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OF PRAYER I
LEARNED IN A
DREAM***

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A WORD FROM PHIL & CATHY



Welcome to this edition of *Destiny Magazine*. We trust you will be encouraged, informed, and equipped through the great articles, stories and information provided in these pages. Pay special attention to the updates regarding our annual *Destiny Gathering*. This is our 24th Gathering, and we are so excited! We're at Grace Church in Humble, Texas this year, and it is shaping up to be one for the record books. You simply do not want to miss it! Every year, the *Destiny Gathering* is filled with fun and fellowship, celebrations and impartation, and this year is going to be no different. The worship is going to be powerful, and the Word rich with fresh revelation, and the prayer times filled with the Spirit of revival!!!

We can't wait to see you all in Texas!

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IN THIS ISSUE...

- 4 PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER I LEARNED IN A DREAM**
Dr. Phillip Brassfield
- 6 WORLD UPSIDE DOWN**
Dr. Landon Galloway
- 9 YES, LORD WE ARE HUNGRY FOR YOU**
Bishop Paul Russell
- 10 WHAT LEGACY CAN YOU AFFORD?**
Dustin Watts
- 12 LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS**
Michelle Braud
- 14 THE GATHERING CONFERENCE 2023**
Registration Open!
- 16 REVIVAL WINDS**
Ben Sanders
- 18 LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE**
Tricia Edwards
- 20 DESTINY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PARTNERS WITH BELIEVERS UNIVERSITY**
Jaron & Holly Hollis
- 23 VILLAGES CHURCH UPDATE**
Justin Meadors
- 25 FRESH START MINISTRIES**
- 27 THE POWER OF THE SEED**
Dr. Phillip Brassfield



PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER I LEARNED IN A DREAM



DR. PHILLIP BRASSFIELD

Several years ago, I had a dream... In my dream, a pastor friend had called and asked for my thoughts regarding the Kingdom of God. He explained that he was working on an upcoming series and needed some ideas. As we began to talk, in my dream, of course, I realized that I was saying things that I had never heard anyone else share before. God was bringing revelation to me through the medium of a dream. When I woke up, I grabbed my Ipad and began to record the things that came to light during our midnight conversation.

In my dream, I spoke about the Kingdom of God in the context of the Lord's Prayer recorded in Matthew Chapter 6. If you harmonize the Gospel of Luke with Matthew's account, we see that Jesus' disciples have asked Him to teach them to pray. I love Jesus' response. He first tells them how not to pray. Here are three big ideas about Kingdom prayer that Jesus teaches us before the Lord's Prayer is introduced.

1. When you pray, make God your audience.

Matthew 6:5 V5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."

Don't bother praying hypocritical prayers. A hypocritical prayer is a prayer that is designed to

influence men instead of God. These prayers are not about answers, but about political influence.

2. Trust God and not yourself.

V6 "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who [is] in the secret [place]; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

Pray in secret (the idea is to God alone). When we do, there is a **transfer of trust** from ourselves and anyone else, for that matter, to God alone. We've all had those moments when we are tempted to pray for our needs within the ear shot of someone who could help. These prayers are seldom effective. They are manipulative and carnal. Yes, God uses people, but He is quite capable of speaking to them Himself. Jesus teaches us to pray prayers for God's ears only. In this way, God becomes the focal point of our trust.

3. Rely on relationship, not ritual.

V7 "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen [do]. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."

Pray from a sincere heart and without religious manipulation. In other words, **pray from the reality of relationship and not with rituals and regulations of religion.** It is easy when we have a need to try to motivate God to answer because of the length of our prayers or because we say the right words in the right way. But God knows what we have need of and what we are going through. He wants us to simply talk to Him from the heart - to speak to Him like a child would to a father or mother.

Another thing that came to light during that dream conversation: Jesus said, **"Your (God's) Kingdom come, Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."** In my dream, I told my friend, **"God wants to introduce His Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven.** If this was not the case, Jesus would not have told us to pray for it." It is God's plan. Therefore, **God's plan must become our petition.**

I told him that the Kingdom of Heaven is not just a place, (and I do believe in a literal Heaven and Hell for that matter); **Heaven is a principle to be practiced.** I told him that Heaven was not just a reality defined by pearly gates and golden streets, but in a broader sense, is it a place where the will of God rules without resistance. And as I am practicing the will of God, I am becoming a conduit for, and ushering into the earth the Kingdom of Heaven.

This was how Jesus functioned in His role as Messiah. Jesus seems to equate the coming of the Kingdom with the will of God.

If Jesus was the ultimate conveyor of the Kingdom on earth, then we can look at Jesus. Jesus seemed to be

almost obsessed (if I can say that about Jesus) with the will of God.

He says in Matthew 7:21, *"Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in Heaven."*

In Matthew 12:50, He says, *"For whoever does the will of My Father is My brother, and sister and mother."*

In John 4:34, Jesus says, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work."*

In Hebrews 10:7, the writer speaks of Jesus and says, *"Behold, I have come in the volume of a book it is written of me - To do your will, oh God."*

In my dream, I told my friend that the Kingdom of Heaven was defined by the will of God. The expression of the coming of the Kingdom is when the sons and daughters of God begin to practice heaven, or the will of God, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

The will of God moves like a river into our lives and flows through things like worship, faith, the Scripture, and the anointing. There is a progression of experience... God's will, God's ways, and God's means.

Jesus said that we should make God's will our passion and prayer.

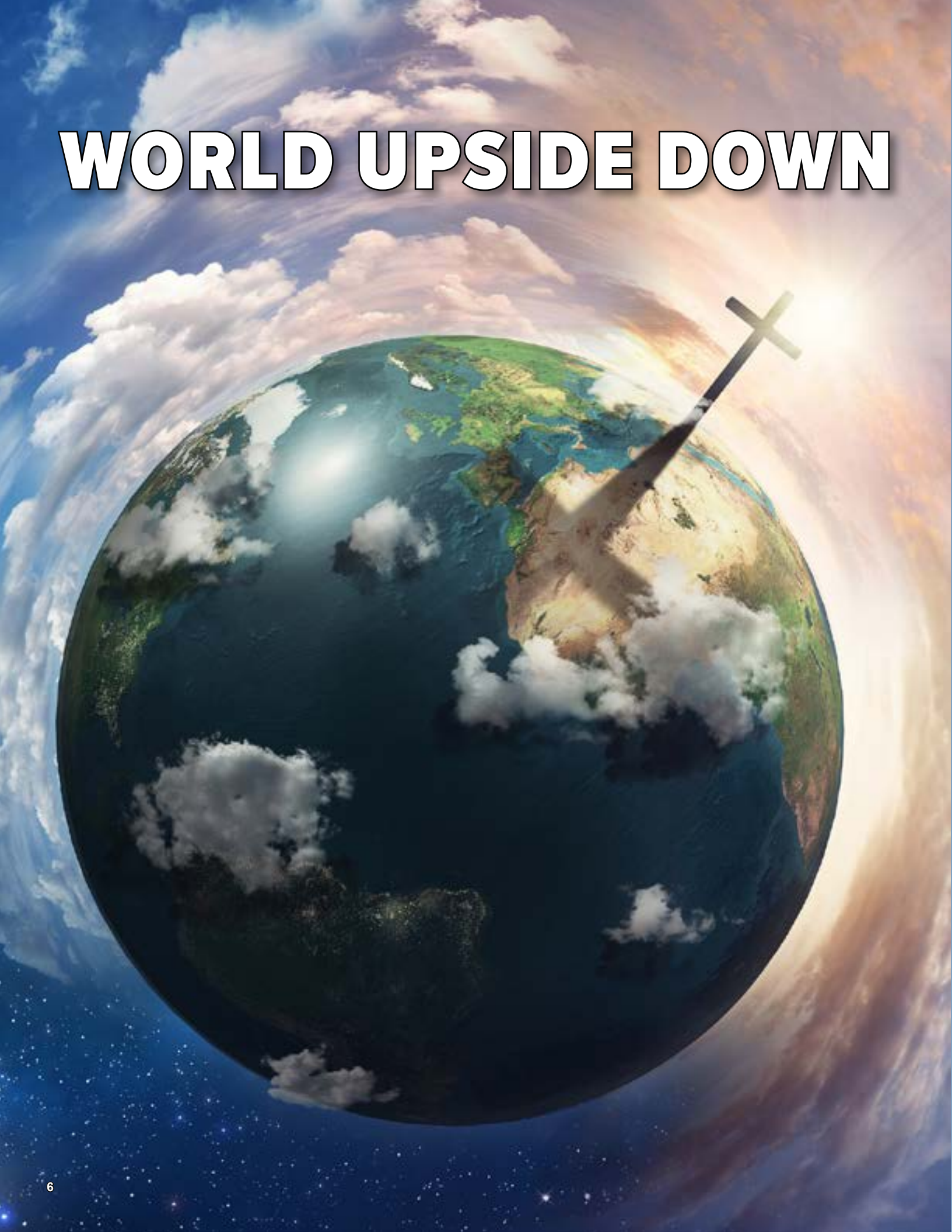
Since that night, my almost constant prayer is, **"Oh Lord, I have come to do your will and finish the work you sent me to do."** This is the greatest and highest purpose for man, to do His will and finish His work. I pray almost constantly- Lord help me to stay in that flow, to follow that progression.

