

Calling Young Adults to the Vision, John 3:29

INTRODUCTION

I'm really passionate about God raising up houses of prayer all over the earth, because the Bible says it and because the Holy Spirit is saying it through the prophets. The prophetic utterance from one end of the globe to the other is that God is raising up His Church as a house of prayer. We have no interest in an organization; we have a vision to encourage many houses of prayer. I just want to say that on the front end.

There are about a hundred groups in America right now, in a hundred different cities, that are saying, "We want to do in our city an international house of prayer like you're doing in Kansas City. Can we join you?"

And I want to say on the front end, "This isn't an organization. We're not interested in franchising. That's not what this is about." We're interested in helping you do the will of God in your city. We want to inspire you; we want to help give you courage; we want you to come visit us and recruit our staff. Take them back home with you; they're yours. They belong to your city if they'll go. That's one of the rules of IHOP-KC: any of you can come for one day, one week, one year, and recruit as many people as you want. We want you to recruit them and we want you to take them back. You don't have to ask our permission. They belong to the Lord, and if they go, we want them to go. So we're not interested in casting the visions so we can have some big IHOP empire franchise where everyone is under us. It's nothing like that, I assure you. The leadership team of our missions base has no interest in anything but helping other people in other cities succeed in this vision, their own vision before God. It may look very different than what we're doing; it needs to look different. God has a different expression in every place, and we love that.

BECOMING A PART OF WHAT THE LORD IS DOING IN YOUR GENERATION

But just looking at the number of young adults standing up and saying, "Lord, I want to be one of these intercessors; I want to flow in the anointing of the prophetic spirit; I want to move in this realm"; I tell you, this is a wonderful, wonderful day. Those who are my age, in my generation, would never have seen over 10,000 young adults—I don't know the exact number—gather like this for fasting and prayer and intimacy with God. You would never have seen this kind of intensity twenty or thirty years ago.

Beloved, this is a drop in the bucket. This is the beginning of the beginning. They'll be gathering far larger than this all over the earth until the Lord returns. Millions and millions will gather. I'm talking about collectively in the cities to come before the Lord in stadiums crying out. This will seem like a very small beginning here. It's happening already across the earth right now. We want to be a part of it. You want to be a part of it. Lord, we just want to be a part of what You're doing in this generation.

IF IT CAN HAPPEN HERE, IT CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE

John 3:29. This is one of the foundational, anchor passages of the Word of God that God has used to form our missions base. We call it "The Friends of the Bridegroom Mission Base." I want to tell you a little of what we're doing. I'm not telling you what we're doing to impress you; that's not why I'm telling you. I'm telling you what we're doing, and then I'll tell you how weak we are, and how broken, and then you'll do the math. You'll say, "If they can do it in Kansas City, we know we can do it in Chicago, and Denver, and Orlando, and Jacksonville, and New York, and Pasadena, and everywhere else. If they can do it, we know we can do it." That's the message I want to send out of this place.

I want to describe what's going on. What we're doing is only the beginning of the beginning. We're not very impressed with it. I'm impressed with the people. We're weak people. We stumble; we fumble; we mess up a lot. But there's a big yes in their spirit. And the yes in their spirit here is the same thing that's going to be happening in your city as well.

So bear with me as I'm telling you some of the story, because I want you to translate it into this: "If you can do it in Kansas City, we can do it in our city. Because the grace of God for weak people in Kansas City will be the same grace of God for weak people in the city where I live."

And then sometimes I'll tell you a little of what we're doing as a proud papa, because I'm just so proud of the majority of our team, most of whom are in their twenties, though some are in their teens. Again, we have some in their forties, fifties, and sixties. We have a couple of ladies in their eighties who are joining us next week.

One little gal in her eighties said, "I'm an Anna. And I never knew where to go. I'm coming. I'm an Anna!" And already, she is my favorite. I've never met her. I already love her and she is my favorite. She called up. She was shaking her fist on the phone! "I'm coming! The Lord told me back in 1940 I would be an Anna. I'm coming! Here I come! I'm an Anna!" I love it. I need to apologize a little, because it's not cute. It's real. It's cute, but it's more than cute; it's real. This is real to her and it's real to God and us. But I'm so excited about that.

So I'll tell you some of the things going on to inspire you to believe God for your area, and again, I'm a proud spiritual father. I'm so proud of the young people here. I was just looking at Marcus and his team. They've been faithful. Month after month, they get up early and they're there worshipping and interceding at 6:00am. I was back there saying, "I'm so proud of them I could just die." So a little of that might come out, but that's OK.

