

Extra-Ordinary

The Touch That Marked Eternity



*“Who are these men that have turned the
world upside down?”*

D.N.H III



PREFACE

In 2004, I began a journey in Mexico that would forever change my life. I was nineteen years old and never imagined what was about to unravel. What was supposed to be a two-week trip marked me too deep to forget, and a year later, I returned to Mexico. In September of 2005, there was a small voice in my heart that I tried to hide from that said, *These will be ten years of preparation for you for something great*. From two weeks through the next ten years up to the present, now marking sixteen years, the journey can only be defined as miraculous. As I look back, there aren't words to express all that I've lived, that I've learned along the way, and what those words from that small voice implied in my life, but these last sixteen years have turned me into the man that I am. In the words of Paul found in Philippians 3:12 and 14, "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." In the same spirit, I have far to go, but have already begun.

For my thirtieth birthday, I was reminded of those soft words that I felt in my heart almost twelve years earlier, and I began to remember the previous third of my life. God had not only done an amazing work, but He had blessed me with many men and women along the journey who have marked my life. Some will never be known beyond the words in these pages, and others are famous in the eyes of many, but both have taught me what it means to truly live.

I thank my father and mother who have been very faithful and supportive of my journeys, although almost always far away; my sister, who has always been more like a best friend; and my wife, the greatest gift that the Lord has entrusted to me, who has given me two amazing sons and one beautiful daughter. There are hundreds or

ISBN 978-1-0980-4047-5 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-0980-4048-2 (digital)

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Christian Faith Publishing, Inc.
832 Park Avenue
Meadville, PA 16335
www.christianfaithpublishing.com

Printed in the United States of America

even thousands of names that will not be in these pages, but as you will see, those that have reflected the mark of the Maker as a part of their legacy have greatly influenced me along the way.

The title of this book comes from two verses: first, the famous words of Jesus found in John 14:12–14: “You will do even greater things than I have done”; and the second from Acts 17:6: “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” It still puzzles me to hear the debate over these words in the church today, but I have seen that the greatness in the kingdom of God is all too often not the great teaching, most gifted, most famous, charismatic, or prophetic individuals. Rather, it belongs to those who have made the choice to live the ordinary, the most rudimental part of our design within humanity. Those that embrace the theomorphic to be transformed, to live the image and likeness of God, to be *extraordinary* when nobody’s watching, when there are no lights on, and when it’s just them before the face of God, living a selfless love with unity of those that surround them.

The process of writing this book began just before my thirtieth birthday and has continued for five years as the ideas developed. This is just a portion of what has brought me to this point in my life as I am so blessed to see that my story began many generations ago. Having two grandparents in the military service, one as a colonel in the Air Force during World War II, and another in the Korean War, I have been blessed to see how the choices of one can influence the many. My parents laid an incredible foundation for my life, for my future, and for my present reality. My choices might not have begun like theirs did, but I’m excited to see the inheritance and impact in the generations to come because of what I have, now, chosen to do. I have a rich legacy of leadership and influence from many generations before me, through my great grandparents, my grandparents, my parents, and my desire is to see that incarnated in my life and multiplied to many generations after me.

My desire in writing this book has three key parts: The first is that, for years, I have enjoyed traveling one or two weeks a month to teach and share in many different cities, countries, churches, and different ministries. Through these journeys, many different teachings

have been developed and many hours of processing the depths of apostolic leadership. In a season of life with a growing ministry and three small children, I have had to make a very conscious choice to turn down most teaching invitations, which has been hard for me. I felt a conviction that it was time to begin to write and to leave a legacy on paper that transcends a classroom in any single location. For my kids, for future generations, for our ministry, but also because of a great conviction that I want to be a faithful steward with whatever God places within my hands.

The second is because I have had a conviction to write for many years. Having had a lot of inspiration by John Maxwell, Max Lucado, Reverend John Wesley, Loren Cunningham, N. T. Wright, Darrow Miller, Francis Schaeffer, among others, I’ve seen the power of writing beyond just public speaking and teaching. My goal is to publish each of my books simultaneously in Spanish, Portuguese, and English as we have a trilingual ministry, and this is my main target audience. *Extra-Ordinary* is becoming an umbrella for daily devotionals, extending into online teachings and ideally a full book series for both children and adults. I currently have several other outlines that I am working on, and this book marks the goal of stepping out in faith as an unknown author with a vision that must begin somewhere.

The third is simply because I have great conviction that God wants me to. It’s taken me over five years to finish this book due to fear of man and personal insecurities. What if no one reads it? What if it’s rejected? What if it’s a complete failure? And to these fears, my only response is—God is worthy of my obedience, even if it’s a failure in the eyes of the world. It’s for His glory, and He is worthy.

Format

My design within this book gives a dynamic adventure from both my own life and key people that I have crossed paths with through the years. I’ve highlighted what I consider to be fifteen of the most important principles in leadership and discipleship for anyone at any point in their faith journey. The format allows each chapter to almost be its own story. It’s my past-to-present journey with the

discovery and application of each principle and how a key person that entered my life was able to most reflect this reality. I hope that this story can be as influential and heart-transforming as it was for me. I've asked each of these men and women to write their own prelude to the chapter so that they can, in their own words, share what this means to them. The stories are all real, based on real people, and events, and to the best of my knowledge, the most honest and sincere expression of my personal perception of my own life to this point. At the end of each chapter, there are application questions and special meditations to consider how these principles can be applied in your own life, family, church, ministry, and with the people around you.



CHAPTER 1

Calling

Inspired by missionary Henry Davis from Venezuela

Calling—a response to the nudge of God, resulting in a change of course, direction, identity and purpose, leading to a new vocation; a response to the voice of the All-Powerful and All-Personal God.

Special Introduction

It's still fresh on my mind, the day when Daniel and I met in Mexico. His team had such eagerness and excitement in their hearts to serve, so it was an honor to be one of the drivers to take him to the location where, together, we built homes for those in need. As I looked at all of you with amazement, I felt that the Lord wanted me to share about His calling through sharing stories about the Lord's plans and desire for our lives. The more I shared, the more excited everyone was. I saw faith rise up in their hearts. This reminded me of when Jesus called His disciples to become "fishers of men," and He was doing this in the hearts of Daniel and his team. In the book of Ezekiel, God said to Israel, "I will first send fishermen." What was amazing about Jesus's disciples was though they were very young and most of them had failed their religious studies and were now working in their trades, they were called by Jesus. Jesus does something that no other teacher does: He went to find these young tradesmen and called them and taught them how they could be like Him. With faith and trust, they

were willing to surrender everything, follow Him, and the rest of the story is *His-Story*. These young men changed the world forever. Today, as each of us are called by God, we need to continue to build hope, faith, and love in calling this generation and the generations that follow to be like Jesus to His calling.

Henry Davis
Missionary in Asia from Venezuela

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Growing up in a healthy Christian home, I remember having my “good Christian week” each year as we would go and serve somewhere in the world on a mission trip. Even before those trips, some of my earliest memories were somehow connected to youth events at church or our annual church vacation trips to Lake McConaughy in Nebraska. My grandparents on both sides were Christian, as well as my great-grandparents before them: Lutheran on one side and Baptist on the other. I was raised nondenominational. Church and the Bible were just a part of life, as was youth group, Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), and many other activities we did. We always had family prayer before dinner, and I remember learning the Johnny Appleseed “prayer song” from the time I was very little. My mom or dad would come in my room every night and pray with my sister and me. My mom would pray for my future wife, and my dad would share how he loved us just as much as the Father loved His Son, Jesus, and share stories with us.

I have a beautiful Bible from my grandfather, and to this day, I am so grateful for the incredible inheritance I have received from the generations before me. The incredible memories of being the “star” in the Christmas story or simply receiving a reality where God was somehow at the center of it.

As I grew older, however, I had to make a choice to step out from my parents’ covering and choose to either draw close to God for myself or to walk away. What seemed like very black-and-white truth soon became more like a gray saying from the generations before me.

There were definitely some moments along that journey of adolescence that really marked my life, but a moment came where God was no longer my focus, and soon almost everything I did stemmed from selfish ambition. Even during those awesome mission trips, I was unable to see beyond myself. In general, these weren’t trips for me to give and focus on others but rather to experience something for myself and forget it as soon as the trip was over. The issue was my heart. I would go to get, to take, or to fill a void that only God can fill, and I was looking at life with the wrong heart. The craziest part: I was going in the name of God, but He was no longer given space within my life to fill those voids of identity, pain, fear, shame, guilt, or pride. These years became a season to just create what I wanted out of life.

More than one of those trips was connected with a new relationship with a girl that would continue for some time after. I was very superficial, and each decision was solely focused on myself. It came to a point that I would spend time with a group of girls only if they were beautiful, or I could get something out of them. I used them to give myself an identity, and they used me to fulfill their own identity. In some of the godliest environments, sin was there knocking at the door of my heart. It was winning the battle of my mind, and even on a missions trip, all I could do was see myself. Perhaps there were a few moments when I was really challenged that God must be real, but nothing had ever marked me in the way that a trip in July of 2004 did.

