

## ***A Perspective on Where We Are in this Season***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. The primary calling for each ministry is to work with others to ***build the Church*** and ***engage in the Great Commission*** as we seek to walk out the ***two great commandments*** (Mt. 22:37-40).
- B. I see five things happening simultaneously in this season of our spiritual family. Each one calls for a different response and has its tensions and challenges.
- C. ***Season of increase:*** our relational connections and influence in the nations is growing rapidly. This increase includes people being sent out to join or start ministries. There are two common approaches to sending. First, the leaders initiate the sending process, and the people respond to it. Second, the people initiate the sending process, and the leaders celebrate it.
- D. ***Season of persecution:*** We are in a season of increased persecution with more adversaries. This is an opportunity for promotion in the spirit, *if responded to rightly* (1 Pet 4:14).  
***<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...<sup>14</sup>If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Pet. 4:12-14)***
- E. ***Season of mobilization:*** We are to function as a community of believers with diversity, reaching out to every neighborhood through friendship-based evangelism and disciple-making. In 1984, I had a prophetic dream in which a man said, ***“Proclaim Zechariah 4 and Ephesians 4, for this is where the Lord is taking you.”*** The Lord wants to establish an Ephesians 4 community of believers with a foundation of night-and-day prayer (Zech. 4) that reaches out to the city.  
***<sup>16</sup>...from whom [Jesus] the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:16)***
1. In the spring of 1983, Bob Jones told me that we would move to Grandview, next to Harry Truman’s property, and that believers throughout Asia would connect with us by “unplugged TV sets.” He said that the Lord spoke to him audibly, saying, ***“I will give a grand view of the kingdom to many nations from Grandview.”***
  2. The “grand” view referred to the unified diversity of people of different ages and from many nations working together with other churches to proclaim Jesus and do the works of the kingdom to bless Grandview. It will be seen by many in the nations through the Internet, etc. We opened the ***All Nations Prayer Room*** in June 2013
- F. ***Season of pruning:*** the Lord prunes fruitfulness so that His people are more focused and fruitful.
- G. ***Season of divine discipline:*** A season of divine discipline is a time when the Lord *emphasizes* our need to correct various deficiencies (blind spots) in our love, humility, wisdom, zeal, or service, etc. As we respond in the right way to His discipline, we will become more fruitful.

## II. THE BLESSING OF PRUNING

- A. The Father is a vinedresser who *prunes* all who bear fruit. He takes initiative to intervene—to train and direct every fruitful believer to bring them to greater fruitfulness.
- <sup>2</sup>*Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (Jn. 15:2)*
- B. A gardener cuts branches off the vine so it will be more flush with life. Each year after the harvest, in early spring, the vinedresser prunes (cuts away) over 80% of the vine from the previous year's growth. If it is not cut off, the vine will grow as a wild vine without producing many grapes. The overgrown branches resulted from the good life in the vine.
- C. Practically, the pruned branches speak of removing some of the increased activities, demands, responsibilities, and expectations that came with increased fruitfulness in the previous season. It may result in a decrease of money, ministry, influence, popularity, position, or power, etc.
- D. In our circumstances, pruning sometime looks like a decrease of God's blessing in our lives; thus some totally misinterpret it and feel discouraged, instead of thanking God and trusting His leadership, knowing that they will be more fruitful in love. Too much activity diminishes our life of abiding in Christ. Blessing in one season can create added distraction in the next season.
- E. Pruning results in us *possessing* more love, humility, and purity in our life and *imparting* it in our ministry. He cuts off the branches that cause the life-flow in us to be distracted or diminished.
- F. The Father wants every fruit-bearing believer and ministry to bear more fruit. His commitment to prune us is a *glorious promise*, not a *dreadful warning*. He intervenes to bring forth more love, and purity in us. The Father prunes us because we do not have the resolve or wisdom to cut off the familiar and seemingly good activities in our lives that result from seasons of fruitfulness.
- G. The purpose of the Father's *pruning* is to *remove distraction* from an obedient believer, whereas the purpose of the Father's *discipline* is to *remove deficiencies* (sin) from an immature believer. They are different. He does not prune sin. He prunes distractions that hinder our growth in love.
- H. In our Western mindset, we often see "bigger as better." Having more money, influence, honor, friends, and comfort is usually seen as being successful without regard for the quality of one's relationship with God. Sometimes more of a "good thing" hinders us from walking in love.
- I. A believer can be popular in ministry—in the Church or marketplace— without being spiritually fruitful. Being wealthy and influential is not synonymous with being faithful and fruitful.
- J. Someone who only influences a few people to grow in love is fruitful from God's point of view. Our highest life goal is to be faithful and fruitful more than having a big and popular ministry.
- K. Believers who do not see the Father as *the vinedresser* see all decrease in their circumstances as being only negative. They cannot see a redemptive purpose in the decrease. Without the revelation of the Father as the vinedresser, we are more tempted to be offended with His leadership, instead of being grateful for His loving hand pruning us.

