

Fulfill Your Financial Destiny!

by
Mark and Patti Virkler

This manual is the result of the united efforts of both authors. The concepts and ideas are a culmination of cooperative study and revelation. The experiences described are common to both. The pronoun “I” is used to demonstrate the unity of our thoughts.

Verses are from the KJV Bible unless otherwise noted.

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Introduction

This Is My Story

I grew up in a conservative farming community and attended a conservative Baptist church, where I accepted the Lord at age 15. After high school, I went straight to Roberts Wesleyan College for training to become a pastor, and served in various pastoral roles from ages 17 to 38. Since then, I have traveled the world full-time as a seminar speaker for the body of Christ.

When I married during my third year in college, I was making \$45 a week working as a youth pastor, tithing \$4.50 and living on the remaining \$40.50 per week. After graduating, I worked in the construction business full-time to support my family and repay college debts, while working part-time in the ministry. Eventually, I went full-time into the ministry where I was paid \$100 a week. I lived at that level for many years, serving in a variety of pastoral capacities. I didn't mind because money was secular, and my goal was to be spiritual. So my family lived on next to nothing as we gave our lives in ministry.

At that time, I essentially had no well-developed theology concerning money. I had never examined the Scriptures to find the whole counsel of God on the subject, nor sought the voice of the Lord. I knew a few verses that appeared to say that money was evil. I believed I should not focus on it, but rather on "spiritual things" like preaching the gospel. I therefore didn't give attention to earning,

investing, or saving money, nor did I seriously consider building a theology about gold, silver, and money. I was rather ignorant (and rather poor), but I was unaware of my ignorance. However, I did feel the almost constant pain of financial pressure in my life.

Things gradually improved, until eventually I was making \$18,000, and then finally \$22,000, while in full-time ministry, with eighteen years experience in the ministerial profession.

HOW GOD FOCUSED MY ATTENTION ON MONEY

Then the Lord ordained a five-year process to lead me into finally spending time focusing on money. I had to learn that finances are an important area of life which I could handle skillfully, adequately, or poorly.

The process began with the preaching of our senior pastor, Rev. Tommy Reid. He preached for a long time that money was spiritual and that it was not sinful for Christians to obtain wealth. After about three years of that, I changed my mind slightly and said, "All right, so money is spiritual. Lord, if You want to give me a \$100 bill, my hand is out." I didn't really expect anything to happen, but at least I was no longer opposed to Christians having money.

Of course, there are no \$100 bills in heaven, so nothing happened - - exactly what I expected. What I learned later is that, while there is no cash in heaven, there are *great creative ideas*. Rather than praying for money, we should pray for a creative idea of a way of serving mankind. That creative idea, when received in our hearts as a spontaneous thought or vision, and acted upon, releases a blessing to those around us, and often a return of financial blessing in our lives. (This idea and process is fully developed in the text *Spirit Born Creativity*, by the same author.)

At that time in my life, since no money came out of heaven, I just let the idea go. I was glad that the Lord had placed me under a senior pastor who was an entrepreneur and a businessman. I could let him focus on the church finances, and I would focus on “spiritual things” like writing and counseling and teaching and memorizing Scripture. You see, I had not yet fully grasped the idea that all of life is sacred. There is no secular. “The earth is the Lord’s and *the fullness thereof*” (Ps. 24:1). All is God’s. All is sacred. And that obviously must include money, gold, and silver. I didn’t understand that Christianity is to impact *every area of life*, and that the Church is to produce leaders in *every area of life*, whether it be education, government, business, entrepreneurship, theater, or whatever. My Christianity still centered around studying my Bible rather than taking its principles and living them victoriously in every area of my life, including financial provision.

Then our church began to face more extreme financial pressure. Rev. Reid came to each department and told us we were to find a way to break even within the next 12 months or find a new job. All of a sudden, money became important to me! It was no longer possible to leave the issue with my senior pastor. He was leaving it with me.