I want to pause here and give a special thanks to the McCombs and their ministry of campaigners (a youth ministry for high school students); my mom, and all her efforts to take me on these trips, to keep me in a healthy environment; and the Nollers, for pushing so hard to have God’s heart become alive in me; for my dad, leading youth group; and the Brumelles’ push to have the Sunday youth services. I may not have made a lot of right choices during my fifteen to nineteen years of life, but I know that these key people fighting so hard to at least provide a healthy environment kept that seed of life within me.

In July of 2004, I had just graduated high school with plans to continue my studies in college. Just like each previous year, an opportunity arose to go and serve for a week on a missions trip. This year, we

were going to Chapala, Mexico. A month prior, in May, after my high school graduation, I had a *very* long night at my senior party marking the peak of some of my stupidity and regret. Soon after, I realized that my life and what I was living for was just like everyone else around me who were five to ten years older: party, have fun, pay lots of money to finish college, obtain a good degree, get a good job to pay off college debt, continue partying to meet many more girls that others wanted and couldn't have—but I didn't really want either—to hopefully find *the* girl, buy a house, have the picket fence, have two children, and one day work hard enough to retire and do what I really want to do. I have nothing against the American dream, and for those who truly dream to do something in their life, to be responsible and bless others is amazing, but I just had an awakening moment that I desired something different out of life. Die today or in eighty years, I didn't want to leave any space for what-ifs or should-haves. I wanted to plan for eternity but live as if I only had today.

My first choice to go on that trip to Mexico was a selfish feeling, and it really had nothing to do with God or anyone else. There was no good merit in my desire to change or any deep divine guidance, but as the door opened for me to go, the Lord was preparing the foundation of my heart in a way that I never imagined. I had tasted the normal, and I wanted more. I wanted today to mark the difference in eternity, and I definitely didn't want my perspective of life and the world to be limited to my small town of two thousand individuals in the mountains representing a very small fraction of global reality.

As I arrived in Mexico, something was different on this trip. My heart was open, and I was listening in a way that I had never done before. My eyes seemed to be opened in a way to see things that I had never seen before. Many people say that short-term mission trips have no lasting impact, can leave no long-term development, and are a waste of money and energy, but I disagree. Those short trips growing up didn't transform me, but they kept a little seed alive; and time and time again, I have seen how a simple trip to another culture or country, putting new people in my path, could influence one small choice, which will eventually alter the course of an entire life. This is what happened to me!

This trip is where I met one of the men who forever marked my life. He was a Venezuelan man named Henry. He was working with our church team, and for some reason, I spent hours and hours listening to his stories, and about the man that he was. There was something different about him. When he was speaking with our leaders, the pastor, the kids, the youth, or the women, we would hang on every word and begin to be transformed. I had never met someone that had something so genuine that applied to and challenged everyone around him. He kept talking to me about how God doesn't have grandchildren but only sons and daughters. What he meant was that I couldn't have a relationship with the Creator of the universe through my church, parents, a religion, or anyone else, and it had to be personal and intimate. As he talked with me, he continually referred to the people of the Bible that were called like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Ruth, and Esther, among many others. They were each called to leave their home and culture, their family and comfort zone, and go into the desert and meet God face-to-face. Sometimes they would be sent home again. Sometimes they would never return, but wherever they went, they went because they were in the presence of God. Henry told me that this was the focus of a program they called a Discipleship Training School (DTS) that I could come to beginning in September through the ministry we were serving with, Youth with a Mission (YWAM). Little did I know that the DTS was all over the world, and YWAM was the largest missions movement in the world connected to the University of the Nations, and soon my life would be shifted and altered into directions that I would have never imagined.

I kept thinking, *God doesn't have grandchildren. He only has sons and daughters. Am I a son, or am I grandchild? Is God my Father? Or is He just another story that I have heard from my family?* As I began to process these thoughts, I didn't like where they left me. I had grown up in the church, I had experienced God, I had studied the Bible, and I had even taught the Bible all through high school; but the same question remained: Is God really my Father?

By the end of those ten days, we built three homes for poor families, but the federal police had come to stop us because the local

Catholic Priest didn't want us helping the people. They didn't want the people to have the Bible, to see and experience the outside world, to think independently. I had never experienced something like this—the church trying to keep the people away from the Bible and change—and it made me examine everything I had ever believed.

As this trip ended, I felt like I had an important decision to make. Would I be willing to go into the desert alone with God without knowing what the outcome would be? Did I really want to know God in an intimate way for myself and not because of my church, pastor, or family? Did I live in such a way that *my* story would captivate anyone who would listen like Henry's did? Was I any different than the world around me? The answer: *no*. I didn't have *His* story, but rather my own; and right then, I realized I wanted more.

As I mentioned earlier, I was raised in the church. I had read through the whole Bible. I had amazing parents and some amazing men and women of God who had influenced me. I had been involved in youth groups and missions trips and many wonderful things. I led a Bible study and would often teach from the Bible, pray, and even hang out with Christian friends. When I was three years old, I walked over to my mom and told her that I wanted Jesus to live in my life, and He filled my heart. My first preaching was at the age of twelve, and several people from the congregation said, "You will be a teacher!" I was baptized when I was fourteen because I wanted the world to know that I loved Jesus. I know that the Lord had been working in me, on me, around me, and through me for many years, but that good foundation was just an influence, and now I was a young adult, and I had to decide for myself.

Here I was, now nineteen years old. I had been selling drugs, drinking and partying, and fighting. My vocabulary could offend almost anyone as I excelled in my four-letter words, and I definitely didn't see the image of God in the women around me but rather an object for my affection, and I had lost any idea of who I really was outside of what others wanted. The mothers at church wanted me to marry their daughters, but my friends would never leave me alone with their sisters. My story was definitely not reflecting *His* story that I had heard so much about, that I had studied or even taught, pro-

claimed that I desired or lived, and definitely nothing like the story of the Venezuelan man Henry, who turned my world upside down in just ten days. My best friend was a strong Christian girl, and she was always mad at me because she knew my life was wrong. But I knew the Bible better than her, and I knew it well enough to defend my sin and to stay far from God in the name of truth and the church.

Needless to say, as I returned home and shared with my parents my desire to put college on hold for a semester and take a time in the desert with the Lord, they were very excited. I don't think they knew exactly where I was in my life, but they had seen the signs. On one occasion when I was eighteen, my mom told me that if I didn't clean out my closet, she would. Well, I didn't clean it out, and one day after basketball practice, I came home and saw that my whole room was clean, and so was my closet. This was *really bad!* And sure enough, right in the middle of my bed was a twenty-four-pack of beer, some pornography, and things that I definitely didn't want my parents to see. They might not have seen everything, but they knew that if I was willing to go and spend six months in a foreign country with a bunch of "godly people: and possibly straighten out my life a bit, they would be happy. I sent in my application to this DTS program with little to no idea of what awaited me in my desert, but I knew I was being called to go, and that was enough. This one little choice would forever change my future.

It was as if I had been walking on two sides of the fence the last five years of my life: one foot in my life of selfishness, living my plans, doing it my way, in my timing, for the glory of myself while establishing my kingdom and the other with some type of skeptical hunch that God wanted something more and that He must be real, and I needed to change. I was curious enough to keep stepping out into it without ever giving myself over to it. I was doing everything right in the eyes of the world: getting good grades, doing well in sports (for a 2A school), working hard and preparing for college, going to church, and becoming ready for the next step in life. Beneath the surface, though, I knew that it was all just a front. I had the normal high school story of one mask covering another, and I knew it didn't reflect *His* story, and I had come to the conclusion

that I wanted more and that He wanted more. So with little to no understanding of YWAM, DTS, or any Spanish, I blindly jumped on a plane to Mexico. This one choice began me walking in my calling as I entered my desert.

As I look back, it's hard to say what would have happened had I never left for Mexico or jumped on that plane. Some say that God will simply have His way with you, and none of it depends on us in some strange fatalism, thinking that nothing I choose can change the fate set before me. In the Muslim culture, it is referred to as "Allah's will" or a concept that God controls all things independent of us as individuals. A lot of my Christian friends would see the God of the Bible the same way, and their excuse for their sin is that if God really wanted them to change, He would change them because He was in control.

The more I reflect upon my life, however, the more I have seen and grown to understand that there is a great weight in the decisions I make. The consequences are very real, and the burden will not fall on God or others to walk forward in what I choose to do. The calling does not depend on us as individuals, as God has called all people, but their response is what transforms eternity. Like David and Saul, Saul had rejected the Lord, so the Lord had to rise up a New king, a humble man, named David because of the hardness of Saul's heart and rebellion. Our choices matter! God didn't change in character. He called three different generations, but Saul had no heart for God. David had a full heart, and Solomon only had half a heart and turned away. Their choices really did matter, and God responded accordingly.

Years later, now being a leader of a YWAM ministry in Morelia, the decision to first come to Mexico seems crazy. I spoke absolutely no Spanish, found no joy outside of my own culture, and I believed that I had a very set pathway for my life. In no way did I imagine I would one day be fluent in Spanish, married to the woman of my dreams with three incredible children, and in a place where the most common language would be one other than my own: Spanish. I never imagined the friends I would have around the world, the journeys that God would take me on, or the lessons that I would learn

having traveled to different countries, communities with all sorts of languages, and experiencing many cultures. I would have never imagined what my life would be like today, where I would be, or what I would be doing, but I know that the day I arose to respond to the calling in my life is the day that *everything* else was pushed aside. I'm about to renew my passport, and it has over sixty stamps in it, and I would have never imagined that one step into Mexico would have opened the door to the nations.