### III. DIVINE DISCIPLINE

- A. A season of divine discipline is a time when the Lord *emphasizes* the need to correct various deficiencies or blind spots in our love, humility, wisdom, zeal, or service, etc. As we respond in the right way to His discipline, we will become more fruitful.
- <sup>5</sup>*“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; <sup>6</sup>For whom the LORD loves He chastens...<sup>7</sup>If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons...<sup>8</sup>But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons...<sup>10</sup>but He [chastens us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. <sup>11</sup>Now no chastening seems to be joyful...but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those...trained by it. (Heb. 12:5-11)*
- B. Hebrews 12 describes three common responses to God’s discipline—individually or corporately.
1. Do not *despise* God’s discipline—we must not dismiss it by resisting or rationalizing it.
  2. Do not be *discouraged* by God’s discipline—don’t quit in despair seeing it as too difficult.
  3. We are to *endure* God’s discipline—knowing that our Father loves us and therefore exposes our blind spots for our good and the good of others. We are to embrace seasons of discipline knowing that they will pass and that they will equip us to excel in love.
- C. We must not mistake God’s correction for His rejection. Rather, it is evidence of His love for, commitment to, and delight in His children (Prov. 3:12).
- <sup>12</sup>*Whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)*
- D. The Lord’s corrections, rebukes, or calls to greater zeal and repentance are not harsh, but are filled with love (Rev. 3:19) as He invites us to deeper fellowship (Rev. 3:20) and partnership with Him (Rev. 3:21). This is also the spirit in which a leader is to bring correction, rebuke, and calls to greater zeal and repentance to those under them.
- <sup>19</sup>*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent... <sup>20</sup>*I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him... <sup>21</sup>*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... (Rev. 3:19-21)***
- E. We are resolved to identify our blind spots—compromises and deficiencies—and learn from them. We can feel God’s pleasure, commitment, and tenderness in seasons of His discipline.
- F. We are to do all that we can to restore relationships, so far as it depends on us (Rom. 12:18). Jesus taught us to go to our “brother” to make an appeal, both when we have *something against them* (Mt. 18:15) and when they have *something against us* (Mt. 5:24).
- G. Our *Appeals Committee* acts as the final step in our appeals process in conflict resolution. This committee is made up of twelve members (see [ihopkc.org/appealsprocess](http://ihopkc.org/appealsprocess)). The leadership teams of FCF and IHOPKC will be subject to and abide by the decisions made by this committee.

- H. The Lord gives most ministries specific assignments that express aspects of the Great Commission. Most specific assignments come with *added challenges*. Ours include:
1. Keeping a 24/7 sanctuary of worship with prayer (demanding much time, effort, and money)
  2. Proclaiming Jesus as our Bridegroom God and necessity of the first commandment
  3. Raising up forerunner messengers to prepare others spiritually for the unique dynamics in the end-times. This politically incorrect message includes the Great Tribulation with Antichrist's persecutions, God's judgments, a falling away, the battle for Jerusalem, and Israel's salvation.
- I. It is important for us to present the biblical message of the end times with humility and in a way that promotes unity, yet without compromising truth. We value people whose views differ from our own, and we must always posture ourselves to continue to learn and listen to others. No group has more than part of the full truth of Scripture about the end times. Only as the *whole Body of Christ receives understanding* will we know the full biblical storyline.
- J. We recognize varying degrees of importance regarding biblical, end-time doctrines and themes. We use four categories of ideas related to the end times: those of *primary importance* (essential doctrines), those held as our *core convictions*, those *helpful for clarity*, and *personal opinions*. Our staff, students, and all others do not need to embrace *all* that we say about the end times.
- K. To be faithful in our witness of the truth, we must be:
- 1) ***Biblical***: we must stay within the boundaries of Scripture in all that we say.
  - 2) ***Clear***: we must speak in a straightforward yet nuanced way with biblical support.
  - 3) ***Tender***: we must not speak with bitterness or anger or in an argumentative way.
  - 4) ***Humble***: we must honor others in the body of Christ who disagree with us.
  - 5) ***Bold***: we must not be intimidated by rejection or be seeking the applause of people.
- L. The Spirit desires that His people dwell together in a ***culture of honor***. Part of our inheritance as well as what we lack is in the hands of others. We receive more from them when we bless them. We are to bless their *budding virtues* that have not yet matured, regardless of their ***deficiencies*** and their ***differences*** from us in ministry focus and style.
- M. In giving your ideas, think of how they will work with our added challenges which include motivating people to be faithful to a *difficult assignment* (24/7 prayer room and a university) with a *politically incorrect message* (end-times and the Bridegroom messages), *mobilizing locally* (as a spiritual family) while serving and staying *connected internationally* (with many church and ministry leaders as well as our former staff and students), and *building with quality* in context of much *turnover*. Our mission base inherently exists to send out leaders and workers to serve other places. Our turnover rate is increased by the financial pressure of support-raising.

## GIVE US YOUR IDEAS TO HELP US TO EXCEL IN LOVE TOGETHER

Email your answers, insights and ideas to the IHOPKC leadership team to [ideas@ihopkc.org](mailto:ideas@ihopkc.org)

1. What areas do we need to correct or improve? What are your suggestions on how to do this?
2. What are our "blind spots" that affect people in our down line? Especially the younger ones?
3. What can we do to serve and connect better with former staff, students, etc. in other cities?
4. How are you willing to help in any of things that you have suggested?