

# Understand the Kingdom of Heaven in a Way You Never Dreamed

Bible scholar N.T Wright says many of today's believers misunderstand Jesus when he speaks about inheriting the kingdom of heaven in the Gospels. Wright wants to set the record straight from a first-century point of view.

"In the modern world, many people think that when Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven, it is a simple way of going to heaven when you die. It really isn't," Wright told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of *Greenelines* on the Charisma Podcast Network. "That's not what the phrase meant at the time or what it means in the Bible.

"Other people have thought that the kingdom of God is basically the church; the church is a kingdom, and that's where God is King. And that's simply not what Jesus meant by it, either. And then, in recent years, some scholars and some simple folk have been taught that the kingdom of God meant that the world is going to come to an end, and we're all going to be in a totally different dimension entirely. And that's wrong as well.

"When we study the New Testament in its world, which is its Jewish world, as well as its Greek and Roman world, we discover the kingdom of God is a way of talking about God becoming King. And that means that God is going to take charge of the world in a whole new way. When Jesus is saying the kingdom of God is at hand, that's what He means. This is the time for those prophecies to be fulfilled, and for God to come in person and take over running the world in a whole new way.

"The problem comes if you think God is a big, angry bully in the sky who just wants to beat everybody up. No, God is the

God we see revealed in Jesus, who is gentle and humble of heart, and who is going to judge the world, to call the world to account. His way of doing that is the way we see in his life and in particular his death on the cross.”

For more of N.T. Wright’s insights, listen to this podcast.

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## **Prophecy: God Is Raising Up Prophetic Children in This Hour**

I see the eyes of children opening. Parents with children between 5 and 10 years old need to begin to teach them the principles of seeing in the spirit through the door of Jesus, because they are going to begin to prophesy through dreams and visions.

This is going to start with dreams, but as you nurture them in the realm of dreams and teach them, show them and encourage them, they’ll begin to see visions. I heard the Lord say:

“Don’t be concerned when some of your children start falling into trances. Don’t take them to the doctor, because it’s Me, and they will come out of that trance, and they will have prophetic insight, wisdom and knowledge on things to come because I’m showing them things that eye has not seen nor ear heard.

“Encourage the young ones, encourage the children. Encourage them. Don’t push them away. Don’t tell them, ‘Later on I’ll talk to you,’ but take the time even now, because in this

season, I'm pouring out My Spirit on all flesh, but I have a special eye on the young ones who have not yet been corrupted and polluted by the ways of the world. And I want to use them as pure voices and pure visionaries in their generation.

"So, encourage them, teach them, show them the way. I am the way, and you will see and know that I will activate even the very young ones in these gifts and the gifts of My Spirit, and they will see with clarity and know and understand even be able to articulate things that their human capacity could not possible comprehend," says God.

[Click here to read the rest of this article.](#)

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## **Why You Must Forgive When a Spiritual Leader Abuses His Position**

"On behalf of \*Dismal Church, I apologize. Pastor \*Richard's actions in no way reflect the church body. He misled you, misused you and abused you," \*Mary said.

With that, my suspicions were confirmed. The church merger we were working on was a bait and switch. We had worked on it

daily for more than a year to the point where it was nearly emotionally suffocating.

Balancing several jobs and daily meetings with Richard, I put friends and some family functions to the side. I believed in the vision and direction of my church and in the promises he made to me. And I trusted Richard. He was an older pastor who could no longer travel much nor attend to his parishioners.

He tried to act like a loving father to me and enjoyed my company. It was apparent he was lonely and depressed. He said he wanted to retire and his church was largely neglected by him for years.

The small congregation could barely make their monthly payments as fundraising was always based on crisis (looking back now, I could see he thrived on and created crisis as he was "needed" in these times). The only thing keeping the ministry going in the tired facility was an educational program, but its families didn't attend the church.

I thought his promises were true, as we were friends. However, when we committed wholeheartedly to this process, someone did warn me saying she has seen many relationships between Pastor Richard and others ruined.

In fact, I was the fifth person or so in 10 years Richard had promised the ministry and facility to. The previous one was his son, but that ended badly—the details of which he kept from me until I had to investigate it myself.

For the merger process, we used Warren Bird and Jim Tomberlin's book *Better Together*. But due to Richard's "disability," I made Cliff Notes for him, which he allegedly read. Our two congregations began combined services and God started moving in power and grace. And even the attendance grew dramatically. The needy community surrounding the church was excited, there was movement taking place!

As we made progress, red flags started popping up, but I dismissed them. And he saw a few members of his church not as people, but as dollar signs to give toward his short-term missions overseas. When I saw this behavior, I shrugged it off, but looking back, I realize this is one way he saw me.