I began to seek the Lord concerning what our department should do. Between my direct supervisor and myself, we came up with six or seven ideas, all but one of which could be easily implemented. That final one was to bring our publishing in-house and print all our own manuals. At the time, we were selling about \$3500 worth of books each week

through our department, marketing courses to Bible schools, individuals, and churches.

The Lord led me to take some time and investigate various approaches to in-house printing. It took six months and the rewriting of a 40-page proposal four times before the church board finally accepted the idea and approved a \$35,000 package of an offset printer and desktop publisher.

I was relieved. The job was done. At least, I assumed my part was done. Now I could get back to “spiritual things.” However, the church put me in charge of the publications department. I thought, “Well, I’ll just find a few people to run it and then leave it to them.” But the Lord spoke to me, saying, “Mark, do not give this a lick and a promise. Take the time to set this department up right.” So I did. It took the next six months, but by then it was running quite effectively.

I was learning that part of spirituality is taking care of finances effectively. Money is not evil. It is a necessary part of life.

However, in my own personal life things had not changed much. Money always seemed to be tight. We were living all right. We had a nice house and were blessed in many ways, yet there never seemed to be enough for any “extras.” I assumed that life would always be that way.

Then, while on a weekend seminar, I noticed that the pastor with whom I was staying had a video series entitled *Wealth Unlimited*. We talked for a bit about it, and then I watched a promotional video about the series. It was exciting, showing how one could learn a strategy to release finances into his life. I was intrigued. I thought seriously of buying the video series.

But I wondered, “Should I really be spending time focusing on money?” After all, I was a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Was it really right for me to take time out to focus on material things? Then the Lord said to me, “Mark, if it is acceptable for you to spend a year of your life focusing on obtaining wealth for the church, it is also acceptable for you to spend a year of your life focusing on

obtaining wealth for your own life.” That was a good point, I thought. If it wasn’t evil for me to do for the church, then it also wasn’t evil for me to do for my own family. And I had long ago discovered that it takes a year for me to effectively learn and implement any truth in my life.

Therefore, I spent the next year learning a strategy for releasing finances through investing. I bought over \$1,000 of training videos and books, and obtained \$6,000 to begin experimenting with investing. Of course, the first year is your time on the learning curve, so I lost most of it and gained it back, plus some, and lost most of it again and gained it back, plus some, and finally lost it all. (Isn’t this an exciting story?) I was experiencing the “joy” of learning. I will talk about the learning curve more later, and how the Lord viewed this time of growth in my life. Suffice it for now to say that my financial portfolio was still looking rather sad.

However, the Lord had put me on a path and He wasn’t finished with me yet. I experienced extreme

financial stress during the transition of moving from one church to another in the ministry. In my travels as a seminar speaker, I noticed that many of God’s children were struggling to make ends meet and to get out of debt. Most churches labored to raise enough money to accomplish the ministry plans God had placed in their hearts. I became committed to the belief that something was wrong. This ought not to be!

Through meditation on the Scriptures, the revelation of the Spirit, and the teaching of the Word, I finally developed a theology of money which I believe is a reflection of God’s will. Our Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the gold in every mine, and He gives to His beloved in their sleep. It is He Who gives us power to get wealth that He may establish His covenant (Deut. 8:18). It is He Who teaches us to profit (Is. 48:17). It is His revealed will that His covenant people should lend to many nations and not borrow (Deut. 28:12). Why, then, were we as a family and as the body of Christ seeing and experiencing financial need? Were we out of the purposes of Almighty God?

My Purpose in Writing This Book

This book summarizes the answers I have found. God has changed much of my thinking and, as a result, my living. Through it all, He has opened the doors of financial provision and abundance in my life as well as many other people's lives. I want to share with you the things that God has revealed in my spirit, with the hope that you may receive the same revelation, and join me on a path to financial freedom.

As a teacher, I am committed to leading and mentoring you into all that God has shown me, if that is your choice. I will tell you step by step what God did with me and what you must let Him do with you, if you are to experience His covenant blessing of "lending and not borrowing" (Deut. 28:10-14).

