

Raising Shepherds after God's Own Heart

INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah 3:14. God is speaking to the leaders. He says, “Return, O backsliding children” (Jer. 3:14). This is a message for literal Israel as well as the backsliding church. It’s a message God will use to awaken them from their compromise and slumber. Look at what He says: “Return, because I am married to you! Return, because I love you! I’m lovesick for you. Return because you believe and understand My heart for you” (Jer. 3:14b, paraphrased).

Beloved, no message will have more power than the message, “Return because I desire you, says the Lord.” That’s the message by which we bring the people back to the Lord. We enable the compromising church to be red-hot on fire by telling them they’re married to the Lord. You may not use that terminology, but here’s what it means: God is lovesick for you. God desires you. God wants you.

Here’s what backslidden Israel says: “If I had only known that He liked me, I would have returned a long time ago. I thought He was so angry with me, I didn’t have a hope or a future; therefore, I never even thought of returning, because I thought He was so angry at me that I didn’t have a chance.”

“I WILL GIVE YOU SHEPHERDS ACCORDING TO MY OWN HEART”

In verse 15, He continues speaking to the leadership. This is the real message that I want to look at. It’s a promise. I believe this promise relates to many of you in this auditorium. This is a promise for the generation in which the Lord returns. This promise was given 2,500 years ago for this generation. Jeremiah 3:15 is for the generation in which the Lord returns. Listen to what God promises the backslidden church and backslidden Israel. He says this: “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15).

Someone asked me the other day, “What is the Holy Spirit doing?”

I said, “I’m sure of what the Holy Spirit’s doing. I don’t know everything He’s doing, but I know a few things. He’s raising up shepherds. He’s raising up young shepherds. They’re fifteen, they’re twenty, they’re thirty. He’s raising up shepherds all over the earth who are shepherds like King David—men and women after God’s own heart.” These shepherds are going to feed the multitudes on the knowledge of God—that’s intimacy—and they’re going to feed multitudes on the understanding of God’s heart.

Beloved, that’s what He’s doing right now—verses 14 and 15 here. Verse 14 is the message, “Return, because I love you.” Verse 15 is the promise to the leaders. The Lord says, “I will take these young Davids and raise them up. I will train them; I will school them.” Beloved, you’re those young Davids God was thinking of when He spoke to Jeremiah 2,500 years ago. Now obviously, it’s not only you. They’re all over Asia, they’re all over Africa, they’re all over Europe, they’re all over Latin America, they’re all over America. They’re fifteen, they’re sixteen, they’re eighteen—and that’s when God first spoke this word over King David.

A MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

Now Jeremiah lived about 500 years after David. Jeremiah 3:15 was God’s description of King David. Most of you know this passage, but I’ll quote it anyway. You can jot it down if you’d like. It’s 1 Samuel 13:14. This is a

very famous verse. Here's what God said to a fifteen-year-old guitar player; He said, "He is a man after My own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14, paraphrased). I find that to be one the most moving verses; that verse touches me in a deep way; to think that God would look at this fifteen-year-old guitar player on the back side of the hills of Bethlehem. Bethlehem had about 500 people; we're talking east of east Texas. We're talking about way over there all by themselves, a little 500-person town that no one had ever heard of. There's a young boy who's tending sheep, who's learning to play the guitar at night, because no one else was with him. And he looked up to heaven, and he said, "God, I have to know You! I have to know You!"

And God said, "That kid has a heart after me, and that's what I'm after across the whole earth—that right there."

David had no idea this is what God thought of him. It's right there in 1 Samuel 13. The prophet Samuel came into this little town, into Bethlehem, this town of 500 people, out in the middle of Nowheresville, and walked right into town, and pointed at this young boy, and said, "You have the shock of your life coming. God has been thinking about you, and God has been listening to the songs you're writing. God has been listening to your prayers, and God is absolutely in love with you, young man!"

And David's eyes got really big, and he said, "I didn't even know it was working! I just love Him; I don't even know how it works."

And the old prophet Samuel looked at him right in the eyes, and said, "God calls you a man after His own heart."

A STUDENT OF THE EMOTIONS OF GOD'S HEART

Now what does it mean to be a man or a woman after God's own heart? This is the language God used for a fifteen-year-old teenager: He called him a man of God; a man after His own heart. Everyone knows that being a person after God's own heart means we're committed to obey the commands of God's heart. I believe that being a man or woman after God's own heart means we're committed to live wholeheartedly for God. That doesn't mean we will always succeed. We will fail many times. I'm not prophesying that on you; I'm just looking at history. Even the fieriest young people, those whose fire is real, those who are the real thing, face their weakness, and the Lord tells them, "Your weakness doesn't disqualify you from the reality of being a woman or a man after My own heart."