Moses began his ministry by responding to a simple call from the Lord: "Take off your sandals, for where you are standing is holy ground." Through the years, God continues to bring me back to this unique verse in the Bible, and I imagine what Moses's life would have been like should he have chosen not to remove his sandals, not to walk over to the burning bush, and not respond to the Call to simply humble himself. Many of the greatest things in life began with someone or something extremely ordinary. Whether it is to take off his sandals like Moses did, to get on a plane and fly to Mexico, or simply leave everything behind like Abraham did without knowing where he would go. The greatest journeys seem to begin with the smallest choice to walk into the ordinary in obedience to God and outside of ourselves. A phrase that God has often brought to my mind through the years is, *You will never become someone tomorrow that you don't fight to become today*. I do not know where this call will lead me, but I know that I can never go back. In response to the calling, I have found that there is nothing on earth that can compare to the *extraordinary* and begin to live *His* story for my life.

Through the years, I have heard many people teach or share about calling as if it referred to a place, a physical location, a time in history, a country, or a people group. "I am called to Asia!" or "I am called to serve the Muslims." But I have come to the conclusion that a calling is not a onetime experience for a single place. It is rather an understanding of what it means to find your vocation, to follow the voice of the Creator of the universe, and to fully live God's image and likeness in your own life. It's not about when I get somewhere or what I will do but more of who I am in Christ and committing to it for the rest of my life.

To give a better understanding of what I mean, I want to share a short story. I know that God has opened doors for me to grow in my teaching gift and that God has given me the supernatural ability to speak and understand Spanish for a reason that in some way connects with Latin America, which I will share more about in the next few chapters. Mexico is where I chose to respond to my calling, and Mexico is primarily where I have served God through this calling. However, I have been in many other nations, worked with many other languages, and have had students from all over the world.

There was a season in my life before I was married that I began to really struggle with the understanding of my calling. I had been in the “desert” for several years, had no money, and being a missionary as my vocation didn’t promise a lot to offer a wife. I loved teaching, and others saw me as gifted in working with large groups of people. I had been in Mexico for just over four years in and made a new seven-year commitment to continue serving in Mexico toward the vision that God had given me. In this same season, I was coming closer and closer to getting married, and I hoped that God would miraculously do something different in my life.

This took place in 2008. I was in San Jose, Costa Rica, helping lead a community development school, and I had the opportunity to be a part of an international conference. I was one of the youngest at the conference in my early twenties, and there were pastors and leaders from Central America, Mexico, and the United States. Through casual conversation, I began to speak with a group of leaders from the United States. I was sharing some of my passions, convictions, and communicating a little bit of the heart that the Lord had given me during the past four years. We had some good chemistry, and it turned out that three from this particular group of leaders were a part of a leadership team for a decent-sized church in Florida. Their head pastor had just moved on from the church, and they were looking for a vibrant young teaching pastor to come and take the church into a new direction. We spoke for several hours, and to my surprise, they offered me the teaching pastor position. Not only would I be a pastor at such a young age without seminary and only having finished a few different schools through the University of the Nations, but

also I would be able to teach full-time, which I loved, get paid for it, have health benefits, and I would get to move back to my home country and speak English! I was very excited, and this was an amazing opportunity for me to finally use all of my gifts *and* be at a place where future in-laws would have fewer questions and more excitement about giving their daughter to me. I told them that I would pray about it and give them an answer the next day.

As I began to walk away, the presence of the Lord heavily came over me, and I knew that I didn’t need to pray about this decision as the Holy Spirit brought conviction. I was excited about my kingdom, my dreams, and what I wanted, but I had forgotten about *His* story in that moment. It quickly changed from serving God for the glory that He could get out of me, to using God to get my own glory, my own influence, my way and establish my own kingdom. I had just made a seven-year commitment because God had shown me that He had a purpose for me in this particular season in Mexico. My calling wasn’t to be in the desert or to seek out a new promised land but, rather, to be with God where He wanted me—in Mexico. I turned around and walked back to those leaders and was honest with them. I shared that I was very honored but that I knew God had already spoken to me for something different in this season. It was a great opportunity, but my place was where God already had me. It wasn’t about money, opportunity, numbers, or my desires, but it was about walking in *His* story, in His timing, wherever, whenever, and with whomever He wanted.

Similar situations arose throughout the years, and the temptation in my mind was always the same: *Serve God in a small place with between five and twenty-five people that I could influence, or go with the opportunity where I could become well-known and touch many people along the way?* It looked godly, but it was the extreme of humanism and using God to get what I wanted. There is a famous preaching by Paris Reidhead called “Ten Shekels and a Shirt.” It reminds me of the dangers of this “Christian humanism” and brings me back to my knees in repentance before God.

One of the verses in the Bible that I have most meditated upon through the years and continually been challenged by is Joshua 5:13–

15. Joshua had just taken command of Israel and the second generation, and they were on the way to Jericho. The captain of the Host of the Lord appeared to him, and Joshua asked, “Are you for our adversaries or for us?” This question reflects what I think most of us as Christians ask in our lives. “God, are You going to be a part of my plans, what I am doing, and where I am going? Or are You against me and my plans?” The captain of the Host of the Lord answered in a way that has always impacted me, “No.” We can’t try to take God with us and live what we want. The question should never be, “God, are You with me?” but the question as we walk forward in life must always be, “Lord, am I with You? What do You want from me? Where do You want me to go? What do You want me to do?” We don’t get to just take God with us and do whatever we want, but when we have responded to the call of the Lord, we do whatever He asks, even if it is something as simple as, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

So through the past sixteen years, I have continually seen that my place, and my calling is to simply say yes because He has said yes, to go because He has asked me to go, or to stay because He wants me to stay. This is the greatest journey on earth. Many times it isn’t doing the spectacular, and more often than not, it is actually doing the extremely ordinary, repetition of a day-to-day life because the voice of the Creator of the universe has called me to follow Him. In the wonderful words of Jesus, “I only do what I see the Father doing, and I only say what I hear the Father saying.” May my vocation, my life, and my calling be a reflection of *His* story and one day be an example of the *extraordinary* as people remember and think of His story!

Reflection

1. As you think of the verse, “Many are called, but few are chosen,” what comes to your mind? Have you responded to the call?
2. Thinking of this verse, “God does not desire that any should perish but that all come to eternal life,” what does this imply?

3. What was your desert experience? Are you a grandchild or a son or daughter of God?
4. When you share your story, is it *His* story? Or is it your story?
5. When you think of the verse in Isaiah 54:2–3 “to enlarge the place of your tent without any limits,” who is responsible to make this happen, you or God?
6. What is your vocational calling? Are you responding to your own passions or the word of the Lord?

Meditation

Jacob had been called from the “loins” of Abraham. Abraham struggled through his calling for almost forty years as he was called at the age of sixty, and Isaac didn’t come until he was one hundred. And continually he failed until he was finally able to trust the God of the promise more than the promise itself. At this moment, he was proclaimed as a man of faith and righteousness. Isaac had to have his own encounter with God and choose to follow the promise independent of what his father had already lived. Isaac was the promise to Abraham and therefore had a calling before his birth, but he still had to choose to respond to the calling and have the God of Abraham become the God and Father of Isaac.

Jacob also was chosen from birth, but even to the point where he was going to meet his brother, Esau, in the desert, he first sent his family and livestock in fear that Esau would come and kill him. One night, he had an encounter with the Lord and wrestled Him all night to the point that he was permanently marked in his hip from the struggle. This encounter with the Lord was much more than an experience but the first time that Jacob did not follow the God of Abraham and Isaac. But now he began to follow His God, His own Father. After this encounter with God, Jacob fully responded to the call of God and took on His calling to be the head of his family. As he responded to the calling, his name was then changed to Israel, and he marked what became known as the people of God.

It has become very evident, when we just step aside and give God His rightful place on the throne of our hearts, everything changes, and our story really can become a glimpse of *His* story!

The Bible and Calling

- Abram was called from Ur to have a son by faith and bless all nations.
- Moses was called back to Egypt to deal with his step-brother and free a nation.
- Noah was called to unite his family, build a ship, and preach repentance for all nations.
- David was called to forgive and honor his enemy and become a prince of God's people for the nations.
- Esther was called to become a queen, to combat social injustice, and bless the nations.
- Boaz was called to redeem Ruth, a widow and foreigner.
- Samuel was called to be a moral voice for a nation that rejected him.
- Daniel was called to counsel foreign kings in a foreign nation that oppressed his own family and people.
- Joshua was called to cross the Jordan and conquer the land while carrying the baton of the previous leader.
- Rachel was called to have a family and serve with Isaac in a faraway land.
- Jacob was called to confront his brother and lead his family into a new country.
- Jesus was called to give up everything and incarnate Himself to redeem His people.
- Paul was called to love his enemies and turn into what he most hated and persecuted.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you been called.