"HE WHO HAS THE BRIDE IS THE BRIDEGROOM"

John the Baptist is speaking in John 3:29. He says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom" (Jn. 3:29). John the Baptist is speaking about Jesus, and giving an entirely new understanding of the Messiah. He said, "He is the Bridegroom, and He possesses a bride in the plan of God."

I can imagine the men who were listening to John saying, "What do you mean? He who has a bride? We suppose you're talking about that preacher from Nazareth, the carpenter, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, we happen to know he's single. He doesn't have a bride. He's never been married!"

And John looks them in the eyes and says, "Let me tell you something you don't know: He has a bride. It has been ordained by His father from eternity. And He's a bridegroom! He's in love with her! He's lovesick for His people! And that's what you don't know about this Man from Nazareth!"

Beloved, let me tell you this: He has a bride, and that gives more clarity about your life than you can ever receive from any other source of information. You're a bride.

THE RECIPIENT OF THE BURNING AFFECTIONS OF GOD’S HEART

Now, men, don’t trip over this. I have men coming to me all the time. They say, “What’s this bride thing? I’m not getting the bride thing.”

Men are the Bride of Christ. Women are the sons of God. Now here is what that means. Being a son of God and being the Bride of Christ describes a privilege, a position of privilege in relationship to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—the entire Godhead. Being the Bride of Christ doesn’t refer to being male or female; it speaks of being the recipient of the burning affections of God’s heart, and an awakening of burning affection in your heart back to God.

BEING LOVESICK IS THE SECRET POWER OF THE END-TIME MARTYRS

And the Bible talks about the people of God being the bride. It’s talking about God being lovesick for us and that reality awakening in us the greatest power ever to touch the human spirit, lovesick under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Being lovesick is the secret power of the end-time martyrs. They will stand before their accusers absolutely fearless, so, so in love with their God, Jesus the Messiah, that they won’t even consider backing away just because they’re going to lose their lives. The power of lovesickness has never been seen the way it’s going to be seen in this generation. It will cause us to stand fearless before sin, fearless before accusers, and those who would persecute and kill us. We will stand fearless before any obstacle that comes in our path because our primary reward is the ability to experience love with the Messiah. We’re lovesick. We’re a bride.

HEIRS OF THE AUTHORITY OF GOD

Now being the sons of God has nothing to do with being male or female. It’s about being the heirs of the authority of God. So when the Bible calls us “sons of God,” that refers to the power of God. When the Bible calls us “the Bride of Christ,” it refers to intimacy with God’s heart. Now obviously there’s a lot more to say about those two subjects, but that’s an introduction.

Here is what John says: “He’s a bridegroom.” Beloved, Jesus didn’t act like a bridegroom to perform a duty; He’s the Bridegroom at the depth of His heart. See, some might imagine that He put on the robes of a bridegroom to perform a duty. Then when He got back to heaven, He threw off that role and went on to be who He really is. Let me tell you this: what He really is, is a bridegroom. He burns with desire for human beings. His heart is set ablaze for human beings. And this is the reality that’s going to transform the prayer movement at the end of the age. It won’t be duty-bound. It won’t be a call to prayer based on duty. It will be a call to prayer like a dam breaking forth in all its power. They’re going to rush by the tens of thousands to the stadiums to worship day and night before the Messiah.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE TO LIVE THE LIFE OF PRAYER

We’ve known the call to duty-bound prayer. We’ve heard the call for years: “Pay the price and live a life of prayer.” The Bible never talks about paying the price for prayer. You know what paying the price for prayer is really a call to? Now I don’t want to offend anyone, but here it is anyway. Paying the price for prayer means this: “If you endure a boring God long enough, God will break down, give in, and answer you. If you grit your teeth, it’s so hard; it’s so boring; it’s so difficult. But you hang in there! God will break down and say, ‘Well, you hung in there so long with Me, I’ll answer you.’”

Beloved, there’s not a sacrifice. There’s not a call to really reach down deeply to hang in there with boring old God for a while because no one else will. The Bible never presents prayer that way—never. It’s a very, very

popular doctrine through church history, but it's not a biblical doctrine. Prayer, when understood from the biblical point of view, is an overflow of touching the Holy Spirit and having a fascinated heart. I'm saying that's the ideal by which God presents prayer. There's a process, of course. And we're on that journey of getting our hearts equipped. But let me tell you this: if you're thinking of prayer in the old model of prayer, well, no wonder you don't like prayer! I didn't like prayer that way, either.