David was a man after God's own heart because he was committed to obey the commands of God's heart. But let me tell you the second reason, and I believe the one that's so important for us to understand in this four days. David was a man after God's own heart for this reason as well: he was a student of the emotions of God's heart. I want you to think on that for a moment. That's a massive statement. The implications of that statement are massive. David was a man after God's own heart because, when he was fifteen years old, he became a student of the emotions of God.

"WHAT ARE YOU THINKING? WHAT ARE YOU FEELING? I HAVE TO KNOW"

What does it mean to be a student of the emotions of God? Here's what it means. When David was out in Bethlehem playing that guitar late at night, he looked up to heaven and said, "You know, God, I don't know You very well, not really. But I love You! I want to know what You're thinking, and I want to know what

You're feeling. I have to know, God, what You're feeling and thinking!" David made it his life occupation. He was preoccupied with knowing what God was thinking and feeling, even about him.

DAVID ENCOUNTERED A GOD OF TENDERNESS AND ENJOYMENT

Beloved, it's not enough for us to be students of revival. I'm a student of revival. I love revival. I study the biographies of revival, and I love it! It's one of my favorite ways to spend time. But it's not enough to be a student of God's power, although that's important. I'm not in any way putting that down, because I'm a very energetic student of God's power: the revivals of the past, the great signs and wonders; I love the power of God. But let me tell you, there's something else to study in addition to God's power and God's breakthroughs in history—studying the emotions, what *moved* God to release His power. David discovered things about the heart of God that no other man in the Word of God up to his time had ever written or understood. He ran into a God of tenderness; he ran into a God of kindness. He ran into a God of enjoyment, a God who had a happy heart. He ran into a God of pleasure (Ps. 16). Last night I mentioned the book by Sam Storms, *The Pleasures of God*, in which he does a study on the pleasures in God's personality. David said, "God, I want to know Your power, but I want to know what You're feeling, I want to know what You're thinking. I want to know what You think when You look at me right now." David became a student of what God was feeling and thinking emotionally.

THERE'S NOTHING THAT WILL MORE GREATLY TRANSFORM YOUR INNER LIFE

I began to study the life of David accidentally when I was twenty years old. It wasn't some great strategy. Again, I'm forty-seven now, so that was many years ago. A man gave a ten-part teaching on the life of David. I had heard of David, but I didn't know anything about him. I knew he was a guitar player, and that was about it. This man taught about the life of David for ten weeks, and it was the most fascinating experience I had had in my young life up to that point in time. And I said, "Lord, I want to know what David knew about Your heart. I have to know what David knew; I have to know!" And that began an earnest, life-long quest—and I've been at it for twenty-seven years, ever since that time—to become a student of what David understood about God's feelings. And I want to tell you, beloved; I've thought this through, so this isn't an off-the-cuff, exaggerated statement: there's nothing that will transform your inner life more than becoming a student of God's emotions; that you would know what He's thinking and feeling about weak human beings.

I mentioned last night that the Lord called me to prayer in my early twenties, and I've stayed with it by the grace of God over the years. It wasn't my intention to say that with braggadocio; it's not about me. But I've seen so many people stay with it for two or three years, and they lose their heart for prayer. And the reason is because I had intimacy with God, and, even more specifically, because I was a student of the life of God. You can't study David's life without studying God's emotions. Because if you study David's life, you become fascinated with what David understood about God's heart.

Young people come to me all the time and say, "What should I read?"

I tell them, "I'm telling you, I know what you should read! You should read the life of David for a year. Get every commentary you can find and read the life of David for a straight year. It will rock your world in a wonderful way and change the way you see God, and it will change the way you see yourself."

LIVING WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN THE REVELATION OF GOD'S AFFECTIONS

Now the message of the Bride of Christ is really the life of David message brought to the next level. The life of David is the revelation of God's emotions—the revelation of God's feelings. David talked about more than just

the feelings of God, but he was the particular, unique vessel in history that made known the feelings of God's hearts. The Church has been so afraid of feelings. Beloved, feelings are a very, very dynamic part of God's personality, and feelings are a very dynamic part of your experience with God. I don't believe we go by feelings; I don't believe, for example, that when we're depressed, and all the lies are hitting us, that we believe the lies because we live by our feelings. I don't believe in living by our feelings. I believe in understanding and experiencing what God is feeling, and it overflows to completely energize us on a new way on the inside.

The message of the Bride of Christ: that's the message we use today. We call it "the bridal paradigm of the kingdom." What we mean by that term is a view of the kingdom in which the main idea is God's gladness and tender affection and burning desire for you and me. When we talk about the bridal paradigm, we're talking about living wholeheartedly for God: living wholeheartedly for God through the understanding of God's emotions as a God of gladness and happiness. A God of tender affection; a God of indescribable kindness to the people who are pursuing Him, even when they stumble in their weakness.

You know, when you discover your weakness, God doesn't lose His kindness because you've discovered your weakness. Some people are running hard after God, and they run right into a brick wall of their own weakness. And they think that because they finally discovered a new part of their own frail and fragile frame, because they discovered this, God's kindness is now on hold. He's pressed the "pause" button.