—Ephesians 4:1



CHAPTER 2

Truth

Inspired by Pastor Braulio Serratos from Mexico

Truth—the correct description of reality from an infinite perspective, absolute, unchanging, that applies to all people, at any given moment in history, present, or future.

Special Introduction

For an introduction to this chapter on truth, and as I think of the value of truth, the following is what comes to mind. Truth is not about any specific religion or philosophy. Truth is simply what it is. The truth is determinate in the life of any individual or society. I grew up in a family in which we didn't know the truth. We believed in religion, we believed in fables, fairy tales, and even lies, which made our lives full of darkness and uncertainty. We lived in constant fear of the present, the future, and even more of eternity. When we know the truth through the Bible, we are totally transformed, and we are set free. For this reason, since thirty-four years ago, I have dedicated my life to sharing the truth of God. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:32: "You will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free." Through the years, I have seen the same pattern repeated many times: individuals and families set free, saved, and totally trans-

formed. May the principles of this chapter do the same and even more in your own life.

Braulio Serratos
Senior Pastor of Jamay Church
Church Planter, Evangelist, and Modern-Day Apostle

* * * * *

I remember the day I got off the airplane as I returned to spend the next six months of my life in Mexico and begin this discipleship program. As I was driving from the airport to the missionary training campus, I had one clear thought: *I must be crazy*. I had just jumped on an airplane to a foreign country, without speaking the language, without anyone I knew, simply because I thought that God was calling me. As my driver said nothing, I sat in silence, whiffed unfamiliar and unpleasant smells; and in my mind, I began to wander. I wasn't even a good Christian or convinced that God existed! As I held back tears, I realized for the first time in a long time, maybe ever, that my walls of protection around my life had come falling down. The masks of my identity were torn off, and I was vulnerable. No one knew my story, the identity I had created and fought so long to possess, or the image that I had portrayed to others. Nothing of what I was existed anymore. I now had no defined past. My story was now what I chose to share, and I could define it however I desired. It seemed just hours earlier I was in control of everything; now all I could do was walk forward and wait for the unexpected. As I was struggling to answer two questions in my mind, I was hit with a new reality: "Who am I?" and "What will these people think about me?"

Having struggled with male relationships—well, not struggled, but having spent much of my time with girls—it was very hard for me when I discovered that I was a part of a school with nearly all guys. Aside from one married Mexican couple, there was only one other woman enrolled in the program. I spoke no Spanish, and I would be rooming with four other Mexicans, none of whom spoke English. I remember the first evening as we all came together. It was

one of the first times in my life that I had no words to say, and I had no idea what awaited me. All I knew was this: I didn't want to be here, at this moment, in this place, with these people—but here I was. My first morning, I awoke, half asleep, and tried to put on my hat. One of the Mexican guys began to yell at me, "Peligro!" over and over again while hitting me. I didn't understand what was happening. He made me very angry, but it turns out, he was trying to protect me. As my eyes began to open, I saw a big scorpion sitting in the middle of my hat. I then came to realize he was hitting me and telling me, "Danger!" and not just being obnoxious. This is a pretty good image of what the next three months of my life entailed: me confused and frustrated and usually completely wrong in my assumptions.

It only seems right that after a chapter on calling, I would follow it with a chapter on truth. My whole life, I heard what I should and shouldn't do, what I should or shouldn't believe, what was right or wrong when talking about the Bible; but at the same time, I learned very little about truth. What I most remember about truth from high school and my time before coming to Mexico was that Absolute Truth didn't exist. It was whatever people wanted it to be. If it did exist, one thing was certain: Christians didn't have it. The latter never made sense to me, and I think this is one of the reasons I had the intuition that God must be real somewhere. Some of the most intelligent men I have ever met—scientists from the Middle East, men from NASA, teachers, lawyers, doctors, among others—were all Christians. Some of the scientists even claimed to be able to prove God's existence. I sat through some of their classes growing up, not understanding much, but I knew there was definitely space for reason and God together. I just never really took the time myself to wrestle through the issue.

Day in and day out, I was challenged with the same phrase over and over—"the truth." People spoke of it in an absolute way, with no fear of what others might feel or think, including themselves. The people I came into contact with would teach and share about their lives. They were living their lives for something greater than themselves, outside of themselves, and measured by a standard not of their own. Dean Harvy was one of the teachers that most challenged, inspired, and even angered me because of this concept of truth. He

tore through my theology about the nature of God and man, sin and truth, and presuppositional truths. I spent hours arguing with him, trying to prove my point from a posture of independent selfishness, and he would respond with an incredible depth of conviction. He made several statements that forever changed my life. He didn't try to defend or argue theology with me yet kept going back to "Truth," the "Word of God," and the person of "Jesus."

The first statement was, "If you can show me anything I am teaching that goes against the Word of God, the Bible, and not just your opinion or what you believe, I will change what I teach. I trust in the Bible so much as Absolute Truth that if it said 'Jonah ate the whale,' I would believe it." The second thing he said to me was, "With how much you argue against the existence of God and any absolute moral standard or give account for what is and isn't permissible in life, I wonder if you aren't arguing so fiercely because you're worried you might be wrong. If you are wrong, that makes you responsible for your life and no longer a victim. That means you would have to change, and I don't think you want to change."

Could it be possible that some of what I had heard or believed my whole life wasn't completely right? Is it possible that I cared more about being right and defending my sin than finding truth? That week, I made a commitment to God: "If You are real and the Bible is Absolute Truth, then I want to know You for myself, not for what people tell me about You, not for any theology or doctrine, but because I want to discover Truth." I think that was one of the most powerful commitments I had ever made in my life, and it began a process of the Bible and me, Jesus in me, hearing the Holy Spirit. Through the next six months, I read through the Bible, cover to cover, twice! I was tired of people telling me about God, about Truth, and about what the Bible said. I wanted to know it for myself. I don't remember much more of the teachers from that season of my life, but I do remember that if God was real and Truth existed, and that Truth was a person named Jesus revealed through the Bible, I wanted to discover Him for myself.

Every excuse I made in the name of the Bible to live a life of selfishness sounded good. "It's about grace, not works," "Jesus came

to get rid of the law," "The Old Testament doesn't matter anymore," "Jesus came to make me free." I was soon to find these were all semi-truths. The real message was about a covenantal relationship in love, a love that transforms everything. In love, there is no space for selfishness. Love makes no excuses but gives everything and expects nothing. Love is an action, not an emotion. The opposite of love wasn't hate but, rather, selfishness. As I began to see Truth, I could see my great selfishness in every argument I ever had. Whether the argument was theological or over a different topic, it didn't matter. At the end of the day, if I had really found love and true grace, which I didn't deserve, I would spend the rest of eternity enjoying the freedom to be responsible for my life. I would be a new creation, reflect Jesus, and enjoy the undeserved gift of a completely clean conscience!

Dean also made a comment that I have carried with me for a long time: "If you read through the Bible every year cover to cover, within ten years, you will have read the Bible more than 90 percent of pastors and ministers in the world today." Whether that comment was right or wrong, it reminded me of what Henry Davies told me once: "God only has sons and daughters, not grandkids." I didn't want to just trust what someone else told me, and I was convinced I had to discover it for myself. I knew that if you could read the Bible in one year by reading three and a half chapters a day, then I could do it in six months reading seven. Yet during those six months, I read about fourteen chapters a day, which has been a habit of mine ever since. I found out it only takes about seventy-two hours to read the Bible, and really, it shouldn't be separated by chapters and verses but, as much as possible, read as whole books—all sixty-six of them.

Sixteen years later, I don't claim I know the Bible better than 90 percent of pastors, but I have discovered that most people I encounter have never read the Bible even once. The Bible is the most reproduced book in the world. It is a book that is quoted, carried, purchased, sold, guarded, and even worshipped, but all too often it isn't read, much less actually applied with conviction and understanding. For sixteen years now, I have read the Bible between two and seven times a year, a different translation every time, and it continues to amaze me how possible It really is to understand the single intended meaning of scripture.

One important principle of studying the Bible has stuck with me—*context, context, context*. And as I always tell our students now, “The Bible can never mean something today that it didn’t mean when it was originally written.” It was written by real people at a real time in history in a real language, with a real message, and I don’t get to change it. My job is to make sure that as I read and study today, I keep the purity of that message. To this day, I still save some “love letters” from my wife that she wrote me as a teenager. Anyone could just read parts of those letters and assume many things. But when you understand our story, what was happening in each of our lives, and just a little bit of context, those words fly off the pages and touch even the driest heart. The Bible has even greater power than one love letter in a single relationship. It can shape nations, transform governments, reeducate a complete generation, and turn darkness into light for obedience to the faith for all nations.

In November 2004, about halfway through my first six months in Mexico, I was sent with a small team of three to go and serve in a local church for the week. We were blessed to meet many people and hear some amazing stories. There was a man we met who has, to this day, marked my life. We were sent to stay at a pastor’s house, and Pastor Braulio received us in his home with open arms.