There was severe financial mismanagement, and my church paid his church's electrical bill as they were given notice their power would be cut off in a few days. And there were letters from the IRS where back taxes were due but also several ministries and personal accounts were intermixed with the church's funds. And the education program meeting in the church treated Dismal Church like tenants instead of the other way around. Out of desperation, both groups tolerated each other. And in our combined church services, the suspicions and toxicity could be felt. But I honestly thought we could bring life, hope, vision and direction to that needy and broken community. And that blinded me to truth.

Staff meetings led by Richard lacked vision and direction becoming toxic the more we looked at the books. In fact, someone on his staff yelled at us in a meeting for a particular "look" and "lacking faith." Things became bizarre and more abusive and spiritually manipulative by Richard. He would use the right words, masking them in spirituality. I kick myself to this day, asking myself, *Why did I tolerate such abuse?* Sometimes, ministry vision can blind you from reality.

And when we got a lawyer to make sure the property acquisition went smoothly, Richard cut off all ties to me overnight, even though he was informed, and we agreed this was part of the process. The process Richard agreed to and mapped out by the both of us from *Better Together* even showed this step.

It was then that I saw he had done this to many other people before. Only wanting to pull the strings and control people, Richard was a narcissist who destroyed most close

relationships but wanted to control the narratives. I saw that prior church members set boundaries up around Richard, but he always acted like the victim.

It was apparent when we retained the lawyer that Richard didn't want the issues with the finances and building exposed. He only wanted control and was caught in his lies. He was dead on the inside, leading a dying church to a slow death.

He only wanted my church body to revitalize his ministry, making him look good. As Mary revealed, he wanted to keep controlling us and making promises, carrying us along as he pulled the strings. But the moment we got a lawyer, his true intentions were revealed.

I tried to pick up the pieces, apologizing to everyone in my church. Then, I was limping my remaining church body along as he kicked us out overnight soon after Mary met with me. But because of the emotional duress and abuse we underwent, we chose an end-date for my fellowship. We loved our remaining church body well and forgave Richard immediately.

Yet honestly, it still hurts. The good news is healing can take place progressively. Even though I, among many others, will never receive an apology from Richard, who is blind to his spiritual prison.

Richard is still there, pulling the strings as his church body can't do anything about his actions because his bylaws give him absolute authority. His "boards" and committees are still set up just to keep the small body happy, thinking they have some say in his church. I'm hoping he is not currently doing the same thing of stringing people along and trying to manipulate. I pray he has learned from his past and historical failures.

A friend of mine who worked with Richard on occasion asked, "Jared, you're a discerning person; how did you not sense he was doing that?" I couldn't answer it at that time, but after

reflecting on it my response would be, “He smothered me and loved me, spiritually manipulated me by promising mission and vision to me. But how do you not sense his manipulations because he does the same thing to everyone, including you?”

Another friend who was part of my church has asked a few times if I’ll ever start another church. Quite honestly, my hopes and dreams for a church that plants churches were shattered and stolen. The desire flew away after we were chewed up by the mess that is Pastor Richard, being added to his long list of ruined relationships for the sake of his “ministry.”

Why am I writing this? Probably because it’s part of the healing process. And also to help someone who might be reading this.

Maybe you have gone through similar ministry ventures, or you have had a spiritual leader mislead you and abuse you in one way or another. There are many Pastor Richards out there. And, if you’re in a similar situation, get out quickly.

However, I hope you can forgive. I know you won’t forget, and your healing takes time. But you can also learn from it as I have.

There is more to write about my lessons in this process I went through. But what is your story? How did you heal or how are you healing? Or, are you still hurting or stuck? Are you currently being manipulated and abused in a church and what are you going to do about it before it goes from bad to worse and there are more casualties?

Please, share your story and insights with me if you’d like. Email me at [jared@](mailto:jared@)

\* The names have been changed, but the story is true.

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## **The Second Coming: Will Our Lord Return in the 2020s?**

2020 begins as the first year of the new decade of the 2020s—100 years since the famed “Roaring Twenties” of the last century.

Prophetically, we might wonder if this is the year in which our Lord Jesus will return! And, if it is, how that relates to:

—The resurrection of those who have died “in the Lord.”

-The rapture of the living saints.

-The great tribulation of Satan.

-The end-times judgments and rewards of God.

Those are all things we read about in both the Old and New Testaments.

Pew Research Center reports that 48% of all Christians in the United States not only believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ, but believe it is going to occur within the next four decades (basically, within their own lifetimes). If that belief is proven to be true, think of the dramatic implications it should have immediately for every person on earth!

