

Outlet

“You are the light of the world,” Jesus said.’

(Matthew 5:14)

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Cover photo by Jack Walker: @jack.dw

I dedicate this book to you, the reader. Thank you for allowing me to share what is on my heart. I pray the Holy Spirit opens up his channels of living water to you, through you, and unveils to you his world of purpose and reach in Jesus Christ.

Introduction

As a follower of Jesus Christ I have often misunderstood the call to share Jesus with others. I have allowed it to be a 'pressure', and not an 'outlet'. It has often been something in my heart and mind that I feel I 'must' do, or even feel guilty about.

The enemy – Satan – can knock us off balance quite easily in our call, our mission, to share the gospel of Jesus. You see, the gospel – Jesus himself – is a Spirit truth. It is not an equation, a box to check, a campaign to run, a message to rattle off. The gospel *is* God. First he becomes our life, then he becomes our life's mission – a spilling over from the inside out.

I hope this book is an inspiration, not an 'admonition'. Yes, there is a call to some action in our lives as disciples of Jesus, to make him known. But there is a Spirit through whom we live that call, and a Spirit by whom we act. In this Spirit, there is freedom, there is reach and fruit.¹

¹ John 5:19; 2 Corinthians 3:17

Outside of this Spirit, there is labor, guilt and legalism. Let's reach for the freedom, the peace, the inspiration that God makes available to us in our call – and our desire – to make Jesus known.

'The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.' (Matthew 13:44)

Fisher of Men

'There must be more.' Ever 'felt' or whispered this? Maybe in question form? ***'Is there nothing more to life than this?'***

There's a *'life motor'* in life itself, that carries us all for a while. Like, just the pursuit of eating, drinking, growing, beauty, romance, family... The next 'natural' stage or chapter can give us a 'reason', a goal, for a while. But after a while...

You see, the same way God has gifted us with a 'life motor', so to speak, to just do life and accomplish all that it demands, and enjoy its rewards, God has also put in us a purpose, a calling, a cry, to know him.

'From one man he made all the nations... God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him.' (Acts 17:26-27)

Now, after seeing Jesus, and coming to him in repentance and faith, we step into

a new reality. He said we would.¹ Our own lives here and now have the Spirit of God, providing, protecting, leading, comforting. But we also find ourselves in the *eternal* space and mission of God himself. He also has a 'life', a purpose, here in the earth, and has now called us to serve in this, advance his kingdom.

For some, this might be a refreshing realization, that there truly is another 'mission' to live for, other than just our own lives, relationships, needs and wants. For others of us, this might 'wound' us a little, because we are quite happy to spend our lives on ourselves. And the idea of another 'call', a purpose beyond us – higher, deeper, truer, other – well, this is challenging.

My friends, one sobering fact about knowing Jesus and following Jesus, is that we can – if we choose - park our spiritual life right there and go no further. We can come to know him, but invest nothing in following him. The good news is that if we do live like this, well, we will

¹ John 10:9; Colossians 3:3; Philippians 3:20

still be 'saved', and go to heaven, because indeed we believed in Jesus Christ sincerely. But the bad news is that we will truly suffer loss in the 'reward' we might have had when we do meet the Lord. Look at this incredible passage in Scripture:

'Each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved — even though only as one escaping through the flames.' (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

You see, the gospel of Jesus – the presence of God with us – is a river that flows. And in some of our lives God is calling for us to allow this river 'out', to

flow to other people and other spaces. God came in, and God wants 'out', so to speak. Jesus himself said:

'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father — he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.'

(John 15:26-27)

Now, I'm talking about 'outlet', not pressure. There is a difference – the former is in the Spirit and freedom and lead of God, the latter is of the flesh, of the enemy, compelled by guilt, fear and lacks joy. ***So how do we access the 'outlet' of God in sharing God, and not get caught in the web of pressure and fear?***

My friends, this space of 'outlet' is a quiet and a safe place; it is not a noisy and hyped-up effort. It is getting lower, not higher. It is resting, not standing. It is a quiet step through the door of Jesus Christ, and a humble, true acceptance of his bigger mission that we are a part of: *to*

fish men.

‘Jesus saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, casting their nets into the water. Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’
(Matthew 4:18-19)

Jesus used their own career as an example of how they might work for higher purpose. They worked for food, but Jesus was calling them to work for souls. They worked for provision in this life, but Jesus called them to invest in the next life. This is the same call to you and me. We have believed on Jesus for our salvation, and Jesus calls us to live for the higher goal now of winning others for salvation.