My midnight dream has caused an adjustment in my thinking, because I often, without meaning to do it, downplayed the will of God and our responsibility to seek it. "Well," I would sometimes say, "God will bless you in any effort if your heart is right, and you desire to please Him." And I generally believe this is true. But, after my dream, I found it difficult to totally contrast that position with the example of Jesus.

Jesus made it abundantly clear that He only did what the Father instructed Him to do, would only say what the Father instructed Him to say. He, himself, spent great amounts of time in private prayer and personal surrender to align Himself to the will of God.

During that dream I learned how to approach God in prayer and how making God's will my focus and agreement aligned me with the principle of Heaven. Today your world might feel chaotic, you may even feel confused, distracted or discouraged. But set that all aside and seek God's will first. Make His purpose your prayer and petition and watch for the clarity and comfort it will bring.

WORLD UPSIDE DOWN



DR. LANDON GALLOWAY

Scholars have long recognized the theme of reversal as an interpretative key for the two books that Luke wrote, the Third Gospel and Acts. New Testament scholar, Justo Gonzales, summarizes what many others have observed: "One of the central themes in the Gospel of Luke is what interpreters have often called 'the great reversal'—or perhaps in today's more common language we should call it 'the world upside down,'" (Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 141). Luke establishes this theme at the very beginning of his Gospel with the words of the Magnificat, in which Mary proclaims:

"He has shown strength with his arm;

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty," (Luke 1:51-53).

The Third Gospel extends salvation to those on the fringe of Jewish society and foreshadows the Gentile mission, while Acts records the full inclusion of Gentiles into God's saving plan. Many people accepted by Jesus were previously outsiders, but have now found themselves inside the kingdom. Likewise, many insiders have found themselves to be on the outside.

The materially poor, Gentiles, Samaritans, sinners, tax collectors, and women are treated favorably by Jesus, while the rich and the religious leaders do not fare well. Matthew 5:3 states, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In Luke's Gospel, the qualifier "in spirit" is absent, so that the poor, spiritually and literally, are the blessed ones (Luke 6:20). Jesus is born into poverty. The poor shepherds are the first to hear the good news of His birth. He inaugurates His ministry with the declaration that, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor," (Luke 4:18). In the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21), Jesus lambasts the wealthy because they store their earthly treasures for themselves and are not "rich toward God," (v. 21). The angels carry the stingy, wealthy man who refuses to assist the

beggar, Lazarus, to the place of eternal torment (Luke 16:19-31). The rich, young ruler fails to enter the kingdom of Heaven because he refuses to part with his wealth, prompting Jesus to say, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God," (Luke 18:25).

Luke affirms the inclusion of Gentiles in his earliest chapters. Simeon declares that his "eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel," (Luke 2:30-32). Mark introduces John the Baptist's ministry with a quotation of Isaiah 40:3, intimating that John's role was to prepare the way for the Lord (Mark 1:2-3). Luke continues the citation from Isaiah and reminds his readers that the way of the Lord includes that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God," (Luke 3:6). God's plan included not only the spiritually elite, but all of humanity. Samaritans are also treated kindly by Luke. The Good Samaritan is more virtuous than the Levite and the priest (Luke 10:25-37). When Jesus heals the ten lepers, only the Samaritan returns to thank Him (Luke 17:11-19). Matthew 10:5 records that Jesus forbade His disciples to enter Samaria; Luke omits the prohibition in his version of Jesus sending out the Twelve (Luke 9:1-6). Jewish outsiders, such as tax collectors and sinners, are also received favorably by Jesus, much to the chagrin of the Pharisees (Luke 5:30, 7:34, 15:2). This brief overview of the data in Luke and Acts shows the importance of the theme of reversal to Luke.

However, Luke does not simply tell his readers about reversal. He shows them through how he presents the characters in his two volumes. These characters, though historical figures, serve literary functions. Luke accurately recorded the words and actions of the historical Jesus and those with whom He interacted. Still, his choice and organization of the material also allowed him to shape these characters to further his rhetorical goal of showing that the advent of Jesus had turned the world upside down. He depicts these characters as historical individuals with distinct thoughts, motives, and emotions, but also presents them in a way that advances the plot and achieves his objective.

To illustrate this point, let's turn to Luke 19:1-10. Luke's carefully crafted account of Zacchaeus displays remarkable narrative and rhetorical sophistication. Luke gives readers several clues about how to characterize Zacchaeus, and each

clue screams that kingdom reversal has drawn near. Those on the outside are now on the inside, and those who were on the inside now find themselves on the outside. These descriptions carry deep significance due to the historical and cultural context available to Luke's readers. Let's look at Luke's description of Zacchaeus:

1. Though his name in Hebrew means "innocent one," Zacchaeus is portrayed as anything but innocent. That we are given a name at all is notable. Most minor characters in the Gospels remain unnamed. Luke's readers would smirk at the idea of the "innocent one" conspiring with the Romans to steal their money. Tax collectors in the first century were notorious for their injustice. They worked for the Roman government and participated in the oppression of Israel. The system encouraged them to collect more than was required and permitted abuses. And Zacchaeus wasn't just a tax collector; Luke tells us that he is a *chief* tax-collector.

2. Luke has consistently castigated the rich in his narrative. The rich fool of Luke 12 finds his life cut short and his wealth meaningless. The rich man of Luke 16 suffers in Hades, while his begging counterpart, Lazarus, lounges at Abraham's bosom. The rich young ruler of Luke 16 is unable to part with his possessions and departs from Jesus in great despair. And, Luke tells us that Zacchaeus is rich. He didn't have to provide this detail. One would expect a chief-tax collector to be rich. Luke is drawing attention to the economic status, because the story will end with a surprising twist.

3. In the Greco-Roman world, it was common to associate physical characteristics with moral standing. Shortness represented small-mindedness and drew ridicule. Zacchaeus is short. While this detail is easy to miss, we must remember that we know more about Zacchaeus' physical stature than we do Jesus'!