No wonder the apostle Paul used the Second Coming as the primary reason for right living right now, since "time is running out" and "the coming of the Lord is nearer now than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11, TLB).

Jesus told His disciples that no one actually knows the day or hour of His return, "not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:36, MEV).

While the exact time of Christ's promised return (John 14:1-4; Acts 1:7-11) is uncertain, the timing—pointing to the divine sequence or season—will become clearer the closer we get to the final apocalyptic revelation itself. For example, Daniel's prophecies were to be "sealed ... until the time of the end," when knowledge and experience will help the wise, spiritually minded to discern and understand the meanings (Dan. 12:4-10).

### **Things Preceding Our Lord's Return**

In the same discourse with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus projected warfare as a way of life throughout this present age. The political turmoil and military mayhem will be accompanied by "famines and earthquakes" in place

after place.

For the Jewish people, these will be the "beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:5-13) during the first half (3.5 years) of Daniel's Seventieth Week and continue as intolerable anguish as "Jacob's Troubles" during the final 3.5 years of the week of years described by Daniel (12:5-7) and John (Rev. 6) in the Seal Judgments.

In Matthew 24, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem as foreshadowing the future, fateful days, which He called the Great Tribulation, where the Antichrist will desecrate a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and break a covenant of protection for the defenseless Jewish people of that time.

He will proceed to severely persecute the remaining Jews and believing Gentiles in unprecedented evil ways. Jesus said that unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. But, "for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" by the rapture and resurrection of the saints (Matt. 24:22).

During those seven years, fulfilling Daniel's Seventieth Week prophecy, some students of eschatology even see spiritual renewal and revival, as a result of the testimony of the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14), the 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:1-8) and the "Gospel Angel" (Rev. 14:9-12), just before the "harvest of the earth" by the angels of the Lord (Matt. 24:31).

The apostle Paul gives us added insights of events to happen before "the day of Christ," when He will come in wrath to execute vengeance upon "those who do not know God" or "obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8).

Paul taught the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:1-12) there must first be a great apostasy or "falling away" and the Antichrist (called "the son of perdition") is finally revealed by his desecration of a new Jewish temple in Jerusalem. This is

allowed after a God-appointed “restrainer” steps aside to allow an “unrighteous deception” by this “lawless one.”

There are many quickly moving parts to the Trumpet Judgments of God’s Wrath (Rev. 8-9) and the climaxing Bowl Judgments (Rev. 16), which may happen in a matter of weeks!

Peter reminds us that the Lord has been slow to wrath, not wanting any to perish. But, what has been slow to come, ends rapidly and conclusively. Our God reigns.

### **Things Concurrent With our Lord’s Return**

Our Lord’s long-awaited sequenced-return is specifically said to begin “immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29) and before the relatively rapid discharge of the Trumpet Judgments followed by the final Day of the Lord, with its righteous vengeance and wrath.

These glorious Omega-times events seem to happen in rapid order, as our Lord’s promised return to earth unfolds, like a glorious panorama or extended procession:

“The sun and moon darken, and the stars withdraw their radiance” (Joel 2:10).

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. 24:29-31).

Then, our Lord claims His own, those whom He purchased with His blood on the cross. Paul describes it as beginning with a mighty shout of creative power by the Lord Himself, joined with a commanding voice of an archangel and with the “last trumpet” of God (1 Cor. 15:52). First, the dead saints of the

ages will be resurrected from all around the world and then the living saints will be “caught up” or raptured heavenward with transformed, heavenly bodies to meet the resurrected ones, including Christ, in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Hallelujah!

### **How Should We Live as We Await our Lord’s Return?**

Jesus told the early disciples, and now us, that “the end is not yet” (Matt. 24:6). There are many circumstances and predictions that must align before He will “send His angels ... and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. 24:31).

But, if He doesn’t return this year, is it possible He will return during this decade? Or in your lifetime? How should we live, as we await our Lord’s return?

Let’s learn from the apostle Paul, who taught:

“... now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us take off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in immorality and wickedness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:11-14).  
{eoa}

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*outreach. Now retired, Gary and his wife have been married for 50 years and live in Southern California. They have two married daughters and five grandchildren.*

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## **Why Christian Leaders Must Cling to These Biblical Standards Now More Than Ever**

In an age of an evangelical church culture that is fraught with scandals, we must continually ground ourselves in the biblical criteria for leadership. Otherwise, we will lose our credibility within our churches and before the world.

In addition, every church's board of trustees should insist their pastor be accountable to a higher body of leadership or presbytery. This can aid in steering clear of unnecessary challenges related to ministerial integrity.