We can talk about ‘how’ all day long, and the different gifts God has given us in this mission. But really, first and foremost, we need to step into this reality, the reality of the kingdom of God, and his global mission. Once we embrace – or allow ourselves to be embraced by – God’s heart for all people to know and receive Jesus Christ, the rest is ‘outworking’, or

even 'outlet'.

Have you captured the vision? Have you lifted your eyes above your earthly 'fishing', your earthly career and commitments, to the higher mission of God, to advance his kingdom?

I would encourage you today to take some time, just 5 or 10 minutes somewhere alone, to sit, close your eyes, and ask God to lift your eyes.

'Jesus said, 'I tell you, lift your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life...' (John 4:35-36)

Part to Play

I struggle sometimes by areas of the world where I personally cannot see the work of God, the gospel of Christ, reaching people. Or I get overwhelmed when I see good work in a city or town being hampered by false teaching or cults. It feels messy to me, like everywhere I see true advance of the kingdom of God, then I start to see leaks, or find out some good work was messed up by some corruption on the inside, a pastor who cheated on his wife, or cheated his congregation, etc.

‘There were false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has

not been sleeping.' (2 Peter 2:1-3)

I don't mean to be heavy here. Truly! I share this struggle because I believe it is a common experience of spiritual discouragement that creeps in on many. For this reason Paul writes:

'Do not grow weary of doing good...'
(Galatians 6:9)

Even Jesus spoke a word of encouragement, admonishment, to John the Baptist, as he began to lose heart and wondered if his own ministry and work really had made any difference. Jesus sent word to encourage him, and added:

'Blessed is he who does not take offense on account of me.' (Matthew 11:6)

Don't lose heart! We do not see the full picture here. God's 'story' and history here on earth, does not 'stack' like our little accomplishments. His view and inheritance and kingdom are eternal, and they are ***'spirit and life'***¹, they are not

¹ John 6:63

‘bricks and mortar’. So we may see a building crumble and fall, or some people’s faith crumble and fail, but the truth – the work and ground taken – was never in vain.

We are told by Paul that our work will be shown for what it is on the final day, judgment day. (1 Corinthians 3:13) prior to that, just trust and believe that every step you take in faith, is sure, is true, bears fruit, and **‘will not come back empty.’** (Isaiah 55:11) Jesus himself spoke this encouragement to us, saying that even a cup of cold water given to someone in need, in Jesus’ name, will be rewarded. (Matthew 10:40)

Don’t worry about how things look on the outside. Don’t worry about the ‘view’ or the panorama of how the world looks to you. The ‘takeover’ of Jesus Christ is certain, is advancing, is relentless:

Jesus said, **‘On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.’** (Matthew 16:18)

Jesus also said, after rising from the

dead, ***'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'*** (Matthew 28:18)

Of the 'battle' here on earth, Jesus said, ***'The prince of this world stands defeated!'*** (John 16:11)

The war is over, the war is won. So don't be disheartened by bleak views of the spiritual fabric of this world. Eyes on the Lord, and keep sowing, keep reaping, the gospel of Jesus Christ as you walk forward each day.

So if I cannot see the 'full' picture, what *do* I see, what *can* I see? Well, I can see what the Lord shows *me*, and play the part he gives *me*. Even the prophets were given particular vision and scope for their 'call', for their role.

***'The word of the Lord came to me:
"What do you see, Jeremiah?"
"I see the branch of an almond tree," I
replied.
The Lord said to me, "You have seen
correctly, for I am watching to see that
my word is fulfilled."*** (Jeremiah 1:11-12)

When I know that the Lord has the victory, I can be at peace to settle into my part. I don't have to see the full picture, just the vision and scope he gives me. This always starts in our heart of hearts, between just us and the Lord. Our quiet time with him, our 'unseen' prayers and relationship with Jesus. He told us that our Father in heaven who is unseen, sees what we do in secret and will reward us.¹ God is about the heart, and the only life and spiritual work that he values, is that which flows out of a heart of faith and surrender. No work or religious activity is of value in itself. Only that which flows out of a heart of faith and love of the Lord Jesus.

'Above all else guard your heart, for from it flows the wellspring of life.'
(Proverbs 14:23)

'What is the most important command?' he asked. Jesus answered, 'Love the Lord your God will all your heart...' (Matthew 22:36-40)

¹ Matthew 6:4,6,18

So we come into the courts of God, through Jesus Christ, alone and in 'secret'. This honest space of repentance and faith, is our true relationship with the Father. And from here we look. We lift our eyes.