Braulio is a large man, very dark skin, large glasses, broad shoulders, and for a Mexican man, very big and quite intimidating at first encounter. I remember he had a very sweet, soft-spoken wife, one son, and two daughters. I grew up with a healthy respect for my own father as he was a big man with large tattoos, and despite never seeing anything I had heard from his past, I had no doubt that I didn’t want to push him too far. I loved him and had a healthy reverence for him. A very similar feeling came over me as we entered Braulio’s house. I was nineteen years old, afraid of nothing, but felt like a fourteen-year-old boy again, almost fearful to talk. Not that it mattered since I was the only one in the house that spoke English, and I still spoke almost no Spanish.

I have never been the best listener in life, but living in an environment where no one understood me and I didn’t understand them, I began to learn the art of watching, listening, and picking out the

smallest details to not be lost in what was happening around me. A smile, a glare, a tear, mumble, or the slightest change of expression on a face would catch my attention. As we sat in the house that first night, I remember studying this man as he looked through his glasses and began to speak to his wife, make a phone call, or get the attention of his children with a simple look. He carried a presence that I had never experienced before. My experience with pastors was expansive. I met men of mercy, counselors, and men I could relate to easily. I also met men who enjoyed talking a lot or teaching, evangelists, or famous public speakers. However, I had never met anyone like this man. He was a man of few words but a great presence in every moment, every word, and with every look. He stepped into the room, and things were different. The question began to build in my mind, what is different about this man?

As we awoke early the next morning, we drove for a long time. The pastor was driving a small minivan with several other men, the two guys in my team, and me. After a while, passing village after village, we arrived in a small town. As soon as the pastor stepped out, all the men came out of their houses, almost like soldiers before a general. We quickly switched vehicles and now, riding in the back of a pickup truck, traveled for hours to a community in the distant mountains.

As the pastor got out of the truck, again people stood at attention. He spoke a few words, but it was evident this man carried something very unique. Day after day, we spent long hours working with the people. We gave out Bibles, shared about Jesus, prayed, and saw miracles. The hunger and need for Jesus was evident.

I don’t think I was able to understand the depths of what I was experiencing in these communities until years later. This area of Mexico, the eight Central States, is known as the *Circle of Silence*. It is the least evangelized area in all of the Americas with a percentage of Evangelical Christianity of about 1.5–2.5 percent. To this day, they run out Christians with machetes, and I have heard tremendous stories. You can go to town after town and not find a single Christian church. On most windows, you see little stickers that say, “We don’t accept Protestants here.” To my amazement, it was town after town

of communities that didn't have the Bible either, and many hadn't ever seen one. They really are silent when it comes to the Bible, and many have given their lives to try and change this in the middle of a region controlled by a sect of the Catholic Church that has done everything in its ability to keep the people from receiving the Bible or education.

When I understood this reality, I was able to truly understand who this man Braulio was. He had dedicated his life to the Bible, Scripture, the proclamation, application, and dedication of the Word of God. He was born into a reality where truth wasn't taught, proclaimed, or heard. He is one of the best speakers I've ever heard, and I have heard Bible teachers from all over the world. A few years back, in 2017, I ran into him and was blessed to hear him in a church where I was preaching. It was like old times, and I was just as challenged as ever. Braulio is different than most pastors or leaders. He has no money, no fame, no glory, no great name, no great inheritance, and he's downright crazy by the standard of most men in this world. His children are now grown up with his son in college and girls graduating high school. Thanks to him, though, community after community now have vibrant, biblically solid churches. Some are as small as just one couple, with others over one hundred people, but there is a light blazing of radical men, women, and children who have risen up and broken the chains of history. Machismo and the matriarch society, drunkenness and cartels, corruption and violence have now become healthy marriages and families of love and peace. Children are going to school and being educated with very hardworking parents. These have become the people of the Living Word. Almost no one will ever know about them, but I will forever be marked by these amazing people and the man, the modern-day Paul, fully dedicated not to teach, not to sell or to make gains, but to be a man who has given up his life for Christ. He is someone who believes that Truth is absolute and is defined in the person of Jesus Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit through understanding the Holy Bible.

I don't know what this life holds for me, but one thing is certain: Truth is absolute. It is not to be invented or determined by experience. It is to be discovered and is open to anyone who has a

willing heart. Pastor Braulio will not likely be known outside of the pages of this book or his small region of the world, but he has forever marked my life. In a way, he has been like a general, showing the men of this world that you can stand strong, you can walk with your shoulders high, no matter what people say. He has exemplified the phrase of Paul: "To live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). The Truth allows us to live the message, to multiply it and embrace it in our lives. It transforms everything. Jesus Christ is the Living Truth. He who was, and who is, and who will forever be. I have seen that I can follow Him and become a man like Him. This is my desire—to be a man that reflects the heart of God, to have a marriage that reflects the relationship of Jesus and the church, that I might die daily, and that my children and wife would grow and thrive in the love that we share. In the words of the Moravians, "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering."

For years as I traveled and taught, I would think back on incredible men like Dean and Braulio. They knew the Bible so well they could just teach without notes, flip through the pages, and share with conviction. This was always a dream of mine to know the Bible so well it would become the word of my heart. I have tried multiple times to memorize Psalms 119, and I've never gotten beyond the halfway point, but I will one day. I have an oral Bible overview I can share in just fifteen minutes, and I've memorized books like James or parts of the Gospels, and my wife has the whole book of Mark memorized. At one point, I even had Genesis memorized through the first ten chapters. I remember taking full weekends studying the Bible and seeking God. Something began to shift in me during this time with Braulio, and like Jesus did with the disciples in the end of Luke, my eyes were opened to the scriptures. I still teach and preach a lot, but almost never with notes anymore. Just my Bible, what's in my heart, and what has become real in my life on whatever God is showing me at that time.

Each year I desire more, and the Bible can never be read enough, pondered enough, explored enough, or applied enough. Just this past year, a Bible translation organization offered to cover my costs to return to school to become a Bible consultant for Latin America

because they think I fit well into what they need. These types of invitations seem almost illogical, knowing my own story. What began as a seemingly impossible challenge sixteen years ago by a young man that doubted the existence of God has exceeded my expectations, and I've discovered that I can find truth, I can understand the Bible, and I can become a living letter, putting on the mind of Christ, knowing and understanding God!

I could have never imagined how this process of discovery and Truth would open doors for me. Just a couple of years ago, my buddy Dale and I were at a conference where there was a focus on Bible translation, oral Bible translation, and the need in Mexico. We prayed that night and made a commitment to try to do something about the Bible-translation needs in Mexico. Neither of us have any background in Bible translation, but we both have a passion for the indigenous of Mexico and years of experience working with them. We adopted some of these unreached people groups of Mexico and began to pray. That prayer turned into a short mission trip that Dale led in faith with a few other people to try and have a first encounter with the Otomi people of Veracruz in Mexico. All we had were longitude and latitude coordinates.

After much prayer, they hopped on a bus, then took another bus, and another bus, followed by a two-hour taxi to finally arrive in the middle of the mountains. Dale went to the top of the mountain and prayed. They made first entry in the community and eventually found a Catholic church. Upon meeting the priest, the team was honest with their reason for being there, and the priest told Dale that he had never seen anyone in history come into their community to help save their language and translate the Bible for them. He let Dale into the cathedral, and while praying and filming a video, Dale felt God speak to his heart. He felt there was an Evangelical Christian family within the community, and Dale committed to finding them. Within six hours, they found the family with a tiny little church! They were bilingual, a Mexican married to an Otomi woman with kids.

A few hours later, a missionary pastor arrived, who was also working in this community. He had been heading on a trip out of

the community when he came to a river, and God told him, *Return. I have sent you people.* He returned to find Dale and our team who were able to minister to him and greatly encourage him! Within two years of that first trip, we have done six different trips with them. We have had some of their leaders travel to Morelia to be trained with us, and we now have a first draft of the Jesus film script and a first draft of the book of Luke. What an incredible story!

In January of 2019, I had another incredible opportunity and was invited to go to the Mexican Congress as the new government took their place. Together, with part of our team from the Council of Michoacán, we united with key Evangelical leaders throughout the country and were able to give a Bible to every new Congress member. We were also able to share about the role of government, the family, and the church within the nation. I was one of the only non-Mexicans invited, and I was the only participant under fifty years old that I could see. How did this happen? How could a man without any degree, without any formal training, and just a young American missionary in Mexico be in a place like this? Simple: the Truth transforms nations. When we become the Living Word, God opens doors to multiply His Truth for His glory. What began many years ago gets deeper, more mature, and stronger each year. God is worthy, and it is His Truth and His story!

In September, of 2019, I was on a trip to teach in Madison, Wisconsin. In the airport, I received a message from a leader in Central America. He had been given the task of pushing forward the Bible-translation Process of Latin America. He knew me, and because Brazil and Mexico have the biggest needs of all of Latin America, he asked me to take on Mexico. It's an intensive eight-month project of beginning the oral Bible translations of forty unreached people groups in Mexico as we enter the global year of the Bible: 2020. To accept would mean stepping out in frontier missions like never before and sending at least one team a week to meet the deadline. I prayed, said yes in the airport, and sent the list to Dale. In just two months, thanks to Dale and his wife, Jesus, Roberto, Gustavo, and a few others, we have already done the first four Bible stories in seven of these unreached people groups. We've experienced miracles, have

been the first to enter certain people groups, formed an alliance with government organizations, Bible-translation organizations, and key indigenous leaders, and once again we are doing things that I would have never even dreamt of sixteen years ago.