There is an urgent need in contemporary Christianity to overhaul our assessment and criteria for leadership. This has been made abundantly clear by all the scandals that continue to take place in the church. Those who attempt to bring correction (like I am doing here) are often accused of being legalists or judgmental. I am not advocating that ministers caught in sexual or ethical sin should step down permanently. But there needs to be a body of leaders to which fallen ministers are accountable so they may be restored to their ministries after demonstrating true repentance and inner healing.

The following are some of the ethical and ministerial standards as related to priests, kings and New Testament elders. These are qualifications that we can still apply in principle to today's church.

## **Old Testament Standards**

### **For the Priests (Lev. 21)**

Originally, all the children of Israel were to serve as priests of the Lord (Ex. 19:6). But this privilege was evidently taken away and given to the tribe of Levi after the people turned away from the Lord. Among the many laws related to the standards for the priesthood (which relate to all present saints, according to 1 Pet. 2:8-9) are some ministerial and ethical principles that we can allegorically extrapolate (though the actual ceremonial qualifications are no longer relevant).

**Standard:** They shall not dwell among dead bodies and make themselves unclean (Lev. 21:11). This has to do with not fellowshiping with folks while they are involved in the works of darkness. (Jesus called unconverted people "dead" in John 5:25, Luke 9:60 and Ephesians 2:1-3.)

**Principle:** I can't tell you how many Christians I know of who think nothing of going out and partying with the world—getting drunk, listening to ungodly music, gambling or other worldly pursuits.

**Standard:** They shall not marry a prostitute or a divorced woman but only a virgin (Lev. 21:13-15). The basic idea of this passage is this: Marriage is not a free-for-all. Priests are commanded to marry women of God without previous marital issues. This is so the priestly class is protected from unnecessary distractions and so they nurture their children in a godly environment.

**Principle:** Jesus modified this view in Matthew 5:31-32 and

19:8-9 for the kingdom age of the church when He forbade divorce (except for sexual immorality) and forbade marrying a person divorced for an unbiblical reason. (It is now common in the body of Christ for people to divorce just because they don't get along with their spouse. Jesus strictly forbids this.)

Various laws highlight physical defects (Lev. 21:17- 24). Physical defects or blemishes are related to spiritual deficits that hinder a person from ministering for the Lord. For example, lameness represents those whose walk with God doesn't allow them to minister; blindness represents those who have no discernment and no real revelation of Christ in their lives; hunchbacks represent those who are not walking uprightly before the Lord (Prov. 2:21) and dwarfs represent those who have not grown in stature and maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:13).

### **Standards for Kings (Deut. 17:14-20)**

While the principles for priests relate to all believers, the standards for kings relate specifically to those serving in church leadership.

**Standard:** A foreigner who is not your brother may not serve as king (Deut. 17:15). Those serving in leadership positions in the body of Christ must be "born again" and demonstrate clear fruits of salvation.

**Principle:** Often, churches place people in leadership positions without any assurance of their salvation! This dilutes the church of its effectiveness and power to witness to the world!

**Standard:** Kings must not acquire many horses for themselves (Deut. 17:16). In the Bible, horses represent strength and pride. Thus, God is warning His leaders not to acquire possessions that symbolize their elitism and raise themselves higher than the people in their congregations. For example,

there are church leaders who drive very expensive cars or wear \$5,000 suits (even though their congregation is very poor) to show people that God is blessing them above everyone else.

**Principle:** This goes against the principles of humility and simplicity that Jesus and His apostles modeled in Scripture. God forbids kings from acquiring too many horses because it would cause people to turn back to Egypt, which is a symbol of returning to previous ungodly lifestyles they had before experiencing salvation in Christ. Leaders who need material excess in order to be satisfied in this life will produce people who will also get caught up in materialism. This will turn their hearts away from the Lord and back to the things the world values.

**Standard:** Kings shall not acquire many wives. God was teaching against polygamy and telling the leaders to go back to the one-wife standard, as found in the union between Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:19-22). Although church leaders in America today don't practice polygamy (having more than one legal wife at the same time), more and more leaders in the church are violating the spirit of this passage because they get married, divorced and remarried numerous times. This is causing unrest, disgust and alarm among many leaders (including myself) in the body of Christ.

**Principle:** Ever since the 1980s, when certain national ministers began divorcing and remarrying without adultery or infidelity being cited as the reason (and then on television telling the world that they are blessed), the standards of church leadership regarding marriage and divorce have been sliding down into an abyss.

Several years ago, two high-profile church pastors/leaders divorced. The reasons they gave had nothing to do with adultery but everything to do with simply not getting along or having different visions for ministry. If this is so, they have set an awful example for younger leaders and their

congregations by putting their ministry aspirations (or career aspirations) ahead of their marriage vows, which are emblematic of Christ and the church and should never be broken (Eph. 5:25).

