



Revelations & Reflections Newsletter
(October 28, 2006)

OUR PATH TO MINISTRY

I wanted to take a moment to share insights from this past Wednesday with each of you. It was a phenomenal time where God really spoke to our hearts. As I began documenting this, God did some further teaching, so there are some corrections, clarifications, and additions to what we discussed last week. Buckle up, because this is not a short ride.

The insights began with us asking, *"What made a difference in our lives to come out of the wilderness season we have been in?"* There were three things that came up: confidence, the influence of others, and purpose. We realize that every thing we go through is rooted and grounded in some spiritual principle where the Word of God is testing our faith.

So, the question became, *"What have we studied thus far in Luke [Chapters 1-10] that helped us to achieve our confidence?"* because that study seemed to be the main study that made a difference. So, we looked back, and what a wonderful journey it was.

Here is the bullet version of what we learned in the first ten Chapters of Luke:

- At 12 we see Jesus in the temple (about His Father's business), but it wasn't His season yet (**Luke 2:42-52**)
- Years later, John the Baptist baptizes people into repentance, preparing the way for Jesus (**Luke 3:1-18**)
- John the Baptist then baptizes Jesus when He was around 30 years old (**Luke 3:21**)
- The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, and He receives approval from His Father (God) (**Luke 3:22**)
- Jesus' genealogy is given. (Answers the question, "Who am I?") (**Luke 3:23-38**)
- The Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness (**Luke 4:1-13**) where He ...
 - Undergoes three specific tests in relationship to the things of the world (**1 John 1:16**):
 - Satisfying his hunger for food (lust of the flesh)
 - Worshipping Satan to gain what He sees (lust of the eye)
 - Tempting God (pride of life)
 - Passes each test by standing on the Word of God (obedience)
- He came out of the wilderness "in the power of the Spirit" (**Luke 4:14**)
- Did some teaching and received praise from man (man's influence without falling prey to man's praise) (**Luke 4:15**)

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- Stated His purpose in the Temple (**Luke 4:17-21**) when He declared the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to:
 - Preach good news to the poor
 - Proclaim freedom to the prisoners
 - Receive sight for the blind
 - Release the oppressed
 - Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
- His ministry began in earnest

To be honest, I like the **King James Version of verses 17-21** better. It just seems to paint a clearer picture for me. So, here are the same points from Jesus stating His purpose from that version:

- To preach the Gospel to the poor
- To heal the brokenhearted
- To preach deliverance to the captives
- Recovering of sight to the blind
- Set at liberty them that are bruised (crushed)
- To preach the acceptable year of the Lord

As we discussed the outline of Jesus' life, we could see how our own lives have played out in similar fashion. This review helped us to clear see

There are three tests we must go through before we can move forward in ministry:

- **First, we must wait for God's timing and not ours.** Just as Jesus season was not when He was 12, but He knew His calling, our season is not always when we first know our calling. Like Jesus, we must also be patient and wait on God's time.
- **Second, there is always a season of preparation before we can begin ministry.** *In that season, we must do three things: receive God's approval, deal with our past to understand who we are, and go through the wilderness.*
 - **How do we receive God's approval?** Strictly going by our current model in scripture and without getting too theological, we
 - Repent to prepare the way for the Lord
 - Enter into relationship with the Lord Jesus (Romans 10:9) which grants us access to the Father (John 14:6)
 - Get baptized

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- Receive the Holy Spirit
- **How do we deal with our past?** Everyone's experience is unique, so I can only share mine. It culminated recently when I went through a seminar called "Ancient Paths." It dealt with the blessings and curses that occurred in my life. Here are the verses that really came alive for me:

Luke 3:4-6:

4 "A voice of one calling in the desert,
Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.
5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.
6 And all mankind will see God's salvation."

By the time the seminar was over, every detail of my life made sense, and I understood exactly why, over the years, different things had happened. I reconciled my past to my present and my future. The things that happened to me had long since stopped being a tragedy, but now they fully opened my eyes to the schemes of the enemy and what he was trying to do. How each person reaches this point will be unique. This is just my example. I pray it will help those who read this understand theirs, because until we overcome our past, we cannot truly move forward in what God has for us to do, which leads us to our wilderness experience.