He did not. God doesn't change because you discover new things about your weakness. When we talk about the bridal paradigm, we're talking about a pursuit of wholeheartedness that flows out of the reality of encountering God's emotions for us.

YOUR DESIRE TO BE GOD'S IS GOD'S GIFT TO YOU

You'll hear that term used a lot by the IHOP-KC staff—"bridal paradigm." You could say we're *energized* by intimacy with God. Or you might call it "the revelation of the Bridegroom." It means my weak heart has become confident that God burns with desire for me while I'm getting cleaned up, not only after I get cleaned up. A lot of people think we're on probation as Christians while we're getting cleaned up, and that when we're cleaned up, then God changes His attitude and says, "Now that you're clean, now that you've broken through on every issue, *now* I can enjoy you!"

Beloved, that's not how it works. God doesn't begin to enjoy us after we mature. God begins to enjoy us the day we're born again, and the Holy Spirit puts the genuine "YES!" in our spirit. There's a big "YES!" in your spirit that was given by God at your new birth. Every born-again believer has this giant, "Yes! I want to be Yours, God! I love You; I'm not trying to fake you out! I love You, God! I love You!" I call that the "YES!" in your spirit. That desire to be God's is God's gift to you. God looked at you as an unbeliever and said, "I have a gift for you: I'm going to put into you desire for Me!" The desire you have for God is God's special gift to you. And God looks at you through the grace of Jesus. He sees that desire that He personally put in you. He sees that yes in your spirit, but He also sees your weakness. God isn't blind to your weakness. You may be blind to elements of your weakness, but He's not blind to it.

BE SUSTAINED BY SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH THOSE OF LIKE MIND

I remember when I first met the Lord. I was fifteen years old, and I was with a youth group of fiery people. Beloved, you must be with fiery believers. You can't do this thing alone. I don't care what radical change you have to make, you need to be with fasting, praying people who are pursuing intimacy with God. It's critical that

you surround yourself with people who have the like vision and the like values you have. I've seen it for many years: they're on fire at ages seventeen and eighteen, and by the time they're twenty-seven or twenty-eight, that fire was only a distant memory of back when they were in high school. Why? Not because their love was fake. It was because they didn't surround themselves with people of like mind, or they didn't pursue it based on intimacy.

But I remember when I met the Lord at age fifteen in a fiery youth group. It went from 200 to 1,200 in a short period of time—all new converts. I was one of the new converts. People were getting saved. This was 1971, and every time you turned around, ten more were being saved and brought into the group. It was a short season of revival. Our youth leaders gave us all the biographies and told us all the great missionary stories. Beloved, I believe in those biographies. They put a vision in my heart to go after God. All of us had that vision. There were a thousand of us. We read these biographies, and we said, "We're going to do it! We're going to do it! We're going to do it!"

I told you last night, there was a time when I was about eighteen or twenty when I said, "Why not me?" There was a critical time when the biography was no longer just the story of a man or a woman who died and was in heaven; it was now a personal reality. "I'm going to be a man like that! Why not me?" It changed my life when I got a vision that I was going to be wholehearted, and not just read about others who were wholehearted. It's powerful. It's powerful.

There's a moment; there's a time. I don't necessarily mean a moment as in one minute of one day. For some people, it's one minute of one day; for others, it's a process of a few months. But there's a season when you decide it's not enough to read the books. It's not enough to hear the stories. You say, "I will be absolutely radical, by the grace of God!" and it becomes personal inside your own heart. I mentioned that last night—the vision for wholeheartedness. Oh, when that vision hits your heart, you decide you're going to pour out all the strength of your life; you're going to give yourself, your money, your time, your energy. There's nothing anyone can do to pull you away from that.

Again, I talk about these Night Watchers. I've gone to some of them and said, "Hey! You know, you've done the Night Watch for two years. Why don't we make it easy on you and give you the day watch a little." Because the Night Watch is hard; it's hard on your body.

They said, "No! Absolutely not! This is my post; this is my place in God. I'm taking my stand, and I will be a Daniel. I will press through in fasting and prayer. I will do the Night Watches, and I will change history!"

I look at them, and I say, "God bless you! That's awesome! Don't let me steal this from your heart."

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WHEN YOUR WEAKNESS APPEARS?

But beloved, it's not enough to have a vision to be wholehearted. That's essential, but it's not enough! Because when you begin to face your weakness, what are you going to do? What are you going to do when the crisis comes, and you see your weakness beyond what you previously knew?