THE OVERFLOW OF A FASCINATED HEART

Beloved, there's a whole new understanding of God. There's a whole new understanding of who we are to God. There's a whole new prophetic music; there's a whole new anointing. There's a breaking in of power and prayer that won't be something we have to endure until God breaks down and answers us. It's got to be the overflow of a fascinated heart. It's got to be the overflow of lovesick worshippers entering into the reality of the Holy Spirit, and that's your destiny. Beloved, that's your destiny! That's why you're on the earth, to participate in that in one degree or another.

BEFORE JESUS RETURNS, THE CHURCH WILL BE IN PRAYER

Revelation 22. We all know the verse very well: Revelation 22:17. The Spirit and the Bride say what? "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'" (Rev. 22:17)! And I believe the hour and the generation in which the Lord returns is not that far away. It may be ten years, twenty, thirty, forty—I don't know. I think it's probably closer to thirty or forty than five or ten. I don't know. I think there are several decades to go, personally. Maybe a little longer, because there are a lot of things that have to line up, and God is going to cause His Church to come fully out of passivity, fully out of compromise into this red-hot unified place in the Holy Spirit, together with the bridal identity. That hasn't happened yet. We're at the beginning of the beginning of that taking place. But let me tell you, before Jesus appears in the clouds, the Church will be in prayer. The Church will be saying, "Come! Come!" That's describing the Church under the anointing of prayer: "Come! Come!" And the Church will be saying it with the reality of a bride who feels cherished by the Bridegroom God.

Beloved, right now the Church sees Jesus more as a coach or a disciplinarian; they don't see Him as a lovesick bridegroom. And that's all going to change, and when it begins to change, when we get a new view of who it is we're praying to, it will change the entire spirit of the way we gather for prayer. We're going to find a new music. It's going to be a new sound, a new anointing. There will be a new revelation of the beauty of God. There will be a new breaking-through of intimacy upon the Church. The most broken young person will enter into this new reality. They'll say, "I never knew my life was so important. I thought I was broken, forgotten, forsaken. I thought I was doomed to be a failure. My God, I'm Your bride! I'm anointed at the end of the age. I love You! You love me! This is who I am! This is what I do!"

This is where the end-time movement is going right now. Beloved, this is why God has gathered you to this place: to strengthen this reality in your spirit, or if you don't have it, to birth it in an initial way.

FORERUNNERS PROCLAIM THE REALITY OF GOD'S HEART IN ADVANCE

John the Baptist went on and said, "I am a friend of the Bridegroom" (Jn. 3:29, paraphrased). John the Baptist described himself as a friend of the Bridegroom. Now John the Baptist was a forerunner. What is a forerunner? Well, we're going to talk about more of what a forerunner is later this week, so let me say this. I believe there are hundreds of thousands of them worldwide, hundreds of thousands of young people called to be forerunners. John the Baptist was a forerunner. He was one short step ahead of the rest of the people of God, and he was telling them what was on the divine menu, what was on the divine calendar, what was about to break in upon

the planet. A forerunner is one short step ahead of many others, and they turn around to give the menu of what God is about to serve the planet. They're telling the others what's coming in just a minute.

WE WILL EXPERIENCE PROPHECY, ANGELS, DREAMS, AND VISIONS

Forerunners flow in a prophetic anointing. God is going to cause you to see dreams and visions. You're going to have radical experiences in the Holy Spirit. You will see angels. A number of you will be caught up into personal encounters with the throne of God. You will have heavenly, angelic experiences. You will see open visions. "In that day, your sons and daughters shall prophecy. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. All of them will prophecy under the anointing of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:17-19, paraphrased). Beloved, that's what God has planned for you: a prophetic anointing. He has called you to enjoyable prayer. You're going to love the experience of prayer. He has called you to receive, whether you're a musician or one who receives the benefit. The new sounds, the new music, are flowing like a river from the heavenly symphony on high.

AN ARMY OF TEN-YEAR-OLDS THAT FASTS AND PRAYS

What those who are in their twenties will enter into in the next decade is so awesome, it will only be surpassed by what those who are in their teens will experience in the decade after them. We have the most amazing thing going on. I've been in ministry for nearly thirty years, or close to that. It seems like the number keeps growing. But in so many years, I've never seen this. It's not very many: maybe ten or fifteen of them, I don't know. But they're ten and twelve years old, prophesying, having open visions, giving the word of the Lord, praying under the anointing with authority, fasting and praying regularly. I said, "They don't make ten-year-olds like they used to." I've never seen such a thing. They're the children of our IHOP-KC family. Again, there are 400 IHOP-KC staff. There's an army of ten-year-olds coming in the wake of you guys.