What do *you* see? This is *your* vision, your call, your scope.

Do you see a need for moral courage in school, in work? Do you see a need, a call to resist immorality, and stand in the gap of where people are being immoral? Do you see orphans, widows, that need help, need prayer, need the Word of the Lord? Do you see the poor, that need to hear and 'feel' the gospel of Jesus Christ, which he himself said was '*good news to the poor*'?¹ Do you see a need in your faith community for service, to set out chairs, to make repairs, to encourage, carry, build, pray, teach? What do *you* see?

'I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand

¹ Luke 4:18

***before me in the gap on behalf of the
land...'*** (Ezekiel 22:30)

'Do not go straight up.'

There's an amazing story in the Bible about king David attacking the Philistines. Now, David had already had a victory against them, but he did not rely on past victories for a present challenge. When the Philistines came up against him again, again David inquired of the Lord for guidance. A new battle, a new day – new guidance needed. And it was good that he did, because God led him differently this time:

“Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the poplar trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.” So David did as the Lord commanded him, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.’ (2 Samuel 5:23-25)

I want to relate this to 'outlet', to our ministering Jesus to others. I personally have been discouraged at times, when I

meet with someone in my life 'lane', like in work, who is opposed to Christianity. They are hardened, and have a coldness towards me because of the Spirit of Jesus in me. I feel the wall. I feel the block. It can dishearten me. Have you ever encountered this?

However, I've come to learn, and even experience, that not all is lost here, and I should not give up hope, for a few reasons. One is this: I'm not the only person or witness that can reach this person. There may be others in their life that are praying, and will have opportunity to share, to break down barriers. Not to mention the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself said the Holy Spirit would testify to him, and also convict the world of sin – of their need for salvation. (John 15:26; John 16:8)

Recently I picked up hitchhiker. I was driving the way he was going, and I felt led to pick him up. After chatting I realized that although he was heading to the town up ahead, he had no place to stay there. He said he was hoping to find a motel, or something. I knew there were no motels

in this little town. My heart and mind scanned for the Lord's wisdom, his leading. My thoughts went to the parable of the *'Good Samaritan'*.¹ The good Samaritan took the man he was helping to an Inn, or a motel, and paid for him to stay for a couple nights. So that's what I felt I should do. First we pulled over to a fast-food restaurant to get something to eat, and there I looked up on my phone for nearby motels. Another 30 minutes or so down the road there was one, and I said I would take him there and pay for him to stay a couple nights. He was deeply grateful.

So as we drove, we began to chat. It turned out that that he had some Christians in his family, but he said that he had doubted, and turned away from the faith. But as he ate the food, and considered the provision of the motel, he seemed to open up. He knew from our talk that my heart, my reach to him in this moment, and my gifts to him, were because of my faith in Jesus. In a sense Jesus was providing him this 'rest',

¹ Luke 10:25-37

through me. After I had checked him in, and we were saying goodbye, I asked if I could pray with him. He agreed to this. We prayed together, hugged, and he said to me that he would see if the motel room had a Bible, and maybe try to start reading the gospel of Matthew again. That's the last I saw of him.

I share this story because it was a personal experience of being part of a '*backdoor*' opportunity with someone who had closed the front door, so to speak. He had shut the front door in the face of family and loved ones that shared Jesus with him. But Jesus brought someone else in the back door, in his time of need, which opened something in his heart to Jesus afresh. If you encounter a closed door, a wall, don't give up praying, believing, hoping and even smiling. Jesus can reach this person through another person, through a different set of circumstances.

Let me share yet another story. Once I had worked in an organization for a couple years. My career took me out of that job for about 8 years. Then I came

back to it. A past colleague was now my supervisor. On one of the very first days back to this organization, this supervisor shared with me of her experience coming to know Jesus since I had been gone. She mentioned how a lady who had taken care of her kids, took her kids to a 'Vacation Bible School' (VBS) in the summer – a 4-day program for kids at the local church. Her kids had so enjoyed VBS that they asked to go back to the church. So my supervisor reluctantly took her kids back to church, to visit. Planning to just drop them off, she was invited in to stay for service. She did. The rest is history. And it is an amazing history. And she has been hands-down the best supervisor I have ever had, a protection on me in my job both spiritually and occupationally. Honestly, since this experience of mine, I have had a heart for reaching 'employers' and bosses with the gospel, just knowing how they can change the life of other believers who work under them. I had not reached this colleague with the gospel. To me there was no avenue, no open door. But as Paul writes, **'The word of God is not chained.'** (2 Timothy 2:9) Another set of

believers had been used to reach this person in my path, and they had circled around by another avenue, in this case first reaching the hearts of this person's children.