So here it is. I'm eighteen, nineteen years old, and I've read the biographies. I'm so excited! My life vision is to go be a missionary, and maybe even die for God! I want to be martyred; I want to be a missionary; and I want to die! I don't want to be just some pompous, old, rich American who has a memory of Bible class when I was

twenty, when I'm eighty years old. I don't to be that. I want to go and die on the mission field! I don't want to be some spiritually bored American. I want to do this thing hard. There were a whole bunch of us. Now, today, there's a whole room of you like that. You're saying, "I want to go all the way." But here's what happened. Here's what happened. My fire was real. The yes in my spirit was real; it wasn't fake at all. And during the ages of eighteen, nineteen, and twenty, I began to hit pockets of weakness, of lust, of anger, of pride, of bitterness—of all kinds of things. You make the list and then double it, if you want it to be accurate. Take whatever you're thinking and double it. I didn't walk out everything; I walked out some things. I didn't walk out all of the things I wanted, because I was a committed believer. I looked at those things, and I said, "God, my heart is so much more messed up! Do You know how messed up I am, God?"

See, I thought God was shocked because I was shocked. I did something, and I said, "I can't believe it! I'm the missionary biography go-for-God-man, and I did that! I can't believe it! God, can You believe that I did that?"

Of course, the Lord could have said something like, "There's a whole lot more where that came from. Just hang in there for a while, and you'll see a whole lot more than you see right now."

RUN TO GOD WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER THE SIN IN YOUR HEART

Over the years, I've run into my weakness in ways that pain and shock me. But what is the difference? I'm using myself as an example in a good sense right now. Because I've encountered my weakness and done things that have been shocking, even for me, and I've seen things in my heart that caused me to say, "I could never feel and want and think things like this—but I did." I really did. Many of my friends were fiery for God. One group of us all hit the same weaknesses. There may have been different manifestations, but one group of us understood that God liked us, and the other group thought God was angry. The group that understood that God liked us while we were growing ran *to* Him, and the group that thought God was angry ran *from* Him when they discovered their weakness. I know that's a very, very simple reality. We never graduate from that reality.

GOD HAS AN INFINITE SUPPLY OF PASSION AND DESIRE

So I would hit my weakness. I don't mean I would instantly have confidence; the confidence grew over time. I would hit my weakness, and I would look up. Really, this happened through the life of David. I was studying the book of Psalms as it related to David's life. I would encourage all of you to study the life of David, because he was the student of God's heart—the student of God's emotions.

I began to say, "Wait a second! David did something far worse than I just did. And David understood that You liked him, God. Maybe You like me in the way You liked David."

And over the months and years, that began to be very real to me—that God liked me as much as He liked David; that God didn't have a limited supply of passion and affection—David didn't use it all up. It's not like God's heart is a battery, and David used most of it on his sin, and now God said, "Sorry, Mike. I would have liked you if you had been born a few generations earlier." It doesn't work that way. There's an infinite supply of goodness and passion and desire. God says, "I have as much for you as I had for David, and I have it for every single person who's drawn to Me by My Spirit, and they have the yes in their spirit at the new birth."

When you were born again, a mysterious, wonderful thing happened: God dropped a supernatural "yes!" into your spirit. "I want to be Yours, God! I desire You!" That's a gift that God gave you.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMMATURITY AND REBELLION

I mentioned this last night, but I have to repeat it over and over. I know those of you who have been around for a while are saying, "Mike, let's just get on to some other stuff." It's Christianity 101. Immaturity isn't the same thing as rebellion.

Many young people act out their immaturity, and what they hear from their leaders is, "You're rebellious!" They're not rebellious! They're immature, and God is angry at rebellion, but God enjoys the person with a "yes!" in their spirit even when they're immature. God doesn't enjoy the immaturity, but He enjoyed me; He enjoyed me at eighteen, twenty, thirty, and here I am. I look up even now and He says, "I still enjoy you!" Even in immaturity, there's a yes in your spirit—"You're mine, and I'm Yours!"

Your love isn't false because your love isn't perfect. Some people have the idea that their love is fake, that their love is false until it's perfect—that anything less than perfect love is false love. That's a lie from the pit of darkness. Your love is real for God, even while it's growing. Even before it's pure and mature, your love is real in the sight of God.

PEOPLE WHO FEED ON THE REVELATION THAT DAVID FED ON

Here's what King David had. King David was called "the man after God's own heart." Why do we care about the man after God's own heart? Because according to Jeremiah 3:15, God is going to raise up shepherds after His own heart—you! You're going to be people who feed on the revelation that David fed on, the revelation of God's emotions. But beloved, this isn't going just going to fall from the sky while you're in the midst of a busy lifestyle. God wants you to slow down. God wants you to take time off from all the hectic activity. He wants you to become a student—a focused student of the emotions of God. He really, really wants you to do that.

We have people who come and join us at IHOP-KC so that they can become missionaries who embrace prayer and fasting so that we can win the harvest. But it's missions work and prayer and fasting that's energized by intimacy. They read the brochure, they go to the informational meeting, they sign up, and they say, "We're coming for six months. We want to take six months off and do this." And they come and join us. Most of them don't do it this way, though a few of them do. They live in the same hectic schedule. They fill up all of their free time that's not in the program; they fill their minds with anything besides studying God's heart.

I say, "Listen: hanging around doesn't automatically fill your spirit with this stuff. You need to intentionally, deliberately become a student of God's emotions."