This is different from some of the cases in which a spouse does not want to serve the Lord anymore or wants their spouse to choose between them and the ministry. This is a difficult situation, especially if a person thinks that by resigning they are putting the fleshly desires of their spouse before God.

**Standard:** Kings shall not acquire for themselves excessive silver or gold (Deut. 17:17). There are some contemporary Christian leaders who live lavishly and receive an inordinate amount of compensation from their churches. I have no problem with a pastor receiving a decent salary, commensurate with their hard work and the size of their church, so they can devote their time to ministering to the church and not be distracted by having to work another job. But some go overboard and live like narcissistic celebrities! This has become a stench in the nostrils of the world and is something that must be adjusted or we will see the judgment of God visit the church like never before.

(I have several income streams related to various aspects of my ministry outside of our local church, so I don't put an excessive burden on the finances of our congregation. Also, I have no issue with someone making a lot of money from book sales, audio sales and royalties. This is different from making millions in salary from a local church.)

**Standard:** Kings shall both write and read the Word of God all the days of their lives (Deut. 17:18-19). Christian leaders are required by God to be "people of the book." We are to focus on the Scriptures, understand all the important doctrines of the church and the Bible, and be able to apply all of this to our personal lives, families, churches and the

surrounding culture.

**Principle:** There are many leaders who know the sports pages, current events or the musings of Wall Street more than they know and understand the Scriptures. If we are going to get back to correct standards of holiness, ethics and ministerial protocol, we need to recapture the simplicity of the gospel (the *kerygma*) and the teachings that apply it (the *didache*).

**Standard:** The hearts of kings shall not be lifted up above their brothers. When I was consecrated as a bishop in 2006, many congratulated me for being “elevated.” I would cringe when hearing this because I could not picture the Lord Jesus telling His apostles that they were elevated! He told them they were servants, called to wash the feet of the people (John 13).

**Principle:** When we view leadership as a position, title or status above others in our faith communities, we are missing the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and are acting like the world. The world has leaders who lord their authority over their subjects. This is the opposite of what Jesus taught His apostles (Mark 10:42-45).

### **New Testament Church Elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7)**

Elders in local churches are those who have the greatest responsibility for leading their congregations. Elder is the highest governmental office in the church—something even the apostle Peter claimed for himself (1 Pet. 5:1). (The fivefold ministry, as found in Ephesians 4:11, describes a function, not an office, of the church.)

Because of the great responsibility, there are some general guidelines that all pastors, fivefold ministers, trustees, deacons and elders must meet before they are installed. The following is a brief summary:

They must be above reproach. This regards not having hidden

“skeletons in the closet” or a lifestyle that others could seize on and use as an accusation to discredit them.

They must be the husband of one wife. This has to do with barring a person from serving as an elder who is married to more than one woman at a time. We can also extrapolate from this standard that one should not serve as an elder if they divorced their wife and remarried for anything but the biblical reason of adultery. (However, a case can be made that divorce is acceptable if one’s spouse is a violent abuser who threatens their life. But, some would say you could divorce but not remarry in a case like this. There is too much to say regarding this subject to fit in this chapter.)

They must be sober-minded. This means elders should be serious about the primary things in life related to God, the church, family and eternity. Their values and priorities should be on things above (Col. 3:1-3).

They must be self-controlled. This means a leader needs to live a prudent, discreet life of self-control in which they are not giving in to their fleshly desires or the whims of their physical and sensual passions regarding lust of the flesh, food and sexual appetite.

They must be respectable: a person who is not disorderly, but lives a quiet life as a respectable citizen.

They must be hospitable. Elders should have their marriages, families and finances in order, to the point where they are able to put up people in their homes as the Lord leads. They should also have people over for dinner.

I know some leaders who never allow anyone near their homes or personal lives. This makes me wonder what they are trying to hide. Hospitality is an important requirement because it enables the discipleship or mentoring process, so those being disciplined can go to the next level beyond what is available in larger congregational meetings.

They must be able to teach. Elders have to be capable of communicating the gospel to the unsaved and applying it practically in a teaching setting for a congregation. Having a Word ministry is an important requirement of all elders.

They cannot be drunkards. It is not a sin to drink alcoholic beverages, but it is a sin if it becomes a habit and causes drunkenness. This can also be applied to any mind-altering substance.

Some leaders have become addicted to painkillers, drinking and other activities that dim the brain to avoid dealing with the pain and pressures of life.

They must not be violent. Unfortunately, there are many leaders with a violent temper. A violent temper disqualifies a person in God's eyes for eldership in the body of Christ.