This generation is entering in so much more quickly than my generation entered in. But the ten-year-olds will enter in twice as fast as you are, and you're going to make a way for them. Fasting and prayer will seem like the most normal thing. The beauty of God, intimacy with the Bridegroom, the new sounds from heaven, visitations from angels, will seem like normal Christianity to them. It's not far from now when that will become more and more the norm of those who gather with a whole heart in the presence of God.

John the Baptist said he was a friend of the bridegroom. He said, "I'm a forerunner right before the first coming." Beloved, God is raising up forerunners before the second coming, and many of you are forerunners who will operate as friends of the Bridegroom. You will be men and women who experience the reality of the Bridegroom God.

Now "The Friends of the Bridegroom" is the name of our ministry organization. But do you know what? We borrowed the name from John the Baptist. You can have it. Anyone can use that name. One man said, "Can I use that name?"

I said, "Are you kidding me? I borrowed it. Ask the one I borrowed it from—the Lord."

It's your name. That's a reality. It's not a ministry organization; it's a reality in the Holy Spirit, the friends of the bridegroom reality.

“I HAVE HEARD THE VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM”

Look again at verse 29. Look! John the Baptist said, “My heart is so full of gladness because I have heard the voice of the Bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29, paraphrased). That’s the secret of the power of the end-time forerunners: they have heard the voice of the Bridegroom. Now what does it mean that you hear the voice of the Bridegroom? Does it mean the audible voice of God speaks? More and more that will happen. I’ve heard the audible voice of the Lord several times in thirty years. I have a few friends who have heard the audible voice of the Lord many more times, but let me tell you, it’s going to become more and more common to hear the testimony of God’s people hearing the audible voice of the Bridegroom.

RESTORING THE HAPPY HOLINESS OF THE LOVESICK BRIDE

I believe it’s partly the audible voice, but that’s not mostly what this is talking about. It’s talking about the written Word of God, or searching out the passages, the truths that reveal the heart of the Bridegroom, the tender, happy, glad, affectionate, burning heart of the beautiful God. His name is Jesus.

Beloved, let me tell you about His heart: He has a happy heart. Yes, He can be angry at rebellion. But He’s not mostly mad and mostly sad. The God of heaven is mostly glad. He’s a happy God. Away with this grouchy holiness! God is going to restore a happy holiness in the earth of a lovesick worshipping bride. I don’t mean a giddy holiness; I mean a holiness that flows out of a joy of encounter, a fascination with beauty, being exhilarated with love. “Oh, I love to love You! I love being loved by You! I want to obey you. I love Your commandments!” I’m talking about a happy holiness. I’m not talking about giddiness; I’m not talking about frivolity. I’m talking about an overflowing gladness because we’ve touched the gladness of the heart of our God. He’s mostly a God of gladness, and that’s a very, very strange idea to many people today in the Body of Christ. They’re trying to endure boring prayer with a mad God. No wonder the prayer rooms are empty all over the land! They’re enduring boring prayer with a mad God, gutting it out until God breaks down and answers. Ugh! Yuck! I hate that.

Then the man gets up and says, “If you pay the price and you hang in there long enough and you endure that mad God with boring prayer, sooner or later good things will happen.” And there are two little old ladies at the end of the day at the prayer room. And everyone else has compromised and fallen away, and I don’t have any energy for that whole concept.

HE EXPRESSES HIS ANGER FOR THE SAKE OF LOVE

Now let me tell you that I preached that concept for a number of years. So I’m not preaching against any particular person or group. I was one of the men who preached that idea. And I could tell you years later, it didn’t produce the sustaining anointing of enjoyable prayer that the book of Isaiah promised. Prayer will be enjoyable, according to Isaiah 56. The God we’re encountering is a God of gladness. Yes, He has anger against rebellion. There are expressions of anger, but let me tell you: His anger is an expression of His love. He’s going to remove everything that hinders love. That’s what His judgment is all about. He’s moving in anger to destroy the things that hinder love. It’s for the sake of love that He expresses His anger.

KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMMATURITY AND REBELLION

He’s mostly a God of gladness. The smiling heart of the glad God is a smile of affection. He’s a God of burning desire. He’s so desirous of you. He’s a God who enjoys you even in your weakness. He enjoys you. And that sounds like heresy to some in the Body of Christ. Beloved, there’s a big difference between immaturity and

rebellion; and a lot of people have confused immaturity with rebellion. And they've charged the immature with being rebellious, and the immature gave up and said, "I can't make it work. I'm so rebellious!"

And the Holy Spirit says, "You're not rebellious; you're immature. And I enjoy you as you grow. Run to Me, not from Me. You don't even know who I am. I want you. I want you. I will help you grow. I'm the Bridegroom God."