The influence of Truth isn't what we can teach others from our mind or teaching notes. Truth is imparted more than it is taught. It is contagious. It has an impact and power when it is visible within the life of the messenger. If Truth is absolute, then the power is seen in the fruit of the application. As a living letter, truth must be seen to be effective. May my life align with the lives of many incredible men and women all over the world that have made a choice to become a living letter of His Truth. May each of our stories create a message of His story. As we always say in one of our Bible schools, "The character of the messenger must be consistent with the message that he or she carries."

Reflection

1. What does it mean for you to be free?
2. If the opposite of love is selfishness, and selfishness is to do whatever you want, then what is love?
3. If Truth is absolute, then what is the absolute standard for what you live?
4. If Jesus is God, and Jesus is the Word, and the Word was in the beginning with God, can you fully know God without understanding the Bible?
5. Do you have a clean conscience with pure thoughts?
6. What does it mean to "be renewed by the transforming of your mind"?
7. Where could God's Truth take you in the next sixteen years?
8. How often do you read through the whole Bible?
9. Who is God, what is the Bible, and how have they transformed your life?

Meditation

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 says, "Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?" Braulio taught me what it meant to understand the fear of the Lord, to begin my life in Genesis 1:1, and remember, "In the beginning, God..." and that all things are sustained in Him, but this is also what's best for me.

Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter one time called "a conversation between my head and my heart," and I think this can be seen in the church of today. We feel or we think, but reason in itself is not enough, and an experience in itself doesn't change anything. It's not about the what, where, or when but more the why and who.

Truth is absolute, and it is not to be created but rather to be discovered. If God created me, He knows what is best for me. If He asks something of me, it is for my good, according to the above verse. God's dreams, desires, and plans for me are continually good, but I need to get out of the way. To discover Truth is the only thing that can fully set me free. Not in my head with knowledge, or in my heart with experience, but a choice to believe with great conviction that I would get up and walk with Him, that it would transform me, and I would become like the God that I worship in thought and character. I have come to a place where I don't just believe the Bible; I understand what it means to love and trust the God revealed through the Bible. He has created me, and my reality is defined by Him. My desire is that I will live my life in such a way that I'll reflect the great commandment, "Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind."

I believe that most people desire to "feel" God. They desire to have their will follow Him, and most people put great effort into doing so. At the same time, I don't believe we have really understood what it means to love God with our mind. Truth is simply the correct description of reality, and I am not the source of Truth, but rather

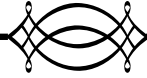
I have the ability to discover Truth, to apply Truth, and to abide in Truth. “You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free.” I have given up everything, but I have gained everything. I have died to every dream in my life, but I have discovered the real desires of my heart. It took me getting out of the way and discovering Truth to discover who I really am.

The calling was not enough, but to be set free, to become a reflection of the image and likeness of God and learn to really be His image bearer. Only in Him can this take place. Only in Him can I fully live a life of love, of freedom, and a completely pure conscience with no regrets and no shame. As I discover Truth and apply it, I have been set free and will be free indeed. So many years ago, my ideas had no room to turn me into the man I am now. I was a reflection of what I worshipped: myself and my own way of thinking. My desire is that as I discover more and more of the Truth of God, that I will reflect Him more and more. My dream is to be a life learner, willing to trust, even when I don’t understand, because I love God!

The Bible and Truth

- Jesus proclaimed that He was the way, the Truth, and the life.
- Pilate looked at Jesus and asked, “What is Truth?”
- When choosing the judges and leaders, Moses chose the men who fear God and were full of truth.
- As the Lord passed before Moses, He proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.”
- The people told Joshua that they would “fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth.”
- When Samuel spoke to the people before anointing Saul, the first king of Israel, he spoke to the people and said, “Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart.”
- When David was made king, he looked at the people and said, “Now may the Lord show loving-kindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness to you.”

- “Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For you are the God of my salvation; For I wait all the day” (Psalm 25:5).
- “All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth, to the hose who keep His covenant and His testimonies” (Psalm 25:10).
- “Into Your hand I commit my Spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of Truth” (Psalm 31:5).
- “You, O Lord will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me” (Psalm 40:11).
- “Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3).
- “He who speaks truth tells what is right, But a false witness, deceit” (Proverbs 12:17).
- “A false witness will perish, but the man who listens to the truth will speak forever” (Proverbs 21:28).
- “Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23).
- “For the law was given to Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).
- “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God” (John 3:21).
- “But an hour is coming, and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24).
- “So Jesus was saying to the Jews who had believed Him, “if you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31–32).
- “But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth’” (Acts 26:25).



CHAPTER 3

Intimacy with God

Inspired by missionary Loren Cunningham from the United States

Intimacy—to know the character of another to such a degree that life becomes a depth of love and trust, openness and honesty, humility and transparency so that two can become one without any shame. Learning to love what he loves, to hate what he hates, and to abstain from anything that might negatively affect the others emotions.

IN TO ME YOU SEE ALL THINGS.

Special Introduction

Hearing God is not all that difficult. If we know the Lord, we have already heard His voice—after all, it was the inner leading that brought us to Him in the first place. But we can hear His voice and still miss His best if we don't keep on listening. After the what of guidance comes the when and how.

If we want to be known in heaven and feared in hell, we must be willing to lose our reputation here on earth. May this chapter challenge you to dare to live on earth in the same way that Daniel has been trying to do this in his own way.

“For from the days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God beside You, Who acts on behalf of the one who waits for Him” (Isaiah 64:4).

Loren Cunningham

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I remember a late night on Halloween in 2004 where a friend and I were sitting at a bonfire that overlooked the city playing the guitar during my missionary training program in Mexico. We spent hours talking, singing, and watching the stars. I remember hearing sirens and knowing what was happening all around me, but at the same time, it seemed so peaceful. After my buddy went to bed, I stayed up for a while longer and began to share my heart with God. As I looked around me from the mountain where I was sitting, overlooking the city, I had this strong feeling of how selfish man had really become. Even within the domain of the church, self-centeredness had become a theme of the Bible preaching: the creation for man, God for man, angels for man, miracles for man, salvation for man, heaven for man, earth for man, life for man, death for man, and everything that could possible “feel good” for man.” My prayers quickly shifted from simply pouring out my heart to actually breaking within my spirit and identifying with this spirit of selfishness. I had given up everything to follow God: my family, my culture, my language, my job, and so much more. Then it hit me. I felt like God owed me something. I was living a life of transactions with God. I gave, so now He *had to* do what I wanted. I was on the mountain, in a new culture, language, and country, and I realized I only wanted God for what He would do for me. I was hiding under the mask

* A global missions movement

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of ministry or Christianity, but my heart motive was the same. I remember humbling myself before God while shedding a few tears, and as I arose again, the story of Noah and the ark came to my mind. It wasn't an audible voice, but the details of this Bible story that surfaced did not come from me. It was God talking to me, and three questions popped into my mind:

- How long was Noah building the ark before the flood?
- How many people listened to God?
- How many times did God speak to Noah during this time?

As my mind began examining the details of the story, I saw a man working hard with his wife and kids for one hundred years on a boat, no one heeding his message. While building the boat and preaching repentance to the people, I didn't see long conversations with God. Noah didn't serve God for what he could get out of Him, but he simply served Him because he trusted Him and therefore was willing to be obedient no matter what the cost, or the results, which were zero converts in over one hundred years of evangelism. Again I humbled myself before the Lord and began to repent of the many times I felt like God had to do something for me; that I had to feel Him; that for me to obey Him, I must first get something. I was nothing like Noah. I had been a man serving God not because I trusted Him but because I had fear of His power and, at the same time, expected His power to bless me before I had to do anything. There was no foundation of a love-and-trust relationship that brought forth radical obedience, just transactional choices while I waited for the reward. That night marked my life. All alone on Halloween, I made a covenant to God. If He never spoke to me again, never used me again, and never allowed me to experience Him again, I would still serve and obey Him for the rest of my life because He was worthy, and I trusted Him.

Many times through the years, God has brought me back to that covenant with a simple question, "Do you trust Me?" I haven't always made the right choice, and to my regret, I have fallen into the humanistic Christianity that believes God is for me like a magical

genie. However, with great patience and love, the Holy Spirit has brought me back to that one experience that I will never forget on top of that mountain. After a few tears from conviction and repentance, the decision becomes easy: God is good, I trust Him, and He is worthy, no matter what the cost.

This experience was preparing the soil of my heart for an experience that would forever shape the way that I saw God and how I interacted with Him. After a couple of months in Mexico, everything in my foundation was being rocked. The areas that were weak were being broken, and I found, to my great surprise, that God Himself had begun to build a new foundation within me. After that Halloween night, I went very extreme and began to live as if it was wrong to experience the presence of God. I shied away from prophecy, the miraculous, and the gifts of the Spirit. As I saw the great destruction that a few movements focused on "God experiences" had done, I had become cold in my personal relationship with God. To fully pursue God, however, I had to first put my heart in the right place. As I humbled myself, He then took the job of bringing me into the balance of living a daily covenant full of loving intimacy with Him.