THEY WILL FEED THE PEOPLE WITH INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE

God says in verse 15, "I will raise up shepherds after My heart like King David. I will raise up those who are fifteen and twenty who know My heart like David. And here's what they're going to do: they will feed multitudes from the overflow of their knowledge and experience."

Look at this: "They will feed the people with knowledge" (Jer. 3:15, paraphrased). Instead of knowledge, call that *intimacy*, because that's what knowledge means. The word *knowledge* is the same word used in the phrase, "Adam knew Eve" (Gen. 4:1). It's the same word used for sexual intimacy. God says, "I want to know My people, and I want My people to be filled with the knowledge of God." It's an intimate, experiential knowledge. He isn't talking about just taking a few Bible school classes; He's talking about encounters at the heart level. That's what *knowledge* means.

WE HAVE DAVID'S REVELATION MULTIPLIED BEYOND MEASURE

Imagine this; this is what I'm picturing. I'm picturing a million young adults across the earth who have the revelation that King David had of God's heart, and more. Because, see, David didn't have the fullness of the revelation. When Jesus came, He took the revelation of David and multiplied it dynamically. We have David's revelation, multiplied beyond measure by the coming of Jesus. We have more than that.

You say, "More than the coming of Jesus?" Well, hang on with me for a minute; we have more than that. We're in the time frame at the end of natural history when the Lord returns, and we have all the prophetic promises where the fullness is going to come in the generation in which the Lord returns. So we have David's revelation, we have the revelation that Jesus brought, and now we have the activity of the Spirit at the end of the age, in the generation in which the Lord returns, fulfilling all the promises to bring a young adult movement to fullness across the earth. Beloved, there has never been an hour where God is more available to a twenty-year old than this hour of history right now! It's not enough—and I'm not saying this negatively—it's not enough to go to a Christian concert and buy the CDs. It's not enough to go to Bible school. We have to be intentional; we have to be deliberate! We refuse to be denied. "I won't be turned back; I'm going after this thing! I will become a student of your heart! I will move this and that out of my schedule. This one is mad, that one is sad, but it doesn't matter—I'm moving into this reality that King David operated in!" That's what we mean by becoming a people of one thing.

This isn't a Holy Spirit number, but I love this number. It may be too small. I'm picturing a million of them worldwide—a million of them, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-eight. They're all over South America; they're all over Asia. They're all over Asia, South America, Africa, America, Europe, and everywhere. They're twenty years old. They have confidence in their spirit with God. There are a million of them across the world. The Holy Spirit is moving on them. The Holy Spirit says, "I will bring you to fullness now! I will bring you far beyond where David went. I will bring you beyond even what the early church experienced. I will bring you into the full experience of what the prophets said would happen in the generation in which the Lord returns."

But beloved, here it is, summed up in two verses: "Return, backslidden people. Don't you know that I'm lovesick for you? Don't you know that I want you? And if you knew it, if you knew it, you would return."

And then the Lord says, "I have the answer." Look at verse 15: "I will raise up shepherds that tell the people I'm lovesick. I will raise up shepherds that tell the nations, 'I want to be married to you, if you'll only say yes in your weakness to My burning desire.'"

A GENERATION THAT LOVES GOD LIKE NO OTHER GENERATION

And these shepherds—this is what I'm looking at right now. I'll just mention this briefly; this is the reason I feel so much emotion about this. Twelve years ago He told us there would be the beginning of gatherings in this auditorium, in Bartle Hall. The Lord spoke this to His prophet, Paul Cain, who knew nothing about any of this. He knew the numbers and significant details. He said there would be young adults from all over the earth—not just here, by any means. There will be 40,000, and they'll meet many times. It will be a young adult movement. They will love God like no other generation will love God. And I'm looking at the beginning—at the first fruits of this. I looked at this big building in 1990, and I said, "Lord, how on earth is that going to happen?"

The Lord said, “You just wait and see. I’ll set it up.” And tomorrow, with The Call, we’re going to have this building; there will be so many thousands of young people. Beloved, that’s the beginning of the beginning. And beloved, this is going to happen all over the world. It’s going to happen in London, and Berlin, and Singapore, and it’s going to happen in Shanghai, and it’s going to happen in Johannesburg and Sydney and Melbourne, and Pasadena and New York City! It’s going to happen in Montreal! It’s going to happen all over the earth!

“Oh, Lord! Release it in Rome. Release it in Paris! Release it all over Africa! Release it in Nairobi, Lord. Release it in Nairobi, Kenya! Release it in Kampala, Uganda! Release it all over Eastern Europe! Moscow, Lord! Moscow, in the name of Jesus! Raise up large gatherings of young adults!”