My goal, certainly, is not personal wealth and extravagance. Being an obedient servant of the Most High God, I feel compelled to extend His kingdom into all the areas that He leads me to put my hand to, including business and finance. Yes, our income has increased. However, that is not my primary goal. My main goal is to fund ministry through business. I am looking forward to the day when I can create millions of dollars a month for Kingdom purposes. That day is on the horizon and moving closer all the time!

For Whom Am I Writing?

I am writing for you if you identify yourself as any of the following: A student or a disciple of Jesus Christ who is committed to growing into and becoming all God has destined you to be; A frustrated employee seeking a new job to increase your income; Anyone trying to discover ways to fund Kingdom projects. I am writing primarily to Christians telling of my odyssey of spiritual growth in the areas of finance and business.

1

Our Destiny Is to Be Financially Independent

BECOMING LIKE ABRAHAM, THE FATHER OF FAITH

God spoke to me in my journal one day, saying, “Mark, I want you to be like Abraham.” My immediate response was, “God, I want to be like Abraham. He was a great spiritual leader. I, too, want to be a great spiritual leader.”

The Lord responded, “Yes, and what other kind of leader was he, also?” I thought about it for awhile and then realized Abraham was also quite a wealthy businessman. So I responded, “Why, Lord, Abraham was also a great businessman.”

The Lord answered, “That is correct. Mark, I want you to be like Abraham. I want you to become a great spiritual leader and I also want you to be a leader in the area of business and finance.”

Wow! Talk about enlarging my vision! I had believed that to acquire leadership in one area would be enough. But here the Lord was asking me to become a leader in business as well as in spiritual matters. Could I be both? I had always put these two things in opposition to one another — either I would be a great spiritual leader or I would be a great business leader, but I never dreamed of becoming both.

MULTIPLYING TALENTS

Then I remembered the parable Jesus told of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). One person was given two talents; I assumed that was similar to me. I felt I had two talents: I was a pastor and a teacher. I always thought that would be enough. But the person in the parable was expected to gain two more. And now God was asking me to add business leadership to my repertoire of skills.

(Actually, the conversation did not end there. A year or two later, after I had become somewhat successful as a business leader, the Lord picked up the conversation again and said, “Mark, what other kind of leader was Abraham?” I said, “Lord, I don’t know.” He said, “Abraham was the founder of a nation. He was a political leader. Mark, I want you to also become a political leader.” I reacted negatively and said, “But, Lord, I hate politics. I have no desire to become a political leader.”

God’s response was, “Mark, whose life is this anyway, yours or Mine?” I said, “Well, Lord, philosophically it is yours, but in reality, I hate politics and I do not want to go into that area.”

His response was, “If My Church is unwilling to become involved in politics, who will be involved?”

I really did not want to hear this, because I knew He had me. Perhaps that was the reason politics had become so evil of late. The Church had decided a number of years ago to get out of politics, and now evil had taken it over. It was obvious to me that politics could never have become so dark had not the light of the world left it (Eph. 5:8,9). Rather than discipling this area, we had withdrawn from it. Rather than providing leadership, we had stood outside and criticized.

Lord, forgive me and show me the better plan You have for me and for Your Church.)

APPROPRIATING COVENANT BLESSINGS

God reminded me of the covenant blessings in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. *If we would hearken diligently unto THE VOICE OF THE LORD OUR GOD* (v. 1), He would make us the head and not the tail, we would be above and not beneath, and we would lend and not borrow. Sounds like leadership to me! Then He said, “Mark, all the promises are Yes and Amen in My Son, Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20). These blessings are for you and My Church to experience today as you become Spirit-anointed disciplers of your nation.”

Which promises are “yes and amen”? Well, they would be the Old Testament promises, since the New Testament was not yet written. So let’s take a look at just a few of these promises. One of the best listings of God’s covenant promises to us is given in Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

“Now it shall be, if you will diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and your herd and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

“The Lord will cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way and shall flee before you seven ways. The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you will keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in His ways. So all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord shall make you the head and not the tail, and you only shall be above, and you shall not be underneath, if you will listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

The covenant blessings of Deuteronomy 28 include (among others):

- being the head and not the tail;
- being above only and not beneath;
- lending and not borrowing.