They must not be quarrelsome. There are some leaders who are very argumentative because they have issues in their own hearts that have not been dealt with. While we don't want "yes men" to serve as elders (people who just rubber-stamp everything the senior pastor says without honest dialogue and feedback), we also don't want people serving as elders who must debate everything.

They must not be lovers of money. Leaders whose hearts are fixated on money are not qualified to be elders because they will always view their ministries and associations with people with a "What's in it for me?" mentality.

Those with serious financial challenges should not serve as elders or trustees because they will be tempted by a conflicting interest when they have business meetings and discuss how to dispense or spend church finances.

They must manage their households and have their children subject to them. If a person cannot lead their own family, the Bible teaches they cannot manage or lead the household of God.

This also means that young children of elders who are still living in their homes should be submissive, attend church and not be a disruption to the family goal of serving the Lord.

They must not be a recent convert. In New Testament times, a person had to be at least 30 years old and a believer for several years before they were appointed as elders. This is to protect new converts who could be puffed up with pride if they are put in a position of influence.

They must have a good reputation with those outside the church. We are not called only to be an example within the church, but also outside the church. This is why an elder should not have bad credit, have a bad record on their job or have a bad reputation among their neighbors.

These are all simple guidelines. Unfortunately, we need to be continually reminded of the first principles and foundational things of leadership so our standards will glorify God and enable us to serve as salt and light in our communities. {eoa}

*This article is chapter 10 from Poisonous Power, Bishop Mattera's latest book. For more like this, you can purchase your copy on Amazon here.*

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# Why This 2,000-Year-Old Scroll Holds a Key to One of Israel's Greatest Treasures

Could secrets contained in the most enigmatic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Copper Scroll, hold the keys to one of the greatest treasures in Israel's history? Author Shelley Neese says yes.

Neese, vice president of The Jerusalem Connection International in Washington, D.C., says the scroll, discovered in 1952, may be the one witness to a covert operation to rescue Temple tithes and vessels before foreign invaders overran Jerusalem's gates more than two millennia ago.

The Copper Scroll story also becomes inadvertently tethered to Israel's modern battle for the Temple Mount.

"The Copper Scroll reveals Israel's ancient past, but it also latches onto her future," Neese, a Christian, told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of *Greenelines* on the Charisma Podcast Network. "In fact, it's the ultimate study for my own faith, and I expect it to be for every person who reads about it in my book, *The Copper Scroll Project*."

"*The Copper Scroll Project* is a story about hope; it breeds hope—a hope that the Temple's lost treasures will restore the faith of all non-believers. They hope that Israel—a nation that has known more than its share of persecution—will, upon receiving remnants of its glorious past, be reassured of God's promise to her exceptional covenant."

For more of this fascinating story of the Copper Scroll,

listen to this podcast.

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## **3 Ways to Position Yourself for an Epic 2020**

Chess players know it's all about position. Every piece has a position and every move you make has implications on the outcome of the game.

Every move is vital.

And so goes life. Where are you going? Do you know?

Yogi Berra said: "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."

How true is that? Some people allow life to order their steps and others step toward the life they designed.

The best life is the designed life. We design our lives by discovering our passions and reaching for them. This requires introspection, sacrifice and risk-taking.

Again, it's about putting yourself in the right position.

To experience the Dallas Mavericks game, we must choose to purchase a ticket and enter the stadium where the game is being played. Some people buy a ticket and stand in the vending area and never position themselves to experience the actual game. What is that about?

If you choose to stand in the hallway, you can hear the game, but you will not experience the actual game. Have you ever

noticed people in a venue who hang around the bathrooms or just wander around?

We must position ourselves to gain the most from our experience. Let's challenge ourselves to get in a position to experience the most productive year of our lives.

Opportunity is everywhere, even the worst of places. The worst places offer us the best opportunities. Needed change is obvious in the not-so-good places.

We must position ourselves to grab the opportunity in front of us.

Here are a few ways to get in position for 2020.

1. **Let go of the past.** This is challenging for most.

Niklas Goke said: "We all keep past versions of ourselves in a closet somewhere, and every time we open it, we feel pain and suffering. We can't change the people we once were, but we can make peace with them. Open the closet and let in some light. Reconcile. Otherwise, our past will forever be a drag on our heels."

How often have we experienced the drag of the past with the wind behind our back? Rather than live in the present and plan our future, we pay too much attention to our former days. This is a thief of our future.

George Orwell said: "He who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."

Our best life is always in front of us. Have you ever met a person who is a victim of their past?

The former hurts are real, and the pain merited, but to stay in disappointments of the past cripples our progress.