The Lord told us years ago that this building would be filled up so many times. And God is going to loose a young adult movement that will touch the ends of the earth. And it will be part of something far bigger that He’s orchestrating. Just being here moves me, because I’m seeing the first fruits of that which we’ve prayed for, for many years. This is just the down payment. That’s important in itself; but we will hardly remember this for the glory that God is going to do in the days and the years to come. But at the same time, it’s a good beginning. I’m happy for this little beginning.

AN INCREASE OF THE SPIRIT’S ACTIVITY BEYOND ANYTHING EVER SEEN

Look at this, beloved. God said, “I will give the nations of the earth shepherds according to My heart.” They’ll know what King David knew, and they’ll go beyond. They’ll add the revelation of Jesus to what David knew. That brings it far beyond! But it’s more—not more than just the revelation of Jesus, because we will never have the fullness of that! But in the generation in which the Lord returns, the increase of the Spirit’s activity is going to be beyond anything we’ve ever seen in history. We’re going to feel and experience and encounter dimensions of the heart of Jesus that the early apostles never experienced. And it’s centered around the phrase in verse 14, “I’m married to you.” There has never been a generation, never, that understood worldwide, in a universal way, that our Messiah is the Bridegroom. There’s always been a little group up on a hillside somewhere—a little mountaintop community—that huddled together and held the truth of the Bridegroom God. But beloved, something is breaking in upon the planet: it’s the revelation of Yeshua. His name is Jesus; His name is Yeshua. He’s a bridegroom! He’s a king! He’s more than a king—He’s the Bridegroom King! He uses His power to express His burning desire. That’s what He’s going to do as King. He doesn’t use His kingly power just to show it off! He uses His kingly power to give expression to His desires as the Bridegroom God.

A GENERATION LOVESICK FOR THE COMING OF THE BRIDEGROOM

The apostles knew Jesus the Bridegroom just a little. Jesus told them; John the Baptist told them; but they didn’t understand it. They looked and said, “Wow, that’s wonderful.”

You know the passage: Revelation 22:17. John the apostle was taken away in the Spirit, and the Lord showed him a time frame, a people across the earth, with a heart of worship. A people who would cry, “Come!” They would be an evangelistic people. They would cry to the nations, “Come and drink!” They would say, “Jesus, come to us!” They would say to the nations, “Come to Jesus!” It’s a twofold *come*. “Come, Lord Jesus!” expresses intimacy. “Come, nations, to Jesus!” expresses evangelism. It’s two sides of one coin. John the apostle saw by the angel that when this praying, worldwide company of believers cries out with fervency under the anointing, they’ll do it in the understanding that they’re a cherished bride before a lovesick bridegroom. There has never been a time of history where the Church has understood this worldwide. But it’s about to break in upon us.

Oh, I can imagine David, when we get with him in heaven: “David! Incredible! Oh, I love your stuff! I read all your stuff! We sang your songs!”

David says, “Well, you got that one song wrong. I really wrote it in a different key, but that’s OK...”

“David, this is fantastic!”

David says, “Fantastic? Are you kidding? I understood a little; you understood the Messiah as a God with the burning heart of a bridegroom!”

He’ll say, “I didn’t understand any of that. I’m overwhelmed at who Yeshua—who Jesus—is!”

EVANGELISM FROM THE OVERFLOW OF BRIDAL INTIMACY

Beloved, there will be shepherds after God’s own heart with the revelation of David. But that’s not enough! It’s going up a notch! It’s the revelation of the Bridegroom. We will cry out to the nations, “You can turn from your sin, because the One who wants you wants to be married to you! He loves you! He really desires you!” And this changes the entire message of evangelism. This is what Matthew 22 is all about. In Matthew 22:1-4, Jesus said, “You’re going to tell the nations, ‘The wedding is ready’” (Mt. 22:1-4, paraphrased). He says, “Before this is over, your evangelism will be the overflow of bridal intimacy.”

Right now, we’ve separated things. “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (Mt. 19:6, paraphrased). We’ve separated things in a very unnatural way. We have the evangelist over here, the prayer ministry over here, the intimacy people over here, and the prophecy people over here. The Lord says, “You can’t separate those things!”

And we have the evangelism people say to the intimacy people, “I’m not just going to sit in a room all day and say, ‘I love You, I love You.’ The nations are going to hell—get with it!” Because that’s how I started. I said, “Lord, I’m not going to sit in a room all day long if people are going to hell. I want to go and do something.”

The intimacy people over here look at them and say, “Well, I feel God. I love God.”

God says, “If you feel Me and love Me, bring Me to them.” You can’t separate those things in the grace of God. It’s one heart flow from God’s heart.

“ONE THING I HAVE DESIRED OF THE LORD, THAT WILL I SEEK”

Turn to Psalm 27. We have this verse everywhere; you know where we’re going. Psalm 27:4. I’ll tell you a little story about Psalm 27:4. If you have your Bibles with you, I would like you to see it. One of my goals is to see the IHOP-KC staff wear out Psalm 27. I check their Bibles: “Looks like you haven’t even looked at Psalm 27!” No, I don’t really do that. You don’t have to read it to have the reality of it; but I want us all to see it right here. Let’s read it first, and then I’ll end with this story.