If these covenant blessings are Yes and Amen in Christ Jesus, *why doesn’t the Church demonstrate them more completely in our society?* As a matter of fact, Deuteronomy 28:10 says that all the peoples of the earth shall see that we are called by the name of the Lord; and **they shall be afraid of us**. Wow! How is that for an overcoming vision of anointed leadership? Do you think this would

describe the current scenario in America? Are unbelievers afraid of the power and blessing they see flowing from the Church? Or do the heathens laugh in scorn and ridicule the Church? Do you think that the Church is demonstrating the anointed leadership and honor it is supposed to be demonstrating? If not, why not?

BLOCKS TO APPROPRIATING COVENANT BLESSINGS

God showed me several reasons why we as a Church are not demonstrating covenant blessings to the degree promised in Deuteronomy 28.

1. We removed covenant blessings from our lifetime and put them into other dispensations.

We conservatives have lost our Bible by dispensationalizing it away. Consciously or unconsciously, we have believed that the Old Testament was for the Jews, the Gospels were for Jesus' earthly lifetime, the book of Acts was transitional, and the book of Revelation was futuristic. So in reality, even though I was an evangelical, I had lost my Bible. Only the epistles related directly to me!

The liberals have lost their Bible by denying that it is the inerrant Word of God. So, in reality, it makes no difference whether you are a conservative or a liberal. Satan has successfully snatched the Bible out of the hands of the Church of Jesus Christ and convinced us we are under no obligation to become living expressions of it. Talk about crafty! And, of course, we have accepted his many wonderful, intellectual reasons that "prove" that the Bible is not for twenty-first century man. Talk about arrogance and foolishness. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" is a verse which just might apply (Rom. 1:22).

Most of my steps of spiritual growth have come when I have embraced another section of the Bible and said, "I can live this, too," and then pressed into learning how. If you have lost your Bible for any reason, I encourage you to fight to get it back.

2. We believed in a sacred/secular split.

When I accepted Christ, my church told me that if I wanted to go into "full-time Christian service," I must become a pastor, a missionary, or an evangelist. I certainly did not want to give just part-time service to Almighty God, so I became a pastor.

You see, in my church, business was not ministry. Politics, of course, was totally evil. And if you ever became involved in the entertainment industry represented by Hollywood, you would go straight to hell (without passing Go or collecting \$200)!

3. We withdrew from the secular (entertainment, politics, business, education, healthcare, etc.).

We believed that good Christians separated themselves from all secular areas. So, we did. We withdrew from most areas of life, and relocated and redefined ministry to the activities which took place within the four walls of our church building on Sunday morning. On Monday, we just went to work. Of course, work was not ministry; it was secular. It was unfortunate that we had to do it. But, since we needed to earn a living in this evil and sinful world, we ventured into it during the week, but took refuge in the church on Sunday where we would declare the beauty of the age to come when we would walk on streets of gold and live in mansions which our heavenly Father had prepared for us.

4. We gave the secular over to evil.

As we withdrew from area after area of this world, we gave them over to the evil one. We were just glad to get out alive! And we declared that these secular areas were Satan's. Politics was evil. Hollywood was demonic. Business was corrupt. Come! Let us gather in our church building and find solace there, worshipping God.

5. We interpreted the Bible in such a way as to promote fear and gloom and escapism.

Of course, since the Church was retreating, evil was advancing upon the scene. As we extinguished the light, darkness rushed in. (What a surprise!) So, we

began to search for verses in the Bible which would justify what we were seeing. Could we discover verses which said that darkness was going to increase and become strong? Of course, we could. There is enough tension in Scripture that if you know it well, you can find a verse to back up just about anything. If you recall, satan even used Scripture to tempt Jesus to do things which were not right. So, I need to be very careful how I interpret and use the Scripture. I can find verses which indicate that satan's kingdom will increase at the end of the age. I can also find verses which indicate that God's kingdom will increase at the end of this age. I wonder how they can be reconciled? Later in this chapter I will tell you how I do.