THE ANSWER TO THE PRAYER MOVEMENT IS THE REVELATION OF THE BRIDEGROOM

God is going to make friends of the Bridegroom. Again, don't worry or be confused by that being a ministry name for our little organization. We got a little organization and we call it that. Who cares about that? It's a spiritual reality. It's a spiritual reality. That's what I'm talking about. It's a spiritual reality they'll enter into all through Latin America and Africa and Asia. They'll enter into that John the Baptist anointing of the friends of the Bridegroom. They'll hear the voice of the Bridegroom; they'll understand the God of gladness. They'll understand from the Scriptures the God of affection, the God of kindness, the God who is happy with them, the God who desire them, and it's going to change the way they think about themselves radically.

And beloved, when you change the way you see God, it changes the way you see yourself, and when you change the way you see yourself, your heart is unlocked like a volcano exploding in the life of God. We'll never, ever see ourselves differently until we see Him differently. We must begin with a fierce determination to make known the voice of the Bridegroom, to reveal the Bridegroom God. The answer to the prayer movement is the revelation of the Bridegroom God. Not that there's any one answer, but, beloved, this is a critical answer that has been neglected for many years. But now is the hour, the timing of God. It's the *kairos* hour for the Church to pray, "Come," in a bridal identity. It's going to happen all over the earth. That's where God is taking this.

PEOPLE IN THEIR TWENTIES ARE LIKE WET CEMENT

Well, this is such an important hour right now. Again, I don't know an exact number—over 10,000 have gathered here together; most of you are eighteen to twenty-three years old. Most of these people in the room are between eighteen and twenty-five. Beloved, these are such critical hours in your life right now. Because what you buy into right now is what you will walk in, as a rule, in the next few decades. What you believe right now is what most of you will walk in, in the next ten or twenty years. I tell people it's like wet cement. When cement is wet, you can write anything on it you want. Once that cement is dry, it's very difficult to write on it. You have to get out the big equipment, beat the tar out of it, break it all up, and start all over again.

It's not too late for those of us in our forties and fifties and sixties. It's not too late. It just takes a lot more effort to get to the same place where some of you can get in a short amount of time. We have to go and undo all the wrong ideas. We have to pull out the equipment, the jackhammer, and break up all the old ideas. And we have so many wrong ideas about God, wrong ideas about ourselves, wrong ideas about ministry, wrong ideas about prayer, and on and on and on.

And the Lord looks at us with mercy and He says, "I'm inviting you, too. It's just going to be a lot more work for you to get through all that dry cement that you bought into in the sixties and the seventies and the eighties and the nineties. . ."

But, beloved, this group tonight is different. With this group tonight, the cement is still wet. You're not sure what God looks like emotionally; you're not sure what you look like to God. You're open to the fact that God is mad and you're a hopeless hypocrite. But you're also open to the idea that God is lovesick and you're a cherished bride that He enjoys even in your weakness. And some of you are saying, "I'm not sure which one. I like that one better, that other one. But I'm not sure. I grew up in a place where they were always shaking me over hell with a rotten stick hoping that it would break and I would fall in. That old, mean preaching: 'You old sinner, you had better get with it. God is looking for a reason to crush you anyway. He's looking for one good reason to call you history.'"

Beloved, that's not the truth of the Word of God. There are many lives here. Even though some of you have been serious with God for ten years and longer, even at twenty-two years old, some of you have been on fire since you were eight and ten so I'm not saying that you don't have experience in the things of God. What I'm saying is, there are still many of you at the place where you could go this way or that way. And however the cement dries is how the majority of you will walk in the next ten or twenty years.

LIVING WITH NO LIMITATIONS BUT THE WORD OF GOD

I'm passionate about this. You must, must understand a glad God filled with affection, with burning desires, who calls you His bride, who enjoys you while you're growing, who wants intimacy with you, who is about to break in with signs and wonders, in an open heaven, with visitations of angels, with a great harvest. Beloved, this is who you are. I plead with you in Christ Jesus: go in that direction and don't look back. Maybe it's a new idea for some of you. Maybe you say, "I've heard the ideas, but I don't know much about it. I don't know what it means. I don't know how to get more. I have to feed my spirit on this." And that's part of what this conference is about. We want to help encourage you to believe God for incredible things: to live without a ceiling over your head, to live without any limitations in your relationship with God, except for the limitation of the Word of God itself.