Psalm 27:4. This is King David, the great warrior king of Israel. “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” (Ps. 27:4). For the word *behold*, you can write *experience* or *encounter* the beauty

of God; and for *inquire*, you can write, “prophetic ministry”: “that I would receive divine information in the place of prayer.” That’s what *inquire* means: to get into that prophetic anointing to hear back from God.

HIS HANDS WERE OCCUPIED WITH THE KINGDOM, BUT HIS HEART WITH GOD

It’s a very interesting verse. First, because there are only one or two places in the whole book of Psalms where David describes what he did all the days of his life. It’s very, very unusual that David would use that term “all the days of my life.” David says, “Before I was king, when I was a fifteen-year-old guitar player, when I was running around in the wilderness before I was king, when my enemy was chasing me for seven or eight years, and in times of testing and trial,” after he was king he said, “It doesn’t really matter what season of my life I was in. All the days of my life, I had one thing that I always pressed into: the beauty of God; the revelation of the beauty of God.”

“Well, I thought you were King David!”

“I *was* king. King was my daytime occupation. King was what I did with my hands. My hands were occupied with running the empire. My hands were occupied with running the army while my heart was preoccupied with the beauty of God.”

“THAT I MAY DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE”

Twenty years ago, I was twenty-seven years old. We had just moved to Kansas City. We had a little young adult church of about 500 people. This was May 1983, twenty years ago. This May is our twentieth anniversary of that event. And the Lord spoke to us to come together for twenty-one days of fasting and prayer for revival. So we did it. Five hundred of us committed ourselves to fast and pray. We met every day. We met from six in the morning until twelve at night, eighteen hours a day. Not everyone did, but many of them did, all day long. I was twenty-seven. I was one of the older men in the church. Most of them were twenty-two or twenty-three. We were going for God and no one was going to turn us back. “God, we want revival! We want revival!”

And here’s what happened. The most surprising thing happened one day. Because we were there eighteen hours a day, and we had an open mic, and we were using it to pray for revival. But I asked them only to pray revival prayers on the mic: not personal devotion prayers, just revival prayer. One day the Holy Spirit hit me like an arrow: Psalm 27:4, “this one thing.” To be truthful, I didn’t even know where it was. I knew it was David, because I had taught on it. I knew it was in the Psalms, and I had to look for it. “Where’s that verse about looking on His beauty?” I said, “Huh, where is it?” I remember teaching it a few times when I taught the life of David, but I couldn’t remember where to find it.

So I located Psalm 27:4. And here I am all day long walking back and forth. When I pray, I love to pace. I love to walk back and forth. And I was praying. It was a Holy Spirit arrow. I said, “Lord, this one thing, this one thing, all the days of my life, this one thing.” It was 8:00am; it was 10:00am; it was noon. It was 2:00pm; it was 4:00pm; it was 8:00 and 10:00pm. I couldn’t shake this thing off. Nothing like that had ever happened before. It was as though this thing had taken hold of me against my will. I mean, I liked it, but I didn’t know what was happening. It was resonating through my being. It was fiery inside. I said, “What is going on?” I didn’t realize I was about to have a life-changing encounter with the Lord. That’s why everything is based on this verse.

BOB JONES HEARS THE AUDIBLE VOICE OF THE LORD

So I went to bed and got up the next morning. At 6:00am, I arrived at the church. There I met Bob Jones, one of the most powerful prophetic men I've ever met in my life; he and Paul Cain are both seventy-four years old. And again, in the *Encountering Jesus* series, I take twelve nights and I tell a lot of the stories of these two men and their encounters. This is one of them. I give a lot more detail there than I'm going to give right now.

Bob Jones comes to me. We're on this twenty-one days of prayer and fasting. Maybe it's the first week or two of the fast. He says, "The Lord visited me last night." He says, "I heard the audible voice of the Lord. He told me the answer to your prayer is yes."

Now I was thinking my prayer on the microphone, because I prayed at maybe 8:00am, 10:00am, noon... I gave my little ten-minute prayer for revival all day long. I said, "Which prayer? I don't even know which one you're talking about. I prayed lots of prayers!"

He said, "No, not those prayers; the prayer God gave you."

And I said, "Which prayer was that? I don't even know what you're talking about."

He said, "The prayer the Holy Spirit gave you!"

And I really had no idea what he meant by this. I said, "Bob..."

He said, "If I tell you the prayer, will you believe it was God?"

I said, "Yes."

"He gave you Psalm 27:4 yesterday."

I said, "That's what... that really happened yesterday. How did you know that?"

He said, "I heard it by the audible voice of the Lord in the night visions last night."

I said, "That was real! I really got Psalm 27:4."

He said, "I know. I heard audibly from the Lord that He gave it to you."

I said, "No way!"

TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR-A-DAY PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT OF THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID

And I thought, "Wait a second, wait a second... Surely I prayed it on the microphone." And I said, "No, I didn't." Because I didn't want personal devotion; I just wanted revival prayers. And I said to him, "I didn't tell anyone that verse."

And Bob said, "You didn't have to tell anyone. The Lord is the One who told you to pray the verse. And the same One who gave it to you, gave it to me. And the Lord said the answer is, 'Yes.'"

And I said, "Yes, what?" I said, "I'm praying for revival in Kansas City in 1983."

And Bob said, "That's not the major thing on God's mind right now." He said, "Here's what He told me. He's going to release to you twenty-four-hour-a-day prayer in the spirit of the tabernacle of David." He said, "I heard that audibly. You're going to have twenty-four-hour-a-day prayer in the spirit of the tabernacle of David."

That was twenty years ago. Now some of you say, "What's the tabernacle of David?" That's what I said: "What is the tabernacle of David?"

And Bob Jones, the prophet, said, "Oh, you'll know all that. Don't worry about it. You'll figure it all out some years from now." I didn't know it would be almost sixteen years later before we began it. We began it in 1999. This was in 1983 when I had this experience. I don't want to give a long speech on that, but he said, "The tabernacle of David is where the prophetic singers will be released, and the prophetic anointing on the musicians."

Did you know that King David had 4,000 full-time musicians on his staff? How many of you knew that? King David used the finance of the government of Israel under the anointing of God and financed 4,000 full-time musicians for his prayer ministry (1 Chron. 25). He had 288 trained prophetic singers. He had schools of singers, schools of musicians, schools of interns. He had 288 of them brought to maturity, and 4,000 musicians. And undoubtedly it cost millions a year to finance them to do this full-time. And the Lord is going to do this again. And Bob looked at me. He said, "The Lord is going to release the wealth of the nations, and there will be thousands of singers and musicians released full time, far beyond what happened in the days of David."

And I remember, my eyes got so big. And that was kind of cool; but the truth is, I was a little discouraged, if you can believe that. Now it sounds so awesome, but twenty years ago, I said, "We're on a twenty-one day fast, meeting eighteen hours a day, we're dead tired, and you're telling me that God's answer isn't revival for our city. God's answer is, 'I will have prayer meetings forever'? That's the answer to this fast? I will have to do prayer meetings forever?"

When the woman is in labor having the baby, you don't come to the woman and say, "Here's your great gift: labor pains forever!"

I said, "I don't want to lead prayer meetings all day. I want a billion people saved in the earth."

And Bob laughed, and he said, "You don't understand a thing that's going on, do you?" He said, "God is interested in Kansas City, but He has something far bigger on His mind called the nations of the earth." He said, "God is going to raise up a prayer ministry that will go twenty-four hours a day with the anointing of musicians and singers." And I can't tell you the rest of the story, but it's a great story; I have it on those twelve history tapes. There's another twenty minutes to the story which I don't want to go into. But Bob said, "Audibly God said to me, 'When you begin it, you'll grow to 5,000 full time in one place.'" We're at 400 right now, and he said, "You'll have 5,000 in one place"

Now if you're operating in today's economy, you say, "Five thousand full time intercessory missionaries? That's too big to be true." Beloved, that's nothing. God is going to raise up hundreds of millions of people who

want to do this. He's going to raise up millions all over the earth. There will be 5,000 in numbers of cities across the earth! Five thousand seems big because we're on this side of the revival. Five thousand will seem much different on the other side of the revival! The Lord spoke by His audible voice, "I will give you Psalm 27:4. I will give you prophetic singers and musicians. They will flow in the intimacy; they'll be missionaries."

A WHOLE NEW PARADIGM OF MISSIONS THAT FLOWS OUT OF BEAUTY

Now this part wasn't the audible voice of the Lord, but we understood it as the months and years unfolded. There will be missionary warriors like David. David was a warrior king. They will be missionaries. They'll say, "Devil come out, or I'm coming after you! Devil, get out of here!" They'll have a militant spirit. They'll refuse to be denied. They'll be warriors like King David. Missionaries, evangelists, prophet warriors... I love that warring spirit on King David.

But beloved, let me tell you something. Here's what God was speaking to us twenty years ago. He said, "The warring spirit on King David, that evangelistic apostolic missionary spirit—that warrior spirit—will flow out of the intimacy of gazing and encountering God's beauty." It's a whole new paradigm of missions that flows out of beauty. The beauty of God is the same truth as the Bride of Christ and intimacy. Those are all different terms for the same body of truth.

Bob the prophet told me, "Your prayer ministry will look so different. Now you have these hard, boring prayer meetings." He said, "Your prayer model will flow out of encounter with beauty. Your missionary model will flow out of encounter with beauty. Your militant spirit will flow out of beauty, just King David's did. And God will give you singers and musicians who will flow out of this; and He will raise up this kind of reality"—not just here, but sovereignly all over the earth. "And it will flow out of Psalm 27:4."

Let's stand.