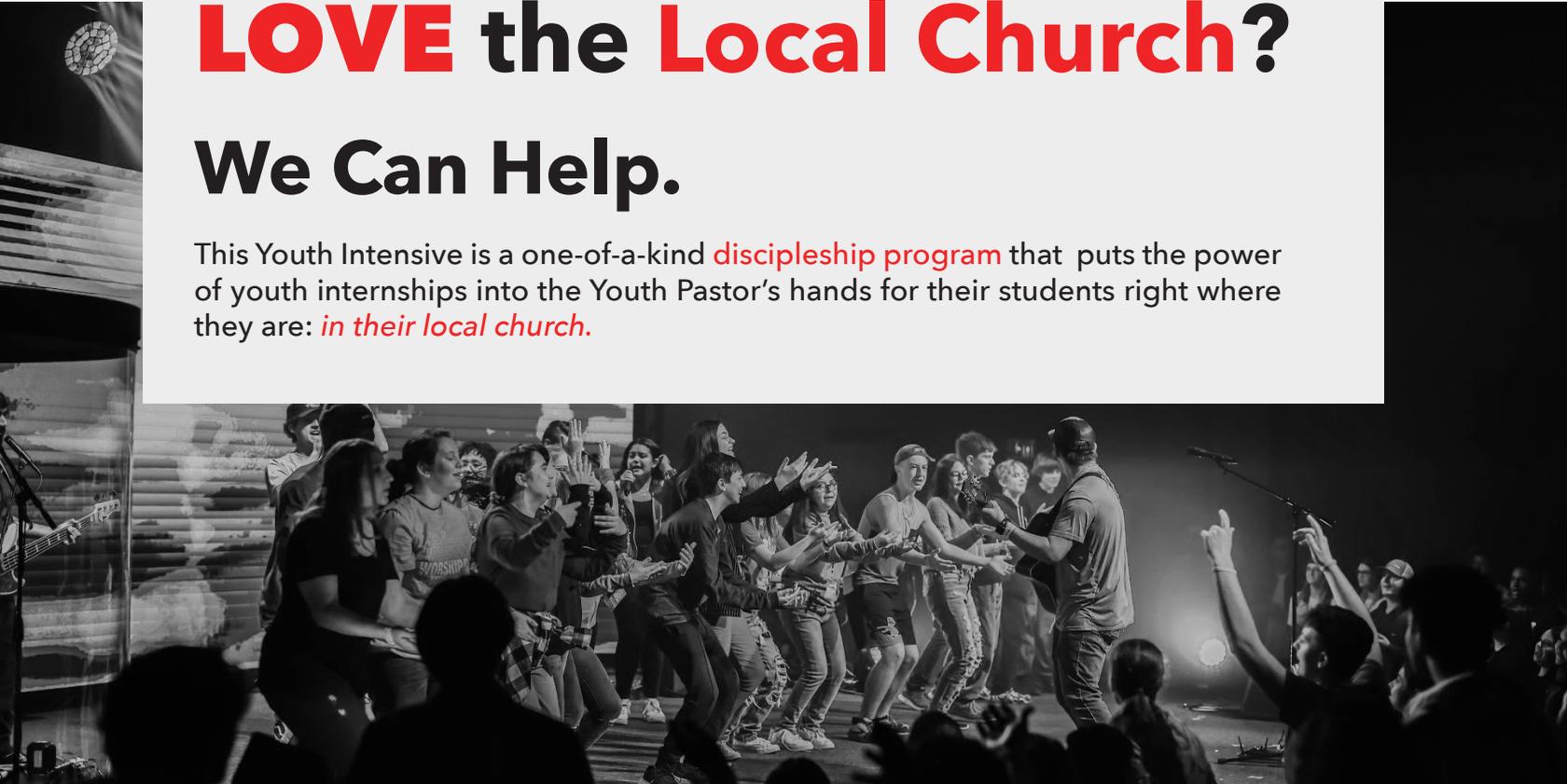
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