6. We prophesied gloom and doom and waited for the takeover of the enemy.

Now that the Church, the light of the world, had withdrawn from the world and cloistered herself within the four walls of the church building, she began to prophesy darkness over the areas from which she had withdrawn. And guess what! Those areas became dark and evil! Now, whose fault do you suppose that was? May I suggest it was our fault? If we had not withdrawn God's powerful light through us from these areas, they would never have had the opportunity to become dark (Matt. 5:14-16). What would have happened if we had seen these areas as ministry and stayed in them and become Holy Spirit-anointed leaders in them? Would they have been able to become dark?

7. We accepted a vision of ourselves as the underdog, and ran and hid.

How's that for an overcoming worldview of aggressive discipling? Now, instead of leading and not following, being above and not beneath, lending and not borrowing, we see ourselves as those who are ravaged by the forces of the mighty evil one. "Oh, poor us! Please come back and save us, dear Lord!"

Now hold it! I thought Jesus already did come and did destroy the power of satan by His death on the cross. I thought that, as it was prophesied, He

crushed the serpent's head. I thought Jesus *won* at Calvary, and from that point on empowered His Church to carry forth that victory through the same power which He Himself manifested, the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:12). Now that the Spirit has been given, we are to do the works of Jesus and finish the mop-up operations by discipling the nations through the power of Almighty God (Matt. 28:18-20).

Talk about confusion in the body of Christ! We really should see if we can figure out who is on top here. Is it God or satan? Righteousness or evil? Light or darkness? The answer we give to these questions greatly determines the way we live our lives. If I have a picture in my mind and a belief system in my heart that satan and evil rule, then fear and flight fill my heart. However, if I have a picture in my mind and a belief system in my heart that God and righteousness rule, then I aggressively push forward until I have accomplished the commission God gave me: to disciple the nations. What is your picture and belief system? What does the Bible say (Dan. 4:17)?

HOW GOD IS REMOVING THESE BLOCKS SO WE CAN ONCE AGAIN EXPERIENCE COVENANT BLESSINGS

God then showed me seven things He is currently doing to remove these blocks and release His Church into all the arenas He has prepared for them to disciple and occupy until He comes.

1. God is pouring forth His Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:17).

We have had four amazing outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in this century. The first was the Azusa Street revival in 1902, out of which Pentecostalism was born. The second wave of the Holy Spirit was in the 1960's when the Charismatic movement was birthed. The third was in 1985 and has been called simply "The Third Wave." According to C. Peter Wagner, about one-quarter billion people were swept into Pentecostalism, about one-quarter billion into the Charismatic movement, and about one-half billion into the Third Wave. Altogether, about 1.2 billion believers have received a new sensitivity to the Holy Spirit this century.

When God sweeps such a huge proportion of His Church into a new thing, would you call that a reformation? I would. The Reformation in the 1500's had for a motto, "Solo Scripture." I would suggest that the one in the 1900's has as its motto, "Spirit Encounter."

We experienced another outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early 1990's as the laughing revival which broke out world-wide. For example, Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship increased in size ten-fold in only twelve months, going from about 250 parishioners to 2500! Isn't revival amazing!

Since God has brought so many of His Church in this century to a new awareness and intimacy with the power of His Holy Spirit, wouldn't you expect the next century to be different? Wouldn't you expect the power and anointing of God to be released through the Church in amazing and wonderful ways? Once again we would become a "Joshua generation," taking back the land which has been stolen by the evil one. Wouldn't you expect the most incredible outbreak of God upon this planet that we have yet seen? Perhaps the best time is still ahead!

God can sweep away all the negative statistics in a nation by simply giving that nation revival. He has done so many times in the past. Why shouldn't we believe He will continue to do it until He has accomplished His goal of discipling the nations?

2. God is teaching His Church that all is sacred; there is no secular.

The Bible is clear to proclaim that "the Earth is the Lord's and ALL it contains" (Ps. 24:1).

The Scriptures declare that God owns all the cattle on every hill (Ps. 50:10) and all the silver in every mine (Hag. 2:8). I suppose that would mean that God is involved in business!

God also considers Himself to be "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). I think that would make God politically active! I wonder what God is doing in those areas? Doesn't He realize they are secular?

No! He is the One Who rules OVER ALL. We must NOT segregate His rulership into compartments. IT IS OVER ALL. He Is Lord of ALL.

Understandably, God has commanded His children to keep themselves clean and unspotted from the world (i.e., "the world system," a system full of evil and disobedience). We are to come out of this evil system so that we can get this world system out of our hearts, and replace it with the rule and reign of God. Once that is done, we then *turn around and go back into society*, taking with us the rule and reign and anointing of God. God's purposes pour out through our hearts and lives, and transform society with the power and purity and purposes of God. As Jesus Himself put it:

*I pray **not** that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst **keep them from the evil**. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth**. As thou hast sent me into the world, **even so have I also sent them into the world** (Jn. 17:15-18).*

So we have a three-step process: 1) We come apart from the world system, its values, philosophy, and gods; 2) We receive God's Kingdom values and power within our hearts; and then 3) We re-enter society, displaying the power and values of God's Kingdom through our lives, transforming the society.

3. God is restoring communion, intimacy, and His voice to His Church. "My sheep hear My voice" (Jn. 10:27).

After ten years as a Christian who was not able to hear God's voice, God led me to set aside a year to learn nothing but how to hear His voice. During that year, He taught me four simple keys that release His voice within my heart. And it is more than a voice. It is a heavenly Father Who loves me more than I had ever imagined, and radically alters the way I live. (See Appendix A for the Four Keys to Hearing God's Voice.) Worldwide, God is teaching His Church to hear His voice. It is a marvelous time in which to live. The world of

tomorrow will be radically transformed through intimacy with the Spirit of Almighty God.

4. God is asking us to multiply talents under His leading and direction.

This will make us multi-gifted individuals who are able to rise to the top under God's anointing (Matt. 25:14-30).

In the parable of the talents, the point expressed is that God expects us to take our two talents and make them four, our five and make them ten. He is calling us, not to settle down and get comfortable, but to keep stretching and growing and reaching forward into all that He has for us. He is not expecting us to say, "Oh, that is not my gift." He is expecting us to MULTIPLY GIFTEDNESS as we walk through life.

Many of us shy away from multiple giftings because it takes a fair amount of work to master new areas. There are learning curves, mistakes, setbacks, losses, failures, and frustration as we try to master new abilities. Peter obeyed God's voice to walk on the water, and he sank. I followed God's voice into investing in the markets and lost \$10,000. I came away frustrated, but God said, "Mark, I have ordained your losses. I am watching over your life to make sure it is just right. I don't want you to get rich quickly because you would then teach this as a get-rich-quick scheme. So, I have ordained your losses. However, as you press on you will release large sums of money through investing, with which you may fund ministry. Watch and see the glory of the Lord. Watch, I say, and see the glory of the Lord. Watch, I say, and see."

Well, that was fine and good, but I still had a picture in my mind of losing \$10,000, plus the \$5,000 I had invested in research during my two-year study.

God said, "Mark, look at it this way. If you had spent the last two years at Oral Roberts University, it would have cost you \$24,000. You just received a two-year education for only \$15,000. So it was a cut-rate education!"

How is that for a new picture which ministers life and not death? Finally, I was at peace and I was once again able to give thanks for everything (Eph. 5:20).

5. God is asking each of us to reach out and become a servant leader. "Through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

"...If you will be a servant to this people today, will serve them, grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever" (1 Kings 12:7).

"Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3).

It had never crossed my mind to be a leader. I was busy trying to be a servant. As a matter of fact, I even believed that to reach out to become a leader was somehow connected to pride.

However, God was showing me that I would never fulfill His plan for my life if I didn't receive His vision for me of leading, lending, and being above and not underneath. In addition, I would need to be willing to allow God to stretch me. I must follow as He led me into new areas. If I didn't get out of the boat and try new things, I would never gain new skills.

Additionally, as I led, I would do so as a servant to those for whom I was responsible. I would give my life to seeing that the gifts and callings of God were realized and released in their lives. That is my responsibility as a leader.

6. God is asking us to not focus on the works of satan.

Ephesians 4:29 exhorts us to speak only words edifying for the need of the moment. So, perhaps, I should stop quoting satan's statistics of destruction in the various forms of crime, rape, murder, AIDS, abortion, etc. Perhaps, it is all right to be aware of them, but it is best not to focus on them. Whatever we focus on, we give attention to, and whatever we

give attention to, enlarges in our consciousness. If I don't want to be ensnared in satan's kingdom of doubt, despair, unfruitfulness, and fear, perhaps I should obey principle number seven.

7. God is asking us to glorify His works.

Philippians 4:8 tells us to dwell on those things which are lovely, just, pure, and of good report. If I meditate on these things, I become extremely positive and creative. I live in faith and power and peace. I experience the Kingdom of God within my soul. And life is once again fulfilling.

(You may order a cassette of the author preaching through the above from the order form in the back of this book.)

THE CHURCH'S COMMISSION: TO DISCIPLE NATIONS

God's vision is clear. He has raised us (the Church) up with Jesus and seated us with Him in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come (Eph. 1:20,21; 2:6). We are to rule and reign with Him! We are to disciple all nations (Matt. 28:19). Wow!

Can you imagine that? That is a much loftier goal than I ever dreamed of. I was just hoping to pay my bills, hold my family together, and make it through life in one piece. It surely is beyond **my** abilities to live on the level God is describing in those verses. In and of myself I don't have the "smarts."

THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

But that is exactly the point. God never intended that I could or would reach this position in my own strength, but only through the energizing, in-working power of His Holy Spirit. As I learn to live out of the anointing of the Holy Spirit and not depend on my own abilities, His anointing will make me an outstanding leader!

So, I have received a greatly-enhanced view of where I am going in life. I am ruling and reigning with God in heavenly places, and I am allowing the anointing of the Holy Spirit to flow through me. As

a result, I am being made an effective leader in my society, in one or more areas, and through my godly influence, those areas are coming under the discipline of God. Talk about having big dreams!

BECOMING LIKE THE PASTORS WHO FOUNDED OUR NATION

When God told me that He wanted me to be like Abraham - a spiritual leader, a business leader, and a political leader - my response was, "Lord, You stretch my arms so much longer than they have ever been stretched before."

Even as I spoke I remembered that the early pastors in the United States were also the legislators and circuit judges. Our Constitution was written under the strong influence of various pastors and theologians. It was the churches that led in education and founded Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. John Wesley started many hospitals and did experiments with electricity. Spiritual leaders have led in many areas in the past. Today it is our turn to do the same.

May God stretch you as He has stretched me.

THE INCREASE OF *WHOSE* GOVERNMENT? CLARIFYING MY WORLDVIEW

My attitude concerning the end-times is somewhat dependent on the worldview I hold. Let me present two contrasting views, both of which I have held in my life.

I can find verses in the Bible which appear to say that the power of satan increases at the end of the age, and verses which indicate that God, through His Church, disciplines the world. For example, Jesus taught that wide is the way that leads to destruction and many there be that find it, and narrow the way that leads to life and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13,14). That sounds like satan gets most of humanity to go his way. On the other hand, what kind of a win is it for the King of Kings if old slewfoot can sneer in Jesus' face at the end of the age, "I have most of them with me to suffer for all eternity. You only got a few." Does that sound to you like a win for Jesus? It doesn't to me.