DEVELOPING A VISION TO BECOME WHOLEHEARTED

When I was age eighteen to twenty-three—again, I'm forty-seven now, so however many years ago that was; twenty-five to thirty years ago, when I was seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty... Many of you are here right now, but let me tell you, you've already done this: when I was seventeen, and eighteen, and nineteen, and so on, in that five-year period, God gave me a vision to be wholehearted. I read the stories of the biographies of the great missionaries. In my little eighteen-year-old heart, I said, "I will be one of those men." I said, "Why not me?" Because I read all these stories of these mighty men and women of God. And there was a day—I've told this story many times here in Kansas City—and I don't know why I hit it, but I did—I hit the table and said, "Why not me? Why is it someone else who's becoming wholehearted? Why can't I be wholehearted, too?"

And I rose up in the grace of God. I read five or ten biographies in those early years. I was so excited to be a man of wholeheartedness; I made a deep resolve in my spirit. I said, "God, I'll pray and fast to the full measure of my strength, all the days of my life. I'll go as much as my human strength can handle in the grace of God." I said, "I'll give all my wealth. I'll live a simple lifestyle. I'll take all the strength of my natural person, all the wealth, all the influence, and commit it all to You. I'll use it all for the betterment of Your kingdom for pure devotion!"

Some of you, many of you in this room, have that resolve already. You have the vision to be wholehearted. And I said, "I want to be a man and I want to be among people who let nothing stand in the way between them and

God. I want to be with the radical people. There's no ceiling over them; they're going hard for God and they have confidence in their spirit that they can get it done."

Beloved, that's where so many of you are right now. I was eighteen years old nearly thirty years ago and I said, "I'm not content with the status quo. I'm not going to live spiritually bored. I'm not going to accept second best! I want the highest things that God will give the human spirit! I want them! Why not me, God?" And I said those things at the same age that many of you are now, who are sitting in those chairs. And thirty years later, it has been a reality for thirty years. It's real. These things can happen.

ATTAINING A VISION TO BE GREAT IN ETERNITY

But beloved, it's not enough to have a vision to be wholehearted. I know twenty or thirty men and women my own age who have done the same thing for thirty years. There are thousands of them worldwide. There's nothing especially noble about that, but let me tell you: the vision to be wholehearted is powerful, but that's not enough. It's important to have a vision to give everything, to go all the way. I made another commitment in those early years. I'll give you five of them. And my point is: I want you to say yes to these things. I want you to say, "Why not me? I will give the full measure of my strength to be abandoned to God." It's the vision to be wholehearted, number one.

Number two: the vision to be great in eternity; the vision to be great in eternity. And I don't want to tell the story, but I have a story. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three, I had some real resolve in my heart. I said, "God, I'm serious; I'm not apologetic about this. I want to be great in heaven." And I found out that this was a profoundly biblical idea. I want to be great in heaven. And I don't mean "great in heaven" meaning *famous*, but I want to be the kind of man who lives on the earth with such heart responses that God calls them great when it's over.

Beloved, this isn't pie in the sky. I've had many friend through the years say, "Well, Mike, that's a little pie in the sky."

I said, "No, it's profoundly biblical. That's not pie in the sky! I unashamedly want to be great in heaven. I want treasure in heaven, and I'm going after it, and I know how to get it! There's no secret. It's not mysterious; it's crystal clear. And I'm going for it, and no one is going to stop me from going in that direction!"

Beloved, I challenge you, to be wholehearted, yes, but it slightly different. It's of the same spirit, I agree. I challenge you to resolve in your spirit. You don't have to be educated. You don't have to be a gifted preacher; you don't have to be a gifted musician. You don't have to prophesy. You don't need money; you don't need friends. All you need is a determination in the grace of God that you will say yes, and God says, "You can be great in heaven forever."

Now to many people that sounds impractical. That's the most practical decision I've ever made in my life, and I made it many years ago. I preached it for years. I'll never back down from it by the grace of God. Verse after verse after verse in the Scriptures talks about being great in eternity. I challenge you to wrestle with that idea. But that's not enough, either—the vision to be great in eternity. When I was eighteen to twenty-three, God gave me a vision for fullness. I didn't just want to be dedicated; I wanted the fullness of God. I wanted to see the stadiums filled, and they're going to be filled. I want to see "greater works than these" (Jn. 14:12). I want to see the limbs grow out; I want to see blind eyes instantly recreated. I want experiences where the angels of God

visit us, where I'm caught up to the throne of God. I want experiences where I speak and demons come out of whole geographic areas by the authority of one word spoken under the anointing. Beloved, I believe God is going to give an open heaven to His Church. I'm not fully sure of all that means, but it means an encounter in the realm of the supernatural that's profoundly biblical, that's Jesus-centered. I want the fullness. I want to see the stadiums filled, a billion in the harvest. But that's not enough, either.