4. Zacchaeus is further characterized as isolated from the crowd when he climbs the tree to see Jesus. He is presented as physically distant and alone.

In sum, Zacchaeus is the supreme sinner. His name is ironic. Every descriptor points to him as anything but innocent. Therefore, it is remarkable when Jesus approaches him and extends an offer of fellowship. Some in Luke's audience might have initially shared the reservations of the Jericho crowd. Of all people, why did Jesus choose to stay at Zacchaeus' house? Both men in the story provide the answer

to this question. Zacchaeus responds to Jesus' request with a display of genuine repentance and generosity. This act undermines the stereotypical assumptions of the protesting crowd and the potential concerns of Luke's audience. Despite what they thought about Zacchaeus, he proved to be a righteous person. Jesus also addresses the crowd's grumbling by remarking that He is the Son of Man who seeks and saves the lost. Luke characterizes Zacchaeus as one of the lost sheep of Israel and Jesus as the Shepherd. Therefore, Jesus came to seek and save Zacchaeus.

The succinct descriptions—such as Zacchaeus' name, that he is "rich," a "chief-tax collector," and "short in stature"—may not mean much to the modern reader. However, Luke expected his readers to fill in the gaps and create a complex character profile of Zacchaeus. He is a character of depth, and he defies many categories readers might desire to place him in. Luke uses this complexity to draw readers into a beautiful story of reversal. In Zacchaeus, Luke can summarize much of what he has been trying to say throughout his Gospel.

Luke crafted the story with persuasive flair and loaded it with important detail to show how a small, wealthy chief tax collector could find salvation, contrary to the expectations of others. Luke draws his ancient and modern readers into the story. They can relate to Zacchaeus' depravity; they can understand his isolation from the crowd and his reticence to approach Jesus. The story is Good News because Jesus came to seek and save the lost (like Zacchaeus and many of Luke's readers). God seeks sinners who are not necessarily seeking Him. Luke 19:1-10 is a story of salvation, repentance, hope, and restoration; it is, therefore, the perfect summary of Luke's Gospel.

Luke's efforts are persuasive at heart. He has told them that Jesus brought about a grand reversal; now he wants to show them through the acceptance of a paradigmatic outsider. Zacchaeus was a historical person who existed outside of Luke's story-world. However, Luke provided only the information that he wanted his readers to know, and he withheld other information, inviting them to participate in Zacchaeus's redemptive story.

I am writing this as one who also experienced a grand reversal. I am glad that Jesus did not just tell me that He came to turn the world, and my world, upside down. Instead, He chose to enter the messy, conflicting details of my life and restore my identity as a child of God and a participant in the Kingdom. Though the canon of Scripture is closed, Jesus is still proclaiming His message of hope, restoration, and reversal through living epistles.



Yes, Lord. We Are Hungry For You.



BISHOP PAUL RUSSELL

It is Wednesday night. Delia is away from the house taking care of grandkids. I am home alone. My moments in the late hours are consumed with a mixture of tears, joy and curiosity as I switch from one YouTube video to another, viewing the various locations where God is moving on college campuses.

Beginning during a chapel service at Asbury University in Kentucky on February 8, worship services have continued nonstop with thousands of people attending. At times, extra venues on the campus are filled with people also gathering outdoors.

At the time of this writing, this holy phenomenon has spread to other campuses in the nation, and people around the world are captivated by the news. This happening is characterized by repentance, confession, humility, and unbridled worship. Testimonies of healing and restoration are numerous as thousands of people are experiencing a fresh touch of God's presence.

There are discussions about whether this should correctly be called a "revival," "awakening," or something else. That is probably a moot point for many of us. It's like that special chicken dish Grandma used to make. The family debated what it should be called, but it didn't matter. "I'll have some of that, thank you!"

It is noteworthy that throughout history, great revivals in the church have been ignited as young people gathered and responded to the drawing of the Holy Spirit. It seems the community setting of like-hearted souls on college campuses provides fertile ground for God to move.

On that Wednesday night, Craig Keener, one of my favorite theologians, who teaches at Asbury Seminary, was in his study working on a book. His wife came downstairs and said, "You've been praying for revival. What are you doing down here?"

Dr. Keener's observations were insightful. He noted the inclusiveness of revival. "Calvinists dominated the First Great Awakening, the Hebrides Revival, and the West Timor Revival. Wesleyans dominated the Second Great Awakening, the Azusa Street Revival, and the 1950 and 1970 Asbury Revivals."

Many of us in ministry today were affected, whether directly or indirectly, by the Jesus Movement of the 1970's. That movement, which went hand in hand with the renewal movement and swept the nation, was denominationally eclectic and diverse.

When an atmosphere of faith and worship like this is established, and there is an absence of pride, fleshly distractions, and self-centered motives, a place is made for the needy and hungry to find answers and experience life-changing encounters.

One pastor shared, "I believe authenticity and genuineness are the keys to what the Spirit of the LORD wants to do. There are so many people who are tired of the fraudulent, the fake, the drummed up, the conjured up, and the hyped up. That is not what I'm talking about."

It appears the focus is not on getting everything right technically and musically, but on simple, abandoned praise and prayer. Phil Nordstrom has kept us up to date with firsthand reports, "There were no colored lights or smoke machines. The auditorium lights never dimmed. A grand piano played and an acoustic guitar created an atmosphere that mysteriously evoked tears and longing as the chapel filled with students and seekers from around the globe."

By the time you read this, the picture will undoubtedly be clearer. For now, I am praying for three things: (1) That this move will continue in humility and purity, (2) that all of our own hearts will respond to the deeper call of God, and (3) that revival will spread throughout our nation.

Paul, and his wife, Delia, are church planters and mentors engaged in raising up next-generation leaders. They celebrate over 40 years of ministry, including pastorates in Salt Lake City, Utah; St. Louis, Missouri; and Nashville, Tennessee. In 2005, they moved to Houston to launch Christ Family Church and fulfill a long-time vision of planting a life-giving church in Northwest Houston. They are parents to three grown children, all in Christian service, and six grandchildren. Pastor Paul is Lead Pastor of Christ Family Church. He holds a Master of Practical Theology from Oral Roberts University, and a Doctor of Ministry from Southeastern University.

WHAT LEGACY CAN YOU AFFORD?

DUSTIN WATTS

The title of this article poses a daunting question. If you were to stop reading and begin to daydream about your legacy, I believe God has placed a desire to build a lasting eternal legacy inside of each believer. Your daydream would likely be filled with images of heaven populated with our loved ones and strangers alike. All of whom experienced a seed sown through our ministries.

Inevitably, there will come a time when our earthly legacy is presented to those closest to us. Again, if we were to stop and daydream, I believe there would be grand expectations for our earthly legacy. Simply put, our legacy is the long-lasting impact of our lives. Our legacy isn't built when we depart from earth, it's built through the compounding effect of our daily decisions. As much as we would like to avoid the idea that financial stewardship plays a role in the legacy we build, it is an unavoidable truth. Let's be clear and provide the basis for the rest of this article, **our earthly legacy is not dependent upon the size of the estate we leave to our loved ones. However, our ability to steward the financial resources God has provided, can and will determine what kind of legacy we build.**

Let's work together to envision a few hypothetical scenarios I've seen throughout my career as a Pastor and Financial Advisor.

1. Consider the young pastor who has recently launched a church, or is fulfilling his calling on a church staff. He is so fulfilled seeing lives changed, yet has left his family and ministry vulnerable by not protecting their most valuable assets, himself and their cash flow.