- **How do we go through the wilderness?** We learned the purpose of the wilderness in a previous study (it is found in **Deuteronomy 8:2-4**), but for convenience sake, I will recap it here:
 1. To humble us
 2. To test us to know what is in our hearts
 3. To know if we will keep His commands
 4. To cause us to hunger
 5. To reveal something new to us
 6. To teach us to rely on the Word of God
 7. To provide for us
 8. To discipline us.
 9. To teach us to obey Him
 10. To teach us to revere (fear) Him

Now, if we break these ten reasons down to their most basic components, we discover what we really need to learn is fear of the Lord and how to be obedient. The other eight reasons all seem to flow from those two. Think

about that for a moment. If we fear the Lord and we are obedient, what in this list will we not do? And, and if we achieve all ten of these reasons, will we not also come out of the wilderness "in the power of the Spirit?" We must take note of two concepts here.

- **What is the power of the Spirit for?** It is not just for us, but to also help others.
- **We cannot survive the wilderness without God's Spirit.** God's Spirit rested upon Jesus when He entered the wilderness (**Luke 3:22**), and it must also rest upon us. From a personal perspective, I know my life did not really begin to change until I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, with the biggest changes occurring when my focus was no longer self, but how to help others.

Understanding the ten reasons for the wilderness helps us to identify why we are there, determine where we are in the process, realize we influence the length of our stay, and narrow down the scope of our testing. Just as Jesus had to overcome specific tests, we must as well. There are only three key areas we can be tested in since the things of the world consist of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. So, if we ask ourselves in which of these areas is God testing us, we will be better equipped to search our hearts and find the answer. My personal experience has been I will wander around the desert (or as I like to say, go around the mountain) until I find the right answer that lines up with God's Word. I have also found there are often recurring themes that accompany my wilderness experiences. This time has been no different, which we discovered as we continued our discussion. We noticed two specific ones: purpose and preparedness. My main theme was preparedness. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" has been echoing in my spirit for months, and I really sense God doing something different in my life. This, however, did not occur until I understood the last test we go through.

- **Third, we must know our purpose to move forward and be effective in ministry.** Look at it this way. Absolutely every Christian has the ministry of reconciliation. It can occur at home, in the workplace, from the pulpit, or in any other way God so chooses. But, make no mistake, this ministry exists, and it is every Christian's starting point. Reconnecting with that helped me stop struggling with my purpose. Since then, my life has had more meaning. But, for me to fully walk in how God will fulfill the ministry of reconciliation in my life, we must go through a season of preparation.

How does God prepare us for ministry?

Since every Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 3:16**), a good analogy is that of building a house. In order to build this house, we must have proper preparation, proper tools, quality materials, a sound blueprint, and

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the proper steps to follow. How does proper preparation occur? Initially, we grade the land to ensure the foundation won't crumble. Once the land is properly graded, we lay a foundation deep enough to support the house we are going to build. So, how do we grade the land? True repentance. How do we lay our foundation? Relationship with the Lord Jesus! Now, how do we ensure our foundation is deep enough? Water baptism and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Being water baptized is an act of obedience, which is one of our purposes in the wilderness. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit empowers us to fulfill our purpose. This is so fascinating to me, because it all goes back to our initial season of preparation!! Moreover, if true repentance, relationship with the Lord, water baptism or being baptized in the Holy Spirit is missing from our preparation, our ministry flounders. Now, how do we finish building our house?

What tools do we use? Simple. What we learned to rely on in the wilderness - the Word of God. Our next question then becomes, "What materials do we use?" Well, there is one material we must have to hold the house together, and that's nails. So, what is our spiritual nail? Faith. Faith is to our spiritual house what nails are to a physical one. We cannot build a physical house without nails of some kind, nor can we build a spiritual house without faith. For more on faith, please download, "The House that Faith Built," which is something God shared with me years ago. It was part of a series of writings, so there are references to things said not contained therein; however, it will still make sense. Now, that we have the tools and nails, the question becomes, "What other materials do we use?" We discovered that as we continued along in our discussion.