Sometimes you will be the person who hits the wall, encounters the cold front, and here you will need to hold faith, and trust that there are other people with other access points to this fortress. At other times you will be the person who does '*circle around behind*', so to speak, and actually accesses a person at a certain moment, when that they are open to the Lord. Here you may be answering the direct prayers of others.

Two points to close this section. First, don't take it all on your own shoulders. If you encounter a wall to the Word of Jesus, even the Spirit of Jesus, just keep living your faith, being kind, being light, and trust the Lord to use another to share the gospel. Secondly, be a '*backdoor warrior*' for others. Ask the Lord to use you to sow seeds of faith, of the Word of Christ, of his Spirit, to further the work and the cause of others. Your faith and

kindness might access, for example, the heart and mind of an otherwise cold and oppressive employer. He or she might cross your faith action, your witness – in word or deed – and this might break open a window in their soul to Jesus, that others have not been able to do.

Let's all take heart when we hit a wall, and let's all be open to take down walls for others.

Your Path

In this brief section I want to encourage you in 'your path'. What's *your* path? Where do you 'work out' (or '*let out*') your giftings, your kingdom work? I want to note two key things on this:

1. Be You!

This is not the same as the world's proclamation to be yourself. Often when we hear this in society – '*Just be yourself!*' – there is an emphasis on doing what you want, often immoral, and not letting any rule or even prick of the conscience stop you. We don't mean that here!

When I say '*Be You!*', I am speaking of the clear identity that Jesus himself speaks over you, to you. He did this often, giving new names or titles, and giving new definitions of character. To Nathanael he told him that he was a man '*in whom there was nothing false.*' Jesus was lifting his chin, commending his integrity, and breathing a confidence in him to trust his judgement on matters of

truth and falsehood. He called Peter a 'rock', and called John and James '*Boanerges*', or '*Sons of Thunder*' (sounds like a motorcycle gang!).¹

There are things you 'see' in your spirit, like areas of need, and truths of God. Not everyone might see or feel these needs, but you do. They burden *your* heart. Maybe orphans or widows, or immorality or poverty... A particular area of need for the gospel of Jesus Christ, his power and presence, might weigh on you. Now, other Christians will 'see' it, and agree with this, but maybe not 'feel' it like you do. They might have other areas of focus.

So when I say, '*Be You!*', I'm talking about allowing yourself to settle into the true person God has made you, with the true heart and focus that you have. This is key to knowing your 'station' or your 'door post' that you are called to 'work'. We are all different parts of one body, and the kingdom of God has soldiers specially equipped for different areas of the 'advance'.

¹ Mark 3:17; Matthew 16:18; John 1:47

‘There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.’

(1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

What is your burden? Your ‘gift’ – your equipping – is related to this burden. Be confident, now, in what you feel needs doing, and how you feel it needs doing.

2. Your Path

I often think about how God, after he had called Jeremiah to be a prophet, a voice, he ‘calibrated’ his hearing, his seeing.

‘The word of the LORD came to me:

“What do you see, Jeremiah?”

“I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.

The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.” (Jeremiah 1:11-12)

First, it is interesting to me that this ‘vision’ of Jeremiah did not really have a

purpose, other than between him and God. The almond tree did not seem to have meaning, so to speak. I personally at times have caught an insight into something and someone, and felt the Lord affirm to me that I had indeed ‘seen correctly’, but it was not something he was calling me to share or say.

Secondly, God showed Jeremiah particular things, and gave Jeremiah particular things *to do*. Jeremiah did not seem to have a vague or incoherent ministry, that he just cut and paste here and there. No, he had a Spirit-leading in what he did, and acted intentionally according to God’s equipping and God’s lead. ***‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’***

And so I ask you now, ***‘What do you see?’***

Let me finish this section noting how Jesus also followed *his* path. Although Jesus had a broad vision, a global calling, he still took step by step, day by day. He said that he only did and said what he saw the Father do and say. (John 5:19) This is a really important Scripture and

'model' to us, as we seek to follow God's lead in our own path and calling.