After this, God began to give me the revelation of intercession. I was twenty-three years old. Again, I'm forty-seven now; that was twenty-four years ago. God spoke to me that passage I quoted to you earlier in Luke 18. He said, "You're an intercessor."

I was twenty-three years old. I was pastoring a church. I got up and told them. "I'm an intercessor. Read Luke 18! God is going to release justice."

They said, "What's an intercessor?"

I said, "I don't have any idea what it is, but I will figure it out somehow."

I didn't even know what it was. I really had no idea. I went to the Christian bookstore. Back in those days, back in 1979, they only had three books on prayer in the whole Christian bookstore—three, four, or five. I mean, you couldn't find books on prayer. You had to put them on order, and in two months, you could get that one book on prayer.

And I said, "God, how can I be an intercessor? I don't even know what it is!"

And God has given some of you a vision to be intercessors, to be Annas. Beloved, a vision to be wholehearted is good. A vision to be great in eternity, a vision to see the full power of God, to have everything God will give the human spirit, is great, but let me tell you: those things won't just drop out of heaven on their own. They come through the cooperation of fasting and prayer in the anointing, and the revelation of intercession under the anointing. So we say, "God, we're intercessors."

But I said, "God, I'm an intercessor, but I hate prayer! I don't understand it, and what I do understand I don't like at all!"

God called me to prayer and fasting. I hated fasting and I hated prayer. But I had the revelation that that was where it was going, and I couldn't make sense of any of it.

ENERGIZED BY THE MOTIVATING POWER OF BRIDAL INTIMACY

And I'll end with this. I'll end with this, the fifth thing. God wants to equip your heart to embrace those other four things. See, it's not enough for you to come to an altar call and say, "I will go wholehearted." Beloved, if your heart isn't equipped when you face your failures, when you face your weaknesses, you will lose the vision to be wholehearted. The vision to be wholehearted isn't new. We need new ideas of God, new paradigms of God. You need to be energized with intimacy on the inside that empowers you in a whole new way. What God wants to do is to call this generation to wholeheartedness. He wants you to believe that you can be great in eternity. He wants you to believe that the stadiums will be filled with greater works than these (Jn. 14:12). He wants you to believe in fasting and prayer and radical Nazarite commitments. He wants you to see that. But,

beloved, those four things won't get the job done. You need to have your heart equipped to sustain the seasons. For the seasons change, don't they?

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEART IN THE MIDST OF INTERCESSION

I've seen many, many an intercessor. Now hopefully this doesn't sound boastful; for I'm about to say something that may sound boastful. But God called me to intercession when I was twenty-three, twenty-four years ago. And by the grace of God, He has helped me to press in for twenty-four years on a near-daily basis.

Now I'm not saying that to make a big statement about, "Aren't I something!" I'm saying that to make a statement about this. And I hope I don't come off like a know-it-all. But I know how to equip the heart to do it for twenty-four years. I know how the heart is equipped, and it's through encounters with intimacy. That's the critical part.

When I was twenty-three years old, pastoring a church, I would call them together. And all my twenty-three year old buddies were going to do it! And we did it every day. And we've had daily prayer meetings nearly every day for twenty-four years since that day, 95 percent of the time, every day. And I watched a group for three or four years, and they all lost the vision after three or four years of prayer. "Ahhh, we're not interested in that."

STAYING SUSTAINED THROUGH THE YEARS IN THE MIDST OF OUR WEAKNESS

So now I'm twenty-seven and I get another group. They go hard for a while. But now, two or three years later, I'm thirty years old, and between this, that, and the other, they've lost their vision. I get another group. Now I'm thirty-three AND thirty-four. They go for a couple of years. Then I get another group. I'm thirty-eight, thirty-nine. Now I'm forty-seven. Here's my point; I'm trying to make one major point. I understand why they quit, but there are some who didn't quit. I know what it means to get the heart equipped to press through. And let me tell you, as a spiritual father, I know this is simplistic, and it's more than this, I know, but at the very core, it's the pursuit of intimacy at the heart level that equips the heart to sustain the years. That's the missing element in the prayer movement. This is the element that we can't afford to neglect. This element must be centerpiece in the prayer movement.

I was interviewed in a Christian magazine, and the man said, "The biggest need for the Church is what?"

And I was taking a drink of coffee and he said, "I believe I can guess. You lead IHOP-KC. It's prayerlessness."

I said, "No! Prayerlessness isn't the biggest need of the Church."