We have now graded the land (repented), and poured the foundation (accepted Jesus as Lord). We've ensured our foundation was deep enough by getting water baptized and being baptized in the Holy Spirit, so we know our house will stand. We also have the Word as our tool and faith as the nails to hold our house together. But, we do not yet have walls. If we are going to build a physical house, we use lumber. So, what is our spiritual lumber? The bible tells us each Christian has spiritual gifts to benefit the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12**). These gifts are the lumber God uses to build our ministry. You don't start building a physical house until you know what kind of lumber you're going to use and how much you will need. So, you really can't start building an effective ministry until you know what gifts you have and how they will interact with each other to fulfill your particular ministry. You also cannot start building a physical house until you have a blueprint!

I surmise there is one gift that speaks to us more than the others. It's the one you discover when you ask, "*How do I see myself helping other people?*" It is a deep desire, a hope within us, for something we've always wanted to do. This gift, born from desire, is where we get our blueprint. Our blueprint tells us what specific ministry God has for us; it gives us vision; and it provides the hope of our calling. When we know our specific ministry gifts, we have an idea of what our house (ministry) should look like! But, we still need a specific blueprint.

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One thing that is becoming abundantly clear to me is how important hope is to vision and vision is to hope. It's like they are inseparable, one feeding the other and both working to move us into our calling. What is also abundantly clear is without hope and a vision, we cannot create a blueprint, which is a critical component to a successful building process. Without a blueprint, we can't make sure we obtain the right amount of materials, nor do we have a plan to follow, which takes us to the proper steps.

God tells us to "let all things be done decently and in order" (**1 Corinthians 14:40**). For example, in a physical house, we don't put the sheetrock in until everything that goes behind it is in place. Otherwise, we end up cutting out holes, pulling out whole panels, or tearing down entire walls to fix the mistake! It's the same with our spiritual house. If we try to build our ministry without following the proper steps, I guarantee you it will fail! I have walked that road, and it was not fun. Even now, I am careful as I continue my building process to ensure I am following God's plan and His timing, and I do find myself with more confidence. I can see the same process that occurred in Jesus' life occurring in mine. I now realize the things I must do to ensure I have everything I need and the right steps to follow. I have confidence, because for the first time in my life, I really believe I can achieve my goal to become who God created me to be!

I believe He has spent the last seven years framing my house with it's four walls, which is what happens after we lay our foundation. I surmise each of these walls represents one of our spiritual gifts, which would explain why God has been developing different gifts within me. I didn't understand it before, because none of them really seemed to be what I was meant to do. These gifts were the frame for my house. That deep desire within me is much like the support walls to a physical house. Once the frame is in place, the support walls (our "dominant" spiritual gift) can go into place, and God can begin creating individual rooms - areas of ministry He has called us to.

Last, but definitely not least, to keep the elements out and protect what is inside our house, we must have a roof. Our spiritual roof is the anointing of God! When we are covered by His Spirit and flow in His anointing, our ministry will flourish. And, one thing we learned in Luke 7:9, understanding authority helps us have great faith. I would hazard to guess, great faith helps us stay connected to God's anointing!

We have now built our house - our ministry - for the Lord to live in as He works through us. But, if we go through this process missing anything (proper preparation, proper tools, quality materials, a sound blueprint, and the proper steps to follow), our house (ministry) becomes likened to wood, hay, or stubble (**1 Corinthians 3:18**), and falls apart. If we lack nothing in our process, our house (ministry) is likened to gold, silver, and precious stones. It will last, not only throughout our lifetime, but into eternity! Would we build the house we live in without the proper preparation, proper tools, quality materials, a sound blueprint,

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and the proper steps to follow? NO! Then, why build the house God lives in without them?

Father, we thank You for all You have spoken through Your Word. We ask that You would bring all the pieces of the puzzle together that each of us will see the picture You are painting. Father, we pray for ears to hear, eyes to see, hearts to receive, and patience to bring forth a harvest on the Word of God You are planting. We give You all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise. In Jesus' name. Amen!

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