We cannot allow our past experiences to be the mold that forms

our future. It is not our experiences that shape us; it is our response to them. Despite thinking otherwise, healthy people are never exempt from difficult circumstances and bad experiences.

Ayodeji Awosika said: "Life throws a lot of negativity at you. If you try to pretend it doesn't exist and force yourself to "think positive," you will never address the root cause of your discontent in a useful way.

Negative emotions are signals that something is wrong. Often, negative emotions are signaling you *to act*. To be better. To find a different path."

Instead of ignoring negative emotions – they're not going away soon – why not use them to your advantage?

Like Ayodeji said, "We must use the negativity of the past to our advantage. This is not a suggestion but a demand. A demand that only you can demand of yourself. Without it, we will repeat the former years."

**2. Realize that it's never easy.** You never just find yourself in the perfect position. It's rare. We work our way there. And we work hard. Real hard.

Yes, there are breaks along the way. Yes, we gather some luck. I call it favor. And yes, providence plays a role. But we rarely see a great opportunity open to us without positioning ourselves in some manner.

Success occurs where preparation meets opportunity.

And that is nothing but true.

Allow me to quote Ayodeji again.

"People think trying to become successful is arrogant. It's not. Becoming successful happens when you let go of your ego, admit you suck and seek wisdom. The schmucks are the arrogant

ones. They think life should just get better on its own, for no reason, with no extra work or changes in behavior. Do the work, without questioning the process, for an entire year and see what happens.”

**3. Step back to step up.** Every time a bigger opportunity is in front of you, it requires a sacrifice. For instance, most people sacrifice a full-time salary and benefits to go freelance or chase entrepreneurship.

This means the sacrifice of security and embracing the unknown. Many just cannot do this.

It's called risk.

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.” – T. S. Eliot

The biggest risk is the failure of not taking any risk.

Geena Davis said; “If you risk nothing, then you risk everything.”

Are you positioning yourself for a great 2020 or hoping for change? Hope is not a strategy, but hard work is very strategic and rewarding. Let's go. Put the past behind you, realize it's never easy and be willing to take a risk.

Staying safe on the shore will never allow you the opportunity to experience the open seas. 2020 is before us, and so is the opportunity for your best year ever.

Thank you for reading this post. You can find additional articles at my website. {eoa}

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# What You Can Expect Prophetically in 2020

We're in a new era—and not just in the church. The 2020s will see the beginning of what in some sense you could call a global realignment.

We'll start seeing the realigning of nations, political parties and churches, and that process will extend throughout the decade and even beyond. Some of those realignments will be marked by violence. Others will bring greater peace.

One of the first will be the realignment of Great Britain. I prophesied several times since 2016 that Brexit is the will of God for the United Kingdom. The U.K. will serve as a forerunner of national realignment as Brexit—the British Exit from the European Union—is completed.

Global political power will shift. The United States will wane in global influence unless the church in America rises up in prayer and restores the foundations of Christianity. Meanwhile, China will continue its rise in power in attempts to rival the U.S. and usurp our authority as the policeman of the world. Islamic nations will push for power through violence, which is nothing new, but more horrifying violence is planned.

All of this is positioning the world to see a fuller manifestation of Matthew 24:6-8, in which Jesus said:

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled. For all these things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, epidemics, and

earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

I’m not an end-times prophecy expert, but I can say with assurance that the global realignment of nations is setting us up for those final days.

[Click here](#) to read the rest of Jennifer’s article.

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## **Why You Should Spend These 1,440 Precious ‘Pieces of Gold’ Wisely**

When the calendar turns its page to a brand-new year, we all believe with grand anticipation that it is time to begin again. Just as the calendar presents a blank page, we hope that a blank page is what life is offering us as well.

We all deeply desire that we will be given the opportunity to start afresh and anew; we long to be free from the mistakes of last year and the year before that and the year before that.

The truth is, January has no intrinsic power to change a person’s life. The glaring facts are that a new year is simply

another collection of 365 or 366 days. This year will be filled with disappointments, challenges, mountains, valleys, deserts and discouragement, just as every year before it has been.

However, God has given us a game plan for every glorious day that is ours, whether that particular day signals the beginning of a new year or just an ordinary day in March.

Every night, when the clock strikes midnight, you don't turn into a pumpkin, but you are the recipient of a brand-new, shining gift. We all receive the same amount of this gift regardless of weight, age, education, beauty, job description or marital status.

When each new day raises its sleepy head, you are the sole owner of 1,440 of the most powerful commodities ever known in the history of mankind. At precisely one second after midnight, every single day of your life, heaven opens its windows and gives to you 1,440 untouched and valuable minutes to spend. How you spend your minutes is entirely up to you. Time is free, but it is priceless!

“This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 18:24).