Six weeks after being in Mexico, I was soon to experience something that would challenge everything I had ever believed. I was at a pastoral and missions conference with about three thousand people attending. On the second day, the founder of Youth with a Mission (YWAM,) Loren Cunningham, was the guest speaker, and he began to share about how every country on earth is an open nation. He said, "I can get you into any country on earth if God calls you, but you may never come out. God says, *Go*. He doesn't necessarily say, *Return*." Loren didn't say it with fear or force but rather with love and excitement. He really trusted God, not just because He was worthy but because Loren knew Him. He had experienced Him, and he had a very unique relationship with the Creator of the universe with hundreds of stories to prove it. His testimony spoke to me more than his words, and I saw how Loren didn't teach a message but rather lived a message full of power and experience. He said yes, even at the cost of his own reputation. When he did say no, he was quick to repent and

return to the place of saying yes in the fear of the Lord, knowing that God was there to do the impossible. He exemplified sincere love to me, living the kingdom of God here on earth, here and now.

After the conference, there was a time to minister to the different ages, and I went forward and began to call out for God. This was a decisive moment for me as I had been convinced that God was real, that He was good, but that I wasn't right with Him. Since I was the only English speaker, I began to pray out loud in a way that I'd never done before, knowing that no one understood me, and I began to fight with God. I remember saying, "I know You are real, I know You are good, and I know You have more! I can't continue living a divided life anymore. Either tonight You take everything, or tomorrow I am going home and never looking for You again. Either take it all or let me go!" While I was praying, something very unique happened, especially since I didn't believe in the gifts of the Spirit and I had never experienced any of them. I fell down, and as I climbed to my knees, I began to pray in a language that I couldn't understand. I tried to stop, but I couldn't shut my mouth or control it. All the people around me understood what I was saying as I began to pray for them. I was praying in perfect Spanish. This continued for about two hours in a way that to this day I can't fully explain, but I definitely can't doubt that it took place.

After the conference ended and I was back where I was staying, I began to read the Bible to try and figure out what was happening to me. I began looking into speaking in tongues and started to read 1 Corinthians 12–14. I felt like the Holy Spirit spoke as clear as can be to my mind. *You are right. I am real, and I am good, but I am a gentleman, and I won't take anything from you. I am knocking and waiting—you must choose. I knock and wait. I don't break down the door and force you.* I laid down my Bible, looked into the heavens, and I spoke to the Creator of the universe about how I wanted more than to just trust and obey Him—that I wanted intimacy with Him. I wanted to know Him and understand Him in a personal way. With a deep conviction, I knew that no one else could do this for me; I had to do it myself. Loren had left me very challenged. I wanted what I had just heard Loren speak about, but I knew that I couldn't have his

relationship. I would have to develop my own intimacy with God. Just like Loren, I wanted something genuine and real, something very personal and intimate. I wanted my own personal love and trust relationship with God, and I was tired of seeking it in all the wrong places.

About three months later, a similar experience happened in El Salvador on the island of Monte Cristo when I began to pray for a woman, and I felt God's heart for her. I didn't know what to say, but the words began to flow out in her language. She understood me in her own language, and God used me to speak to her. What a privilege! I saw that God was all-powerful, all-personal, and all-relational. I realized that a large part of what my relationship with God looked like depended on me. If I was willing, He was always ready and eager to teach, but His willingness wasn't enough; I had to choose daily as well. This has happened in different places, in a few different languages, and I'm always amazed at how obeying the all-powerful and all-personal God here on earth changes everything.

A few years later in 2006, I had the privilege of flying to South Korea for an international workshop. It was my first experience in Asia, and everything marked me: the people, the culture, the bathrooms, and the beauty. My grandfather had fought in the Korean War, so I had heard many stories about Korea, but nothing that I had heard was visible. It was a beautifully developed country. One night during a worship session, I began to ponder and communicate with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as I was learning how to relate individually to each person of the Godhead. Very quickly, the Holy Spirit took me on a trip down memory lane of dancing with my mom, dad, and sister while growing up. My mom and dad were incredible dancers, and we used to go out dancing as a family once a week. To watch them move when they danced was like watching one person, not two. As I was caught up in that memory, I felt like the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, *May I have this dance?*

"Here in front of thousands of people?" I responded. But then I realized that the Creator of the universe had just asked me by name to dance alone with Him, so I did. I shut my eyes and began to dance with the Holy Spirit. I don't know what the people around me

thought, and frankly it didn't matter, but the principle that I had discovered came springing up in my life again: God is a gentleman, and He knocks and waits on me. He is faithful and personal, but I must choose to answer. He initiates and pursues, but I have to respond. That dance was one of the most spiritual moments I have ever experienced in this life with God. In the middle of a multitude on the other side of the world but alone with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He called me by name, took my hand, and touched His heart while His Spirit overflowed within mine with a profound love and trust. He is the perfect leader. He is the right guide, and He knows each step to take. As I stopped dancing, I felt that the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, *I want your life with the Father to be like this dance. That each step would be guided by Him, just like Jesus did. Jesus did this by listening to Me and following Me. Let Me teach you how to glorify the Son by obeying the Father.*

One of my biggest frustrations in ministry has been the continual debate and comparison of Spirit or Truth as if they are somehow separate or opposites. I have met many passionate young men and women along the way that call themselves prophetic with a desire to live by the Spirit, *but* they have never once read the Bible. They proof text scripture, trying to get scripture to affirm what they feel and desire, despite what it actually says. They struggle more often than not with moral/habitual sin and believe that freedom comes from an experience but feel unable to continually live with a clean conscience, so they never reach freedom and instead seek the next experience. They believe a magical touch by God will heal everything and that somehow a special experience is more important than a genuine covenantal relationship. They seek power, signs, and wonders, with little to no concept of covenant and character. The other side has jumped into an extreme just like I did, loving the Bible but ignoring the message of an intimate God, who is very active and personal. Being so afraid of the negative experiential Christianity, they have jumped into a concept of covenant without relationship. They are good soldiers, fighting the good fight but lacking the sign of the fruit of the Spirit and expectations of the power of God, almost falling into humanism where man has the final word and God's power

is only seen in the future resurrection and their concept of a future heaven out of this world.

As I have dealt with and continue to encounter these two very unhealthy extremes, I am thankful for God's mercies that have brought me to my knees, for men like Loren that have challenged me with something more, and for continual experiences that prove that He is here with me. In 2019, after being married with three kids, I believe that God has given me a beautiful picture of a loving covenant with my wife and what He desires with me. He expects experience and intimacy, but the majority of my daily life comes from a love and trust relationship seen by my commitment, many times in spite of my emotions. He desires for me to enjoy His presence, yet He also expects me to live by principles and truth even when my limited perspective doubt and question within my emotions. I obey because I trust and love Him and have no expectations of experience, but just like with marriage, without intimate experience, there would be no healthy covenant either. God overshadows me with His presence and conquers my heart, but I am called to live for Him without any expectations—I live a covenant.

It is not a debate over Spirit or Truth like so many churches have argued throughout the ages, but we must open our minds to understand that it is the Spirit of Truth. We are to cover our minds with Christ. Truth is Jesus, the Spirit guides us in all Truth, but the Word was in the beginning. Jesus is the Word, and the Spirit renews our mind by the Word. Truth sets us free, and it is all by the Spirit of Truth. An experience might mark us, but the Truth is what sets us free. The Spirit of Truth fills, cleanses, and transforms, using the scripture that we have filled our minds with. I thank God that He showed me my roots of humanism and selfishness, but then conquered my heart as I humbled myself. The balance of intimacy, both covenant and experience, is a hard balance to find. Without the correct balance, it is impossible to live a life of intimacy though. It is time for the head and heart to align with Scripture and fight for the quality time of intimacy to make loving obedience the fruit of this transformation.

From my first trip to Mexico to now, I have understood that God is enough. If I have no tomorrow, what I have with God today is enough, and I expect even more tomorrow because I love Him and trust Him today. I might never make it to eighty years old to look back on my life like Loren Cunningham has and leave this type of legacy, but my dream of today is to never look back in regret. I walk forward with great joy because I love and trust the Creator of everything, and I need Him today—in a multitude or all alone! In the light of what others see or in the loneliness of no worldly glory, my intimacy doesn't change, and He is enough!

It's amazing how so many years later, Loren continues to challenge and influence my life and relationship with God. When Loren was a little boy, he wanted to write John 3:16 on the moon so that everyone in the world would know about the love of God and learn about Jesus. He didn't know about everyone speaking different languages. Loren was the first man, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, to travel to every country on earth. He has dedicated his whole life to one goal: get the truth of God into every home on earth in the mother tongue of every individual. At the age of thirteen, he committed his life to missions at an altar call and has been faithful in his calling.