2. Think about the ministry leader who has invested so much time and energy into building a ministry, yet has neglected the responsibility to steward the financial resources God has provided for him and his family.

3. Let's discuss the pastor who knows that his season of senior leadership should be coming to an end, however, he's unable to begin the process of succession planning due to a lack of financial preparation.

What kind of legacy can the individuals from these separate scenarios afford? Now, take an honest assessment of your situation, what kind of legacy can you afford? No matter your response to the questions, here are three simple statements that can drastically impact the trajectory of your legacy.

First, **Start Now!** No matter what life stage you are in, start making daily decisions that will compound to build that legacy. Finance is an important topic to God, so important that half of Jesus' parables were about money and possessions. God knows that if we aren't proactive about stewarding our finances, our finances will steward us.

If you're in your 20s, focus on protecting your family with the proper insurance planning (life, disability, health) and a thorough understanding of your cash flow, all while creating a financial plan. An excellent philosophy to live by is the 60/20/20 rule, which we've adjusted to being the 10/50/20/20 rule. (10% Tithe - 50% Committed Expenses - 20% Savings - 20% Flex Expenses) The tithe is non-negotiable and first, then create a plan to get your committed expenses at or below 50% of your income. This will free up 40% of your income and from there 20% of that should be dedicated to short, mid, and long-term savings through savings accounts, IRAs, and a 403b. The remaining 20% is to go have fun! We created a fictional character in our home named "Mr. Budget". My daughters thought Mr. Budget was the meanest person around because he said "no" to many things. Then, Mr. Budget said yes to Disney World and I was able to explain that Mr. Budget said no to the little things so that he could say yes to that trip to Disney World.

If you're in your 30s & 40s, you may find yourself with overwhelming feelings of being behind. Don't let that hinder you! You've been growing a family and building a

ministry. You can focus on continuing to protect your family with proper insurance planning and start saving. Ensure that you have a properly funded emergency fund and save as much as possible for retirement to take advantage of compounding interest.

If you're in your 50s & 60s, you're in or near what is called "the critical ten". It's the most important ten-year span regarding retirement. There are some major decisions that will be required of you five years before and five years after your retirement. When will you withdraw from social security? What will your retirement budget be? How much and when should you withdraw from your retirement accounts? Will you be downsizing? Will you continue being compensated as a pastor emeritus or bishop? All questions that will require addressing.

If you're in the retirement phase of life, there is a lot of emphasis from the financial industry on the accumulation of wealth, but not enough focus on the distribution of that wealth. You are in the most important phase of your financial life. You've worked for 40 years, now you're living on your savings and a fixed income for the rest of your life. The decisions that are made in this phase of life will determine whether your portfolio will be exhausted prematurely, or you'll have left over for a financial legacy.

The second statement is, **Be Intentional!** *Haggai 1:5-7 says it this way, "Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways."* It's written twice!

Give careful thought, and be intentional about the financial decisions you're making. Yes, God provides our needs, but how much greater can our earthly legacy be if we give careful thought and are intentional?

When I meet with business owners, one of the first topics of discussion is the valuation of their business. This is essential because the influx of wealth can be added to their retirement plan when they decide it's time to retire and sell the company. I don't get to have that same conversation with the clergy. As a pastor, you've invested the same amount of time, energy, and resources into your ministry as the business owner. Yet, it will require much more intentionality regarding your financial plan. If you're a senior pastor, have a conversation with your board regarding your retirement and succession planning. For many pastors, this can be an uncomfortable conversation, but I believe that you will find men and women who sit on your board that want to bless you and your family. There are many options for how a church or ministry can be a blessing to its pastor when that season comes.

As a member of the clergy, you have access to the benefits of a housing allowance. It is a wonderful tax advantage passed down from the IRS to you that can be used today. That housing allowance is also available to you in retirement utilizing your retirement funds. However, there has to be intentionality in how and where you save those retirement funds.

The third statement is, **Seek Counsel!** Scripture tells us in *Proverbs 19:20, "Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days."* My wife and I love

to watch DIY shows on HGTV. However, the minute we begin a project, we generally realize that it would be nice if the host of that TV show was there to provide some counsel. Can I get an amen?

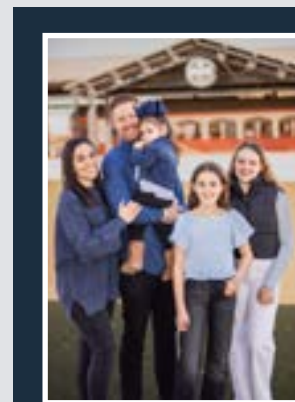
There are many men and women who will retire and live a comfortable life in retirement without ever seeking outside counsel from a financial advisor. However, are they maximizing their retirement funds? Did they save efficiently? Are they utilizing their resources to mitigate present and future tax pitfalls? As pastors, we ask the parishioners that God has appointed us to lead, to trust our counsel and guidance regarding spiritual matters because that's what we've been called and empowered to do. I would encourage you to do the same regarding your financial stewardship. There are Godly, clergy-specific financial advisors available to you. Your next step is to find one and give them a call.

As I wrap up, I would like to invite the worship team to come and invite you all to stand... wait, this is an article, not a sermon. I would like to ask you to prayerfully consider the opening question of this article, what legacy can you afford? I believe that the young pastor or ministry leader is protecting his family from the unforeseen by understanding his cash flow and proper insurance planning. I believe that there are men and women who are developing a passion for financial stewardship in their lives because they know there is a legacy to leave and finances to help build that legacy. I believe there is a pastor reading this who may know their church requires a new season and desires to prepare for its success.

I am confident that the eternal legacies of the men and women reading this will be profound and awe-inspiring, let's ensure that our financial stewardship allows our earthly legacy to be the precursor for our eternal legacy.

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Dustin Roshier Watts is an Insurance Agent of NM. Investment brokerage services provided as a Registered Representative of NMIS. Investment advisory services provided as an Advisor of NMWMC.



Dustin, Katherine and their three daughters have been on staff at Calvary Church since 2008. Dustin began a financial planning practice with Northwestern Mutual with the desire to serve ministry leaders. He is a wealth management advisor, and currently holds an RICP designation with the American College of Financial Services.

Literary Relationships



MICHELLE BRAUD AND HER HUSBAND, TIM, HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR OVER 23 YEARS. IN ADDITION TO WORKING AS THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR AT THE HARBOR CHURCH IN HAMMOND, LA, SHE IS A DEDICATED FULL-TIME MOM TO FOUR CHILDREN. SHE ATTENDS REGENT UNIVERSITY PURSUING A MASTER OF DIVINITY.

MICHELLE BRAUD

God has a great sense of humor! Twenty-five years after completing my Master of Business Administration, the Lord spoke to me about going back to school. I explained to Him all the reasons why it was a terrible idea, but “No!” was not a good response to Him. So, I hyped myself up on all the Christian declarations:

*I've been bought with a price.
My life is not my own.
Fear is afraid of me.
You were born for this, (my personal favorite).
If He calls me to it, He will see me through it.*

...and several applications. I placed the three options before Him and went with the one where I felt peace.

In my first semester in the Master of Divinity program, I took a New Testament class. Great! This is the perfect course to get my feet wet. In the first collaboration session with my professor, he said we would exegete Scripture passages using literary relationships. Say what? We didn't do this in business school! I spent the remainder of the semester using literary tools to interpret Scripture. Let me explain.