Every day that has been graciously given to you by the Lord is a new opportunity to frame your day with exuberant and sincere praise.

God gave you this day and designed it especially with you in His mind. Every day of your life the Father has a plan for you that will always include a liberal dose of praise. If you want the assurance that you are participating in God's will for your life on a daily basis it is vital that you start your day with praise, that you fill it with worship and that you end it with thanksgiving.

From the first moment of consciousness to your last waking

thought at night, make it a choice of your will to only magnify the Lord and never question Him. We are not a people who blame the Lord, but we are a people who bless the Lord!

These are your minutes ... all 1,440 of them ... so spend them well. Spend them on something of importance and something that actually matters. This day will never come again, and a day that is given to the blahs is never returnable. When you give a day of your very short life to discouragement or anger, you have just wasted 1,440 pieces of pure gold.

Rejoicing is an act of your will and you must choose to do it. There will be days when the worship instinctively wells up within you, and a bastion of the blahs would not be able to hold it back. But there will be many more days when you must choose to rejoice and command yourself to whistle a happy tune. There will be weeks when you must command yourself to sing or to utter words of thanksgiving out loud.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Ps. 103:1, 2).

David, who wrote these words, was a common man with an uncommon heart. He struggled with emotional outrage just as you and I do. He stood on the edge of the black pit of depression times too numerous to count, and thus he knew life could be stark and frustrating. David chose to command his soul, which is the birthplace of our thoughts, emotions and personality, to bless the Lord.

This phrase is constructed in the imperative, which means it is not an option but that it is a definitive command. David knew what you and I often ignore: praise will reform the vitality of a new day and a new year in a manner that absolutely nothing else has the power to do so!

You have been given 1440 miraculous minutes every day in which to worship the Lord. Understanding the power of the 1440 means

no matter what I am doing—whether it is the laundry, grocery shopping, taxiing my children or fixing dinner—I am rejoicing!

What is the greatest tragedy in life? Is it cancer or death? Is it bankruptcy or losing your home? I believe that the greatest tragedy in life is being alive without joy!

If you live to be 90 years old and use your 1440 every day to honor God and serve people, you will still discover that is a very small slice in eternity.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (Eccl. 3:11, BSB).

I have heard it said that none of us is allowed to choose the day we will die, but all of us have the option of choosing how we will live the days we have been given. Your 1440 are all yours. Put your hands in the air every day of 2020 and start to worship! {eoa}

**Carol McLeod** is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books: *No More Ordinary, Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, *Defiant Joy!* and *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*. Her teaching DVD *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming.

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# 7 Secrets to Guarding Your Anointing

According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the word *anoint* means “to smear or rub with oil.”

Oil essentially represents the anointing, and the words are often used interchangeably in Scripture and other Christian discourse. In biblical times, oil was poured upon the heads of sheep to prevent insects from attacking. They would set up camp around or on the head and migrate to places around its ears and/or nostrils. Once in, these insects (lice and ticks) burrow deep into the sheep’s brain, killing it over time.

In response to this, shepherds would pour a substance, commonly a mixture of olive oil, on the top of the sheep’s head. It would eventually run down its ears making them too slippery for the bugs to cling on to. As it was for sheep in the natural, so should it be that the spiritual oil upon your life covers you to the point that whenever demons try to latch on to you, they slip off!

## **It Always Begins at the Top**

Notice that the oil was poured on the sheep’s head. The anointing always begins at the top (head) and flows down as Psalm 133:2 (NIV) alludes to with Israel’s high priest, Aaron:

“It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robe.”

The devil’s first target is always the head (your mind). If he’s able to infiltrate the brain, he can secure the body. This is the reason that our thoughts should be covered (concealed) and not always revealed.

Some people say that the devil cannot read our minds. In my studies, I've never encountered any Scripture to support this theory. They assume he doesn't know what's going on in our minds. To be on the safe side, we must actively guard our thought lives. We can accomplish this by meditating on the things the Lord commands us to.

"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Phil. 4:8, NLT).

According to Scripture, the secret to Samson's strength was closely guarded information, because if it fell into the wrong hands, it would mean his utter defeat. We should do likewise in relation to ourselves. As with Jesus Christ, there are times when we are required to refrain from divulging the source of our breakthroughs or miracles or, in other words, the oil upon our lives.

### **Conceal the Oil Until the Appointed Time**

Jesus used parables to conceal His original messages for those who couldn't handle the truth. The anointing we may or may not carry comes directly from the Lord. He is the giver of the oil. This oil is specific to each of us, none being identical to the other. One may require an anointing for breakthrough, another for healing and another for revival. Every anointing has a precise purpose and function.

Satan is not omniscient