This gave birth to the largest missions movement ever in history with one goal: to *listen to God and obey Him*. Bible translators thought Loren was unrealistic, and most denominations thought he was trying to do the unachievable, but how could he have the Word of God in his hands, have understanding and intimacy with the God of creation, and someone else on earth not have that same opportunity? God has used Loren's vision to get our ministry of YWAM Morelia, Mexico, involved with the indigenous of Mexico, with oral Bible translation and the Jesus Film, Wordy by Heart, and putting a Bible in every home within our city and state, and saying yes when so many people are saying "it's not possible," and to just keep believing for more.

In 2 Peter, it talks about us adding to our faith, virtue. Faith and character come before knowledge. Faith is contagious! When we encounter men or women of faith with genuine and deep intimacy,

it takes away our excuses that God isn't real. The power of testimony is stronger than we could ever imagine. The power of impartation within teaching over simple knowledge is more transformational than any one truth. To have a man of faith like Loren in my life has removed my excuses to say no. If he can do it, why can't I?

Once or twice a year, I still get to hear Loren teach somewhere in the world, and I've even had the privilege to translate for both him and his wife. One day, my wife and I even brought him to the airport and shared some of our dreams and visions. So many people would say we were crazy, but he said, "You can easily do that," "You can do much more!" and "You could translate every one of the last languages in Mexico with just a small team in a year or two if you wanted." Some people told us our future vision wasn't possible within a whole lifetime, but here was Loren telling us to dream bigger! Then he looked at me and my wife and said, "If you don't establish it within two years, it will never happen." What a shock! He was right, so within two years, we worked to every extent of our capacity and energy to give all that we could, and we are beginning to see those solid foundations now.

Obviously in just two years, it wasn't visible to everyone else, but the foundations that were placed will never be moved. Even though my wife and I had three kids and were foreigners in Mexico, Loren didn't give us excuses that would allow us to bow out of our dream, and he pushed us to go further and deeper in our dreams with God. Loren is a man of great vision, birthed from great faith in God because of an incredible depth of intimacy with God, and this never ceases to encourage me to go deeper and further.

One day, my wife and I were coordinating a conference for all of Mexico and Central America, and I was responsible for hosting Loren. A friend of mine, Giacomo, who knew Loren well, said, "Don't feel bad if he just wants to go to his room and not talk at all. He might not come out all day, but just leave him alone. He needs to watch the news and to have alone time with God." Loren's wife, Darlene, told me one time, "Loren was on a trip and had disappeared in his room for a few days, and no one had seen him, so they called me because they were worried. I told them that he travels all over

the world, and sometimes he needs to just be with God. Make sure he has some nuts and snacks, water, and the news in his room and leave him alone. When he's ready, he will come out." He has strong convictions, and he cares more about obeying God and hearing Him clearly than getting lost in all the little details around him or all the other people. This was so impacting to me because it made me feel like I'm not crazy, that it's okay to just be me and run to God for what I need first.

During that conference, after the first day, Loren met me and said, "You must have command as your number one strength in strengths finder. Surround yourself with really strong leaders and just keep pushing forward." He had no idea who I was, but he could see through me, and he just encouraged me to keep going to God and to make sure I was surrounded by other strong leaders. I really don't know if Loren and Darlene remember me any more than just being another face in the nations, another driver, another translator, or another young leader, but my encounters with them have always had the same result. Go deep with God, listen and obey, and never give up!

In different seasons, this intimacy with God has looked different. Through singleness, marriage, family, serving in ministry, or leading a ministry—all brought different seasons and different needs. I've had years of reading through the Bible every month, weekends of prayer and just a lot of extra time for intimacy with God. There have been seasons where I needed to wake up at midnight because the day was too busy to have that time. There have been seasons where the reality of my season of life didn't give me any free time, other moments with audible Bible and worship in the car while I would drive to work, go to the bathroom, or just a quick prayer on my pillow in the morning while my daughter was jumping on me to wake me up. I've been on trips teaching where I literally just wander off and get a hotel for a couple nights because I need to be renewed alone with God. I've learned that it's not about the activity, the what, or even how. It always comes down to the why and the position of my heart first; then the details of the how, when, and with whom are very important clarity. In every season, He alone is enough.

Currently, I'm in a season with three kids, all aged six or under, and a growing ministry, so I don't have much free time from the moment I'm awake to the moment I fall asleep. A couple of years ago, we opened a prayer and Bible-reading room in our ministry. I've found that if I can go just once a week or even just once a month at 4:30 a.m. to get an hour or two to just sit and pray, listen and read, worship and renew my mind in His presence, it is all I need. To be a good husband, father, or leader, I must find the place to be first a good son, to be renewed by the transformation of my mind in His presence. It seems to me that there is a crazy cycle in which the more I learn about loving my wife and my children, the more I learn about God loving me; the more I learn about loving God, the more I learn about what my wife and kids need from me.

My highlight of my week has become my day of fasting, where I begin with an hour or two with God in the prayer room, some special time to write or express my heart with God's during the day; and then I break my fast with a special date with my wife. The success of my love with my wife and kids is always a fruit of my depth of intimacy with God. If I could change anything about my life, it would be for me to have greater self-control and consistency on my quality-time days with God and my wife, which overflow into everything else that I do. This has become the only way that I can ensure to function out of debit, what I have stored up, and never out of credit, to give out of my emptiness.

Reflection

1. What is eternal life?
2. Do you seek only spiritual experiences? Do you just hide in the Word and your mind? Or do you live in a covenantal relationship with Jesus with the Spirit of Truth?
3. Where is your secret place?
4. What is the standard of your Absolute Truth?
5. How do you relate to the Father?
6. How do you relate to Jesus, the Son?
7. How do you relate to the Holy Spirit?

8. Has God ever spoken to you?
9. In what areas can you grow in to begin to function in ministry out of debit and never credit as you serve and give others?

Meditation

In 2007, a few years after my first training program in Youth with a Mission (YWAM), I continued to serve as a missionary. One day, I was in a big hurry to get back for lunch at our YWAM campus. As I was driving back, I passed an older man who was almost naked and walking on the side of the road. The Spirit told me to stop, but I was in a hurry and didn't. As I was reaching our YWAM campus, the conviction was too much, so I drove all the way back to town and picked up the man. He was an older American man who had retired in Mexico to drink. Here he was, sitting in my car basically naked, completely drunk, and telling me how his Mexican girlfriend had just stolen all of his money and taken off. I drove him home, went inside, and prayed with him. The smell was unpleasant; he was very sweaty, and the alcohol was strong. Nothing special happened, but when God asked me what I saw and I was honest, He responded to me with what He saw which was completely different. I saw a drunk old man that smelled bad. He saw a young child who was lost and alone, and God's greatest desire was to simply hold this man in His arms. So I did. I leaned over and held this man and shared that the Father wanted to hold him and hug him. As tears poured down his eyes, I knew I had only seen what I smelled, but God knew his name.

As a Bible teacher, I believe strongly that transformation comes through a foundation of Truth, but I have also seen that without love and relationship with the Spirit of Truth, there is only death. One day, I had just finished teaching a week in a discipleship training school with lots of content. I was praying for some of the guys when all of a sudden, the strongest, most macho, dry, tough, and closed guy came to my mind, and I heard the Spirit say to my thoughts, *Tell him I know he is a man, and he doesn't have to do anything to be a man. Simply being My son makes him a man.* This made no sense to me as it didn't really fit with my teaching, but as I remembered

Genesis 1:1—"In the beginning NOT DANIEL," I trusted the Spirit and shared. Immediately, this tough Mexican man broke into tears, and he began to share and weep like a child. There was a story I didn't know, but the Spirit of Truth did. His older brother was living a homosexual lifestyle, so his whole life of fighting, drugs, violence, and rebellion was built on a lie that he wasn't macho enough. I knew some truth, but the Spirit knew this young man's story. When the two united, there was freedom!

As I continue to learn what it means to be intimate with God, a few things have become clear. He desires what is best for me, but I don't know the desires of my own heart, and I need to release everything daily to be filled because God can't fill hands that are already full. He has also shown me that as I work with others, the Spirit of Truth will do way more than I ever could. He desires to bring freedom; He desires to get very intimate and close and has no fear of getting His hands "dirty." These moments of experience that are fully connected to the Truth are what will sustain a life of freedom. Experience without covenant is adultery, but covenant without intimacy is death and suffering. God touches us to touch the multitudes, to transform the nations, to really be a missionary in all that we do. Intimacy with God is not a means to an end but rather the foundation that we can graduate from, and every day it just goes deeper and gets stronger, creating the foundation for everything to come in our obedience to what He will speak next of where, when, with whom, and how?

The Bible and Intimacy

- "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Genesis 1:26).
- "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the

fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on earth” (Genesis 1:28).

- “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:24–25)
- “To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26).
- “Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:22–24).
- “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God” (Hebrews 11:5).
- “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1).
- “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless. I will establish my covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly” (Genesis 17:1–2).
- “Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel and there He spoke with us” (Hosea 12:4).
- “As they were going along talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven” (2 Kings 2:11–12).
- “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2).

- “And you shall be to Me A kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6).
- “For you are a holy People to the Lord your God, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of the all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2).
- “For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; you are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:16–17).
- “For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (1 Kings 11:4).
- “After he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, concerning who He also testified and said, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22).
- “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob who I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham my friend” (Isaiah 41:8).
- “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to Him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23).