He said, "Really? Don't you lead a prayer ministry?"

I said, "Well, yes."

And he said, "Well, why isn't prayerlessness the biggest need?"

And I said, "Prayerlessness isn't the problem. It's the fruit of the problem. The fruit, the core, is spiritual boredom. It's spiritual boredom and shame and condemnation. It's not that they don't want to pray. They're spiritually bored and their hearts are locked in shame and condemnation." I said, "The problem isn't

prayerlessness. That's the fruit of another problem. The problem is spiritual boredom and condemnation. When we unlock those areas in their heart through intimacy, prayer isn't a problem."

I said, "Don't aim at the prayer problem; aim at the ideas they have about God and the ideas they have about themselves. That's where the problem of the prayer movement is going to be solved."

Now it's three and a half years later, and again, we've got 400 staff members. I'm watching eighteen and twenty and twenty-two and twenty-four-year-olds entering into a fascination with Jesus. They're entering in, in their weakness, to a sense of confidence that God likes them and enjoys them. We tell them, "When you hit the wall and you see your weakness, push 'delete!' Run into the arms of the God that loves you! Repent, push 'delete' and run right in full confidence again, knowing that you're loved by God, that you're enjoyed by God."

Beloved, we have to see the hearts equipped. We have to see the hearts equipped. We have to see people sustained through the years when they face their weakness. You know why the people don't pray? Because they're spiritually bored and because their weakness has overwhelmed them.

TEACHING PEOPLE HOW TO FAIL WELL

One of our leaders said this, and I loved it. I said, "I'm just going to take this."

Now this sounds strange, so put your seatbelt on; I like it, though. "The thing that I love about the message of the Bridegroom," he said, "is that we're teaching people how to fail well."

I said, "WHAT?"

He said, "We're teaching them how to fail well." This man has been in the kingdom for thirty years. He said, "Where I grew up, when we failed, it was a disaster, and we never, ever got back up for a decade." He just joined our staff a few months ago. He said, "I'm seeing all these young people who, when they fail, they get right back up and run with an open spirit into the revelation of the Bridegroom." He said, "You've taught them to fail well, so they instantly get back up and run with full confidence."

He said, "My generation"—he's the same age as me—"failed disastrously. And when we failed, we never recovered. We never recovered. No one taught us how to hit the wall in such a way that we could recover instantly without losing one step."

I said, "That's profound."

He said, "Well, it's obvious. That's how I see it."

To fail well, you have to work on that one for awhile. I'll end with this thought. People answer the call to wholeheartedness. They say, "I'm going all the way for God." But they think there are only two options. Either they'll go all the way for God, or they'll quit and just settle as a second-class citizen. Here's what I mean. They're twenty years old. They're twenty-two, twenty-four. They go to a conference. They come up front. They say, "I'm going all the way for God....YESSH!...I will be greater than Bickle in eternity for sure! I'm going!!!"

I love it. That's the vision you should have. You stand up here and say, "I love you, God!" But now, now, you've got a vision for fullness. You've got a vision for wholeheartedness. You've got a vision for greatness. That's fantastic, and every one of you should have those visions for your own life. But now, you hit the wall. You discover your own lust; you discover your own anger; you discover your own pain; you discover your own weakness. Now what happens when you face the inevitable, the weaknesses of being human? Now what happens? And here's what 90 percent of you do: you say, "I can't be wholehearted. That option is over. I'm now a hypocrite that has to hang in there until I die, and hopefully I'll make it to heaven."

We think there are only two options. Beloved, there's a third option. It's not, "Go all the way with no failure or quit." It's to be weak and go hard and accept His kindness day by day in your weakness and keep going hard in your weakness. Even in your weakness, you're lovely to Him.

I want to have the Annas stand up again. I want to pray over those who feel a stirring to this calling. Beloved, saying yes to this is fantastic. But what about tomorrow when lust and anger and pain and disappointment and frustration strike again? What about then? We've got to be able to move forward.

Close your eyes for just a moment. I'll have Kevin Matthews come up here as well. Kevin Matthews is one of the leaders of our missions base in the realm of healing and the prophetic and a whole bunch of areas. He's a spiritual father. I'll have him come and lead ministry time, because I want to take some of the Annas back into the other room, and we're going to talk about some action plans and how you can go forward in your own life. But let's wait on the Lord for a moment.

The rest of you, I want all of you, if you would, to close your eyes. Marcus, go ahead. Lead us into the presence of the Lord for a few moments, and I want to call, not all of the Annas, but some of them, for sure, back to this informational meeting so that I can talk to them for about forty-five minutes. But we won't leave for a moment.