Jesus did not heal everybody he encountered. He healed this person or that person. And it is in this context that he said he followed the Father's lead in the steps he took. (read John 5, and note verse 19)

And so it is with you, with me. God equips us, releases us, and then as we look ahead, down the path in front of us, Jesus will help us connect with this person, cross paths with that person, think this, feel that... your path! No one else is on the same path as you. They may be involved in the same ministry, same church, same project, but your steps in faith, in gifting, in 'moments', in meaning, are just yours, and Christ leads.

Noah's Ark

The story of Noah's Ark can be found in Genesis 6-8.

God was upset at the sexual immorality of people, particularly men thinking they could '*marry*' (or 'sleep with') anyone they wanted. (Genesis 6:2-3) God calls on Noah – a man who was righteous in God's sight – to build a big boat, and then when the flood came to save himself, his family, and species of animals.

It would seem it took Noah about 60-70 years to build the Ark, piecing together some references of his age when he had children, the fact that his sons had wives by the time God was asking him to do this, and the age he was when it happened. (Genesis 5:32; 6:18; 7:6) Not to mention the sheer size of the project!

In this final section I want to encourage you about one key aspect of your work for the Lord, and it is this: Every detail will one day be seen and noted for its worth.

‘Those who sow in tears, will reap with songs of joy!’ (Psalm 126:5)

‘Your Father who is unseen, sees what is done in secret and will reward you.’
(Matthew 6:18)

‘Jesus said, ‘If anyone gives even a cold cup of water to one of these little ones... that person will certainly not lose their reward.’ (Matthew 10:42)

I’m sure that many a day when Noah had finished his work on the Ark, there was a sense that his work was irrelevant to ‘real life’, that the pressing needs of the family and the world around him, were more important and needed his attention.

On a hot, heavy day, he may have labored for many hours and crossed some milestone of the project, such as fixed on a roof or a side door, or waterproofed the base; and yet coming home, or to the market, his work would seem as something he could not even mention, as it was of another kingdom, another reality. I’m sure he often felt lonely, unappreciated, misunderstood.

But 60-70 years later when, on one specific day, ***‘the springs of the great deep burst forth and the floodgates of heaven opened’*** – well, on that day every detail of his work became completely meaningful, fully seen, fully appreciated. Truly, it was *only* the work of Noah, his every detail, that remained on the face of the earth. All other ‘work’ by all other people – *buildings, businesses, networks, investments* – came to nothing. So what seemed irrelevant, insignificant, in the life and efforts of a man of faith over many years, came to actually be the only work that was relevant, was significant, in the lasting history of the world.

My friends, the detail of your work in Jesus’ name – *sincere faith, kind words, controlled thoughts, testimony and love of God, love of your neighbor* – every detail is seed sown that will grow fully.

‘Jesus said, ‘This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know

how. All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:26-29)

I conclude with this: The offer of Christ to be *‘fishers of men’*, is an incredible opportunity for *‘mission’*, for purpose, for investment, for reward. It is not to be understood as *‘pressure’*; it is opportunity.

Jesus calls us to follow him, to let go and rest in him. This is the place of *‘outlet’*. This is where his living water actually reaches us, and flows from us. It is a place of letting go, and truly identifying with Jesus. Here - broken, free and *‘acknowledging’* that we are Christians - waters can flow from us, they can be set forth, *‘let out’*. It’s about identifying fully, quietly, with Jesus.

‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who

loved me and gave himself for me.'
(Galatians 2:20)

It's about believing, receiving, living your *other* life – the one that we are told is 'truly' life:

'.... life that is truly life.'
(1 Timothy 6:19)

When we choose to follow Jesus – not just believe in Jesus – we walk, we move, in his reach for others.

One of the best ways to advance the kingdom of God – and I leave you with this – is to pray for someone. Do you now think of a neighbor, a friend, a family member, who does not believe in Jesus?

Sit quietly for a minute, as you finish this book, and pray specifically, personally for them. What would *you* love to see happen in their heart, their mind, in order to see and believe in Jesus? Do they need to feel some conviction for sin in their life? You can ask Jesus to touch their heart, their conscience, with conviction of sin that will lead them to the

cross.¹ Do they need to see the limitations in their own belief system, see that there is more, that God must exist?² You can pray that the Lord opens their eyes to spirit truths that they see but cannot explain. As you pray for this person in faith, you release the reach and advance of God in their life.³

‘Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine and go after the lost sheep?’ (Luke 15:4)

‘Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.’
(1 Corinthians 15:58)

¹ 2 Corinthians 7:10; John 20:23; Matthew 16:19

² Matthew 13:13-16; 1 Corinthians 2:13-14

³ Hebrews 11:6; John 16:24

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