Biblical authors wrote so the readers would notice the message's most essential and critical facts. One of the methods they would use is repetition and inclusio, (sidenote: I can't help but hear Mater's voice in my head from Cars saying that fancy word!). *In-cluuuu-sio!* I like to call this the sandwich method. The repetition of the same or similar statements sandwiches the most crucial part of the passage of Scripture.

The powerful method of using literary relationships to exegete Scripture led me to see the following truth:

Let's look at Mark 3:13-16.

“And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons. And He appointed the twelve...”

The author uses inclusio to make the main point of why He brought them to the mountain and why, “He appointed the twelve.” I am still in awe of the reason:

1. “so that they would be with Him”
2. “He could send them [out] to preach.”
3. “They would have the authority to cast out demons.”

Tears ran down my face when I saw this literary relationship for the first time. The #1 reason Jesus appointed the disciples was that He wanted them to be with Him. Can we stop and meditate?

Say this to yourself, “And He appointed me so that I would be with Him.”

**He wants to be with you.
He loves to be with you.
He likes to be with you.
He is in pursuit of your heart.**

Before we pray, worship, and seek His presence, what if we reminded ourselves of this truth? He longs to be with me. It is the other side of the coin. Of course, I am in pursuit of His presence and want to move His heart, but all the while, He is after mine.

What if I treated my spouse with a one-sided love? I only wanted to show my husband affection, but never allowed time for him to love me back. I would not consider that a healthy relationship, and burnout would soon follow. Perhaps ministry burnout starts with forgetting this crucial fact. He wants me to rest in His presence, and allow Him to love me.

Before anything you can do for Him, He wants to be with you. Before the Good News is preached, demons are cast out, the dead are raised, and the nations are disciplined, He wants an appointment with you. Let that sink in. An appointment comes before the anointment.

All ministry in His name starts with the relationship principle of presence. Have I been with Him? Have I allowed Him to minister to my heart, and have I ministered to Him? The atmosphere for ministry is His presence; therefore, I need to nurture our relationship before being sent to preach, teach, evangelize, or prophesy. He, alone, is the secret sauce!

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” We usually stop at that first phrase, but it is a two-way relationship. I in Him, and He in me. As we can see in John 15, it is all or nothing. Apart from Him, we can do nothing, but with Him, impossibilities will bow. We were never designed to live apart from Him.

Today's reminder: And He appointed me so that I would be with Him.



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AND YOUR TEAM!**

REGISTRATION

SINGLE \$90
COUPLE \$180
FAMILY \$200



JUNE 6-8, 2023
GRACE CHURCH | HUMBLE, TX

CONFERENCE WILL KICK OFF ON TUESDAY EVENING AT 6PM AT GRACE CHURCH WITH A "COME AND GO" PARTY! GRAB A SNACK, CHECK OUT THE FACILITY, AND SAY, "HELLO," TO YOUR DESTINY FAMILY. ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, GET YOUR MORNING STARTED OFF RIGHT IN THE LOBBY WITH A COFFEE AND A PASTRY, CATCH UP WITH FRIENDS AND MEET NEW PEOPLE. OUR MORNING SESSION KICKS OFF AT 10AM, FOLLOWED BY LUNCH AND AN EXCITING LINEUP OF BREAKOUT SESSIONS! WE WILL MEET BACK BOTH NIGHTS AT 7PM FOR OUR EVENING SERVICES.

ONE OF OUR KEY VALUES AT DESTINY IS RELATIONSHIPS. WE ARE COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING REAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME. THIS YEAR'S EVENT HAS BEEN PLANNED TO MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD AND STRENGTHEN THESE RELATIONSHIPS.

THIS IS GOING TO BE AN AMAZING TIME! WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU THERE!



2023 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY

6:00 PM | MEET & GREET AT GRACE CHURCH

WEDNESDAY

8:30 AM | DOORS OPEN

9:00 AM | FELLOWSHIP

10:00 AM | MORNING SESSION

11:30 AM | LUNCH

12:00 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS

--BREAK--

7:00PM | EVENING SESSION

THURSDAY

8:30 AM | DOORS OPEN

9:00 AM | FELLOWSHIP

10:00 AM | MORNING SESSION

11:30 AM | LUNCH

12:00 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS

--BREAK--

7:00PM | EVENING SESSION

NURSERY & DESTINY KIDS: Classes for children through age 11 or entering 5th grade, will meet during all sessions & breakouts throughout the conference.

DESTINY YOUTH: Teenagers age 12-18 (entering grades 6th-12th) will follow the regular conference schedule, with their own breakout and fellowship times. Check the website for more information.



REVIVAL WINDS



BEN SANDERS

As Christians, we know that we aren't just existing, trying our best to survive. We are going somewhere. This is the driving force behind our attempt at a righteous life, the reason we can live with hope amid a contentious world, and the worldview that infuses purpose into everything we experience. This life is wonderful in so many ways, and at the same time, frustratingly difficult. The fact that we are living for an eternal life makes the beautiful parts a prelude, and the difficult things temporary.

A Biblical metaphor to capture the dueling nature of life's experiences as a Christian is that of a sailing ship traversing treacherous seas. It is through our diligence in maintaining course and the management of our sails that we make a safe arrival. Without this discernment, we run the risk of being overturned in the sea or broken into pieces on a reef.

The Holy Spirit is the wind that pushes us forward to our heavenly port of call. There is nothing quite as blessedly exhilarating as those moments when we sense ourselves rushing forward in faith, under full sail, in perfect alignment with the Spirit of God. That's the stuff of revival!

But the Holy Spirit is not the only "wind" to which we are exposed.

1 Timothy 1:18-19 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith...

A shipwreck might make for an exciting novel or movie, but is a costly life event. In his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul mentions two men - Hymenaeus and Alexander - who made a shipwreck of their spiritual lives. Rather than being full of the Spirit of God, these men were "puffed up" with pride in themselves and their way with words. They began to see the Gospel as a way to increase wealth, (1 Tim 6:3-5,10). False teachers like this failed to dissect the Scriptures rightly and sought material gain through prideful teaching, but also went so far as to strip the Gospel of its power (2 Tim. 3:5) by denying the future resurrection, overturning the faith of other believers in the process (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

No wonder, then, the Apostle would sense the need to admonish the Ephesian church using the same metaphor.

Ephesians 4:14 ... no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

In addition to the puffery of pride, materialism, and false doctrines of spiritual con men, the believer also faces the storms of life, (Matt. 7:24-27), winds of doubt, (Matt. 14:30), and even the winds of fear created by the adversarial "breathing" of others around us, (Psalm 27:12, Acts 9:1). In this life, there is always a contrary wind blowing somewhere.

For a skillful sailor, though, it is possible to move forward, even against a strong headwind. The sails are brought in tight and angled against the wind, so that, through the principles of aerodynamics, the sails are filled with a forward force, while the ship is steered back and forth across the wind.

Faith is our ship! The moment we hear the Gospel, and belief is professed with our mouth, we step into our lifeboat. Just as Jesus looked to a future with us as He went to the cross, in faith we continue to look toward Christ, rather than giving in to our current and temporary difficulties, (Heb. 12:2).

"Hold on to faith and to a good conscience," Paul said. Conscience is our mind, choices, and obedience. It is the rudder that steers our ship of faith. A clear conscience exists when we know that we have chosen obedience to God's Will. We were baptized, (1 Pet. 3:21), became students of the Word of God, (2 Tim. 2:15), spend time in prayer, (2 Tim. 1:3), and our lives are as holy sacrifices, (Rom. 12:1). What greater peace, what more confidence could we have through every tempest and blistering trial than to know that we have done - and do - what God has spoken, (Acts 23:1)? We steer skillfully across dangerous winds when we choose to please God over all else.

We have identified our wind, ship, and rudder, but what about the sail? What is it that catches the movement of God and carries us forward? In a word, *worship!*

Not every season in life is a storm. Sometimes, we find that awful place called the Doldrums, where no wind blows. There we sit lifeless, listless, and longing.

It used to be that to worship God, we would have had to go to a place - a mountain, an altar, a tabernacle. But Jesus said that all of that has changed, (John 4:21-24). When our spirit is right, having put our faith in Christ, and we have obeyed the truths of the Word of God, we can raise the sail of worship. A Holy Wind will begin to stir. Not that He was far away, and now comes close, but He begins to reveal that He is in this place with you. A reviving wind always comes to those willing to align their hearts in faith, lower themselves in obedience, and raise up the name of the Lord.

Whether we can only raise the sail of worship close and tight because of the stormy winds, or if it seems pointless to simply lift our hands, because we just don't feel it, let's put our eyes on the calling of Jesus Christ. Let us repent, and choose His words over all else. In hope, obedience, and in recognition of His greatness, we can raise the sail of worship. Keep the sail raised. It won't be long until the Spirit is at our back, reviving our soul, bringing new life, pressing us forward.

Ben Sanders is the Lead Pastor of Revelation, a growing church planted in 2019, in Frisco, TX. Ben is married to Tamara, and has two boys, Baron and Levi.



LAUGHTER

is the Best Medicine



TRICIA EDWARDS

Laughter removes distance and walls between people. It bridges differences and brings people together. It is like a healthy massage to the body (or a tickle), and it makes you forget your problems and difficulties.

A few weeks ago, a friend asked me to write an article for the Destiny Magazine. My first thought was, "Oh, dear. What in the world am I going to write about that ANYONE would want to read?" My second thought was, "Are there any limits, or can I just take over the entire magazine? Because I do have a lot to say!"

The suggestion for this article was 500-800 words. This is where I have a predicament. Studies show that the average woman uses around 20,000 words per day! Now, I consider myself ABOVE average so imagine the difficulty of corralling all my words into this tiny, tiny restriction! What in the world was I going to do here? I had a very difficult decision to make. So, the question became, "How could I effectively convey personal experiences on a subject within such tight constraints imposed upon me?"

The first word that came to mind was "laughter." If you know me at all, you know that I LOVE to laugh. And I love to laugh with others. I thrive when I am influencing others to laugh.

A little "heads up" here to begin. This is not intended to be a deep, 4-point dissertation on the subject. So, this may not "tickle" your theological funny bone.

Years ago, I taught a message to our church about laughter. I truly believe it is vital to our spiritual, mental and physical health. After all, can we really be Christ followers and not be joyful people? In my opinion, there is nothing worse than a grouchy Christian.

I will have to admit something to you that very few know. When I met Kevin (the hubs) in Bible College, he IMMEDIATELY was attracted to me and wanted to marry me right away (LOL). However, one of the things he questioned was my ability to ever be serious. I have since attained a little wisdom in knowing proper times to laugh and have a good time. He has also joined in on laughing with me (and at me).

If I have learned one thing through the years, it is that there are appropriate and inappropriate times to laugh, both of which I have been a part. I remember as a child being called out by my loving pastor during a packed-out Sunday night service because I got tickled at something and could NOT stop laughing. How many of you have been caught by the tickle bug during serious moments? It was definitely an inappropriate time to laugh. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes 3:4 comes to mind, "A time to weep, a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but there is definitely overwhelming data suggesting that laughter brings short-term and long-term medical benefits. Laughter stimulates many organs (it jiggles our insides

which is basically exercise), activates and relieves stress, soothes tension, improves your immune system, and relieves pain, just to name a few. Science has proven why the Bible tells us to laugh!

Here are just a few scriptures for examples:
Psalm 126:2 NLT - "We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said "What amazing things the Lord has done for them."

Ecclesiastes 8:15 NLT - "So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun."

Proverbs 17:22 NLT - "A happy heart is good medicine and a joyful mind causes healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones."

Laughter is a physical sign of the inward working of the Holy Spirit. It is a response to possessing abundant happiness and joy!

Life can be so stinkin' hard at times! There have been seasons in my life where I looked around and said... "Wait a minute! Where is my joy? Where did my laughter go? They were right here with me a minute or 2 (or 3) ago, and they're gone!" The enemy, (and maybe people), tried to take my joy and laughter. I decided in those moments that, "No, no, no! I'm NOT going to give the enemy or people that kind of power!" I had to encourage myself in the Lord, renew my mind, and remind myself that the joy of the Lord is my strength, and nothing can take that from me!

Job 8:21 says, "He will fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy." God is the very one who fills our mouths with laughter. His desire is to give us joy, even in the hardest of circumstances.

If you don't laugh enough, (for me it is several times a day), or if you need joy and laughter restored in your life, begin by renewing your mind, and ask the Lord to refresh you. This doesn't mean that circumstances change, but it sure does help to change our perspective and help us through difficult times. I am living proof that laughter is a reminder to live life with joy and positivity.

Finally, laughter has a contagious effect. When one person begins to laugh, it often infects others and brings them to laughter.

So, come on; give it a try! Start with a little chuckle, and hopefully it will turn into a full-blown laugh! I promise. It will make you feel better and more relaxed. Life will seem more bearable, even in difficult seasons. That's the natural wonder of laughter at work!

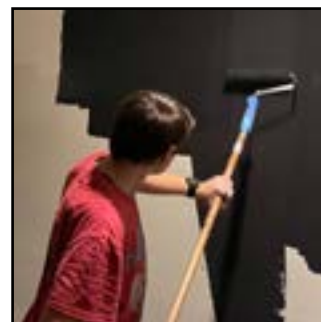
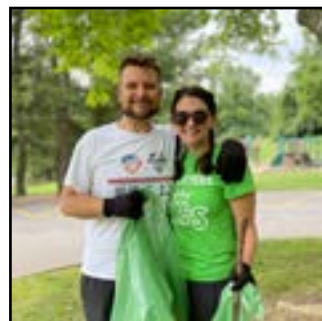
Btw....992 words.

"Trouble knocked at the door, but, hearing laughter, hurried away." ~ Benjamin Franklin



Tricia Edwards is a dynamic woman of many talents and a heart for service. As a mother, she brings warmth, love, and stability to her family. Together with her husband, Kevin, they pastor a church in Carterville, IL which they planted 11 years ago. As a pastor's wife, she is a true partner to her husband, offering encouragement, support, and prayer to their church community. Tricia's musical gifts are a blessing to all who hear her, as she uses her beautiful voice to lead worship and perform at special events. She is also a talented comedian, using her quick wit and humor to bring joy and laughter to audiences everywhere. With her passion for spreading positivity and spreading the Word of God, Tricia is an inspiration to all who have the privilege of knowing her.

DESTINY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PARTNERS WITH BELIEVERS UNIVERSITY



Have you ever experienced burnout? As church leaders, many of us are hardwired to care for others, and we're willing to take on more than we can handle to make it happen. But eventually, something has to give. That's burnout, my friend. It's exhausting emotionally, mentally, and physically. And it's all too common in our line of work.

If I asked you to bench press 2 pounds for 3 minutes straight, you could handle it. No sweat! But what if I asked you to bench 200 pounds for that long? You'd laugh me out of the room! We know our limits and are willing to admit them when it comes to physical tasks. But what about when it comes to ministry?

Let's be honest; you are carrying too much. We are good at that as pastors, aren't we? We want to keep everyone happy, so we attempt to do most of the work. We don't want to be a burden, so we agree to carry all of the burdens, even if it's killing us. We often take on more than we can handle, falsely hoping God will give us the strength to do it all. But the truth is, we can't. We need help.

At The Believers Church in Louisville, Kentucky, we started asking ourselves, "What if others want to help us, but we simply aren't inviting and equipping the members of our church to join us on our mission?" During a Wednesday morning meeting last spring, a staff member asked a simple question that led to an unbelievable outcome. "What if we started an internship program for our church?" That sounded like a great idea, but we needed more time and resources to develop a program (time and resources we didn't have). We needed help if we were going to build something meaningful.

Maybe it was God, or perhaps it was Siri spying on our conversation. In my opinion, it was a little of both. That same afternoon, I opened up Instagram on my phone. I saw an ad for a church internship program, Destiny Leadership Institute. Without hesitation, I clicked the link and scheduled a meeting. After a quick Zoom call with the director of DLI, Landon Galloway, Landon explained how DLI was designed to help church leaders disciple and equip their members for the work of the ministry.



BELIEVERS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

On top of that, he expressed that we could white-label DLI to suit our church's needs. This is what we were looking for! So, about a month later, we announced that we would launch Believers University, a two-year program that would help Christians grow closer to Jesus and become like Him. At the same time, they would fulfill internship hours within the church and throughout the community.

We were enthusiastic, but our expectations were modest, to say the least. It would be a significant win if 4-6 students signed up. We realized very quickly that our expectations were too low. We underestimated how hungry the people of our church were to know God and give their time to serve. My jaw hit the floor when we began the fall semester with 29 students. That number increased to 34 as we moved into the spring semester! We expect that number to surpass 60 in 2024. It's not just the numbers that excite us; it's the personal and spiritual growth we're seeing in our students. They're discovering a new love for the Bible and a passion for studying, sharing, and serving.

Believers University would like to thank Dr. Phillip Brassfield and (soon-to-be Dr.) Landon Galloway for allowing us to partner with DLI. Because of their hard work, we can lead others to develop their character, discover their calling, increase their capacity, and serve the church.

Again, are you carrying too much? Do you wish more people would get involved and take ownership? Here at The Believers Church, we felt the same way. Take heart! You don't have to do it alone. By inviting and equipping the members of your church to participate in DLI, you can help them grow, serve, and take ownership. The curriculum is already there, the path has been laid out. All you have to do is take that first step, and invite your people to join you.



Jaron and Haley Hollis
Associate Pastor and Administrative Pastor
The Believers Church



Student Spotlight

I WAS RAISED ON A CHURCH PEW TAUGHT BY WONDERFUL PASTORS. I RECEIVED GREAT MINISTRY. STILL, WHEN I TRIED TO DIG INTO THE WORD MYSELF, I DID SO WITH ALL THE GRACE OF A BABY GIRAFFE STUMBLING AROUND WHILE FEELING OVERWHELMED BY THE COMPLEXITY OF THE WORD. WHEN OUR CHURCH LAUNCHED BELIEVERS UNIVERSITY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH DLI, I JUMPED AT THE CHANCE TO JOIN.

BELIEVERS UNIVERSITY HAS TAUGHT ME HOW TO DIG DEEPER INTO THE WORD AND APPLY IT TO MY PERSONAL LIFE AND MINISTRY. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ACTIVE IN SERVING MY CHURCH, FILLING IN WHEREVER MY LEADERS HAVE NEEDED ME, BUT AT TIMES I FELT INADEQUATE. BELIEVERS UNIVERSITY IS HELPING ME TO GROW IN CONFIDENCE IN MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD, TO FIND MY PURPOSE IN THE KINGDOM, AND TO BE EQUIPPED AND ACTIVATED TO DO HIS WILL.

MIKE STANSBERRY
NEXT STEPS CORE LEADER

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN PARTNER WITH DLI TO LAUNCH YOUR OWN WHITE LABEL BIBLE COLLEGE OR INTERNSHIP PROGRAM, SEND AN EMAIL TO DLI@DESTINYLEADERS.COM



DESTINY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

DLI

STARTS SEPTEMBER 4TH

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**JUSTIN &
TIPHANII
MEADORS**

It feels like just yesterday when our family felt a call to plant a church in

Columbus, Ohio. Life had brought us to Columbus through other circumstances, originally thinking we would only be in Columbus for 3-6 months, but God had other plans. After living in Columbus for just a short time, we fell in love with the city. We found a city where we wanted to raise our family and build a future. With that came a call to plant a church. After much counsel and prayer, we set a launch date and went to work. Next began the process of creating a budget, recruiting a team, gathering resources, and all of the other necessary steps that come with building something from the ground up. We are so thankful for Destiny Ministries and their partnership both in prayer and finance to plant a brand new, life-giving church in Columbus, Ohio. We are forever grateful for the investment that Dr. Brassfield has made into our family's lives.

After several months of raising funds and putting together a launch plan, we began to put that plan into play. We began with a series of monthly start-up events. These events were focused on meeting new people in our community. We did social media advertising for all of these events and had new faces at each one. Slowly, the team began to grow. Our launch date was January of 2023.

As January came, winter had been mild and we were hopeful! The day came, January 22nd rolled around and at 8:30AM the biggest snowfall that Columbus had seen all winter began to fall. Dropping 4-6" just from 9AM-11AM. We were praying that even a handful would brave the weather and make it out. We celebrated 154 people making their way to launch Sunday! We continued to celebrate 40 people who went through our first Discover Villages Class ("Growth Track"). We also celebrated over 50 people signing up to serve on the V-Team. We also celebrated 7 who were baptized soon after launch! We have navigated bad weather and a stolen trailer of equipment, but through it all, God has remained faithful and we have watched Him do what only He can in the lives of the people of our city. We believe that the best is yet to come! You can follow our journey on social media @villages.church or on our website www.villages.church.



Events that Inspire



At Destiny, we understand the need for real, authentic connection within our Destiny family. Pastors and church leaders frequently communicate that “true life change happens within the context of relationships” but often find it difficult to find the time or opportunities to cultivate them. The purpose of our Destiny Connect Events is to do just that: to provide opportunities for life changing connections to happen within the Destiny family and its circle of influence.

This year, Destiny will host 4 Regional Connect Events in the Fall. These events will consist of a 3-day mini-conference hosted in different parts of the country. But we also want to expand our opportunities for engagement and to build relationships throughout the year. In addition to the Regional events we are hosting, we will be launching specialty events that appeal to various interests and activities under the Destiny umbrella.

These specialty events will be hosted by leaders within our Destiny Network. You will find a variety of events from shopping trips and fishing/hunting excursions, to conferences, retreats and seminars. See what our Destiny Family is up to and join in! We are better together. Check out our website for information about upcoming events within our network, or to host your own connect event!

FALL REGIONAL EVENTS

ELLSWORTH, WI **LANCASTER, PA**
 SEPTEMBER 21-23 NOVEMBER 2-4

FT. WORTH, TX **HAMMOND, LA**
 OCTOBER 26-28 TBA

VISIT DESTINYLEADERS.COM/CONNECT FOR MORE INFORMATION
 OR TO HOST A SPECIALTY EVENT



FRESH START MINISTRIES

Fresh Start Ministries was founded in 2001 as a ministry of River of Life Church in Winnsboro, LA. The vision was and is to reach people hurting from drug and alcohol addiction and give them a “Fresh Start” on a new life in Christ. The men’s facility opened in 2006, and the women’s center became a reality in 2012. We have seen thousands of men and women transformed by the power of God and now actively serving in their communities and local churches.