So I went back to examine the context of the verse. Jesus was talking about those who try to take a speck out of others' eyes while having a moat in

their own. Perhaps what was being said here is that few *Pharisees* find the straight and narrow way. Jesus then went on to discuss false prophets with bad fruit. Perhaps in context, the verse means something different altogether.

You see, there are other verses which stand in stark contrast to the belief that satan's kingdom will continue to grow. For example, "...of the increase of His government THERE SHALL BE NO END" (Is. 9:6,7). Now whose government are we talking about? Satan's or God's? God's! So, if God's government is going to increase without end, guess whose government is going to decrease without end? Satan's! And that really excites me! That is a much more positive worldview.

HANDLING VERSES WHICH APPEAR TO CONTRADICT EACH OTHER

When I have verses which appear to be contradictory, I check a few other pillars which I use for discovering truth. (See Appendix B for an expansion of this concept.)

One pillar is my heart. What does it feel — peace or unrest (Is. 57:19-21; Col. 3:15)? Does it feel more peaceful believing for the takeover of this world by satan or the discipling of it by God through His Holy Spirit-empowered Church? My heart votes for the latter.

Another pillar I use is the counsel of others (Prov. 11:14). I check with other spiritual leaders. Does a portion of the Church hold the worldview that the Church disciples the planet? Yes, it has historically, and it still does today.

Another pillar I use is illumined thoughts. What can my mind discover under the anointing of the Holy Spirit? George Barrett, PhD, author of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, helped me out here. His statistics on Church growth are as follows:
 In 100 AD, there was one Christian for every 360 non-Christians;
 By 1900 AD, there was one Christian for every 27 non-Christians;
 By 1989, there was one Christian for every 7 non-Christians; and

By the year 2000, it was expected that there would be one Christian for every three non-Christians. (See Appendix C for greater detail.)

Two thousand years of statistics bear out the truth that of the increase of *His* government there will be no end. That is enough confirmation for me. I adopt the worldview that God disciplines His world through His Spirit-anointed Church. I choose to be on that team and do all in my power to extend the manifest presence of the Kingdom of God in our midst.

HOW WEALTHY IS JESUS?

For 33 years Jesus temporarily laid aside His wealth for us: "...though He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). His wealth is now completely restored to Him as He rules with His Father in heaven.

It was interesting for me to note that there are four times as many verses in the Bible about money than there are about either prayer or faith. Maybe rather than avoiding the topic of money, I should plunge in and grapple with it in a spiritually mature way.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Dialogue With God by Mark & Patti Virkler

Communion With God by Mark & Patti Virkler

Power to Get Wealth by Luther Blackwell

Appropriating Covenant Blessings cassette by Mark Virkler

Paradise Restored by David Chilton

THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your view of money? Is it evil, secular, spiritual? Where did you get your idea of money?
2. Do you believe God wants His Church to "lend and not borrow, lead and not follow"? Do you feel we are doing this? If not, why not? How would you have to change to begin fulfilling these goals in your own life? What is God saying to you about this? What are you planning to do?

3. Do you believe it is acceptable for people to be like Abraham: to be great spiritual leaders, great business leaders, and great political leaders? Would you consider God a great Leader in all three of these areas? If it is acceptable for God to lead in these three areas, do you believe it is also acceptable for the Church to follow in His footsteps? How would the Church and the world be different if the Church caught this vision and pressed into it through the energizing power of the Holy Spirit?
4. Who do you think was responsible for getting the Church to step out of many areas of this world, rather than putting their light on a hill and lighting the city in which they lived? Does God actually plan on His Church discipling this world through the energizing power of His Holy Spirit, or was God giving us a commission which we were not going to be able to fulfill? If we believe for the discipling of the earth, get a vision for it, and begin acting and praying toward it, could these activities help precipitate the fulfillment of the Great Commission? If we believe for the devil to take over this world, and we get a vision for that and begin acting and confessing that, could these activities help precipitate the discipling of this world for satan? Which vision would you rather believe for and work for?