Drug and alcohol addiction tug at every fiber of communities; however, we know the answer lies in a faith-based program that promotes a relationship with God and knowing who you are in Christ as the foundation to recovery. Fresh Start has now been open for 17 years, and the success rate for those graduating the 7-month program exceeds 70%.

Fresh Start is an official inpatient facility licensed with the Louisiana Department of Health/Office of Behavioral Health. We have a Licensed Addiction Counselor (LAC), Certified Addiction Counselor (CAC), Counselors in Training (CIT), and a Certified Clinical Supervisor (CCS) as part of the full time staff. Fresh Start is able to treat each client from a professional clinical approach, as well as from a Christ-centered Biblical perspective.

The 7-month inpatient program is broken down into three phases. In 1st phase (30 days), the clients are receiving group and individual counseling, along with Biblical classes and chapels. In 2nd phase (90 days), along with continued counseling and Biblical classes, the clients engage in life skills, anger management, parenting, and job-readiness classes. During this phase, the clients also spend time each day working in one of our businesses that we have set up. This teaches them work ethic, dependability, and how to work well with others. 3rd phase (90 days) is where we help each client get a full time job with an employer in the local community. They make real wages with a real employer, and this money goes into a student account for them to help them when they get out of the program to get their Fresh Start on a New Life in Christ. There are also graduate and intern programs after graduation for clients that need to stay longer.

THIS IS WHAT SOME OF OUR GRADUATES HAD TO SAY ABOUT FRESH START:

JOE: “Fresh Start gave me the opportunity and the tools to connect to the Father.”

HEATHER: “...Restored relationships with my child and my family, while starting me on a path to find who I really was.”

CLAY: “Fresh Start gave me the tools I needed not just for my walk in faith, but in everyday life.”

MICHELLE: “Fresh Start has taught me about the Grace message and most important for me was the truth about who I am in Christ.”

VICTORIA: “Fresh Start gave me a safe place to begin to lay the foundation of a Christ-centered life and equipped me with tools that would be necessary to walk it out.”

TOMMY: “Fresh Start taught me my identity in Christ, and I believe that is THE reason why we get sober and stay sober.”

LOGAN: “Fresh Start taught me that I can live abundantly simply by trusting God in all things.”

FROM CLAY RUSSELL, FRESH START EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“I honor the relationship that we have had with Dr. Brassfield and Destiny Ministries for so many years. I just want the pastors and leaders to know that if someone wants to get free and stay free from addiction for the rest of their lives, there is no place better to get that help than Fresh Start.”



If you or someone you know is ready to break the addiction cycle, please give one of our admission coordinators a call at (318) 435-7061.



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.

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THE POWER OF THE SEED

Dr. Phillip Brassfield

The Scripture often applies agricultural metaphors to the Kingdom of God. Israel is called a grapevine, fig tree, and an olive tree. Jesus said the Kingdom is like a Sower who went forth to sow. The Word is called the incorruptible seed; Paul calls Jesus the seed to whom the promise was made.

Jesus often used metaphors of the seed as it related to the Kingdom of Heaven. But, why the seed? The concept of the seed is a Biblical picture of the coming of the Kingdom. Why is the concept of the seed so powerful? Because the seed is the carrier of the will of God. When God wants to produce His purpose and plan on earth, He deposits His will in a seed and then sows it in the earth.

Everything that God wants to do on earth, He puts in a seed, fills it with His will, and then places it in the hand of a man or woman to be planted in the time and location where He wants it to grow. Man's role is to be a steward of God's will in the form of a seed. From our finances to our family and ministry objectives, they are all seeds filled with God's will. We don't own the seeds, we only steward them. It's not our will that fills them and makes them grow. It is God's. God is the owner and giver, and as such, He alone has rights to their purpose. We, as stewards, have only responsibilities.

God's plan for your life is more like a seed to be planted than a door to be opened. Jesus is a great example of this. Jesus was the seed carrier of the Kingdom of Heaven. Paul calls Jesus the "seed to whom the promise was made," (Gal 3:16). Jesus was filled with the will of God, and He even called Himself a seed. In John 12:24, He says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit," speaking of Himself and His death on the cross. Jesus became the seed that continues to produce a huge harvest of sons and daughters of God in the earth.

As with Jesus, God embeds His Kingdom will in a seed, but it must be

sown. When it is sown in faith, it will produce a multiplied harvest in time. But the seed must die. Why? Because it is the corruptible container of the incorruptible. When it dies, it releases the incorruptible will of God inside. What kills the seed? It dies as it is sown. The sowing of the seed produces the death of the seed and allows the outer shell to be broken. And how do we sow the seed? Faith. In the Scripture, the Bible talks about the process of sowing the seed in three phases. And there are three key words I want to draw your attention to. It speaks of (1) seed, (2) time, and then (3) harvest.

Watch these three key words...

The first key word is **Obedience!**

The seed phase is where the seed is sown. It is the act of obedience when I take what God has given me, and, as a responsible steward, I sow it in the field that God has assigned me to. It is writing the check, making the call, making the decision to do what God has asked of me. The emphasis here is not just on doing something, but doing the right thing, the thing for which you are called.

The second key word is sacrifice.

The time part is where the seed dies in what would seem to be a sacrificial death. It is in this phase the corruptible part of the seed surrenders to the will of God, (the incorruptible part), that is inside. The Apostle Paul teaches this principle in 1st Corinthians Chapter 15. In context, He is speaking of the human body and what it will be like in the resurrection, but we see the sowing and reaping principle explained as well. He says in verse 36, "...what you sow is not made alive unless it dies." In verses 42-44, he goes on to say,

"...the body is sown in corruption but raised in incorruption", v43 "it is sown in dishonor but raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power." In verse 44, he tells us that it is sown in one form, but raised in another: the first, natural; the second, spiritual.

The time part is where faith takes over and begins to work on the seed. I call

it the "**death of faith.**" "Faith feels like death to the flesh. I have never done anything by faith that felt good to my flesh!" "Faith kills the corruptible part of the seed, so that the incorruptible part can be released. Sowing the seed as an act of obedience, but in the time phase, faith is in control. Faith breaks down the hardness of the outer shell, neutralizes the corruptible nature with its strong controlling desires, and allows water, the Holy Spirit, to get to the inner incorruptible will of God to bring life to it, and release it to grow. This was so encouraging to me, even in the context of giving and tithing. When you tithe, even though you know it's right and proper, the feeling of loss or sacrifice that you have when you write the check tells you that it is working. Faith is doing what it is designed to do, breaking the outer shell of your me-o-centric carnal nature that wants to be in control and is killing your flesh, so that the will of God can come into your finances!

The Third Key word is Multiplication...

And then the Harvest... In the seed is the principle of Heaven, the will of God. When it is sown, and it endures the "death of faith," the corruptible part of the seed, the outer shell, is broken and discarded, so that the incorruptible part, the will of God that is in the seed, can germinate. With the limitations of the flesh out of the way, now the spiritual side of the equation kicks in, and the life in the seed begins to grow. But with one exception - now, instead of being one unit solely existent in the form of the seed, it is transformed into a multiplying, fruit-producing engine of the Spirit. Natural limitations are lifted, and exponential potential is released. Formerly impossible situations become not only possible, but expected. God's will is now being released into the life of the situation; Heaven is coming to earth. Jesus' prayer and ours is now coming to pass. God's will is being done on earth as it is in Heaven. With the flesh dealt with, God's will is released without resistance, and a Kingdom Harvest begins to multiply more and more, moving through the process of production into a state called **fruitfulness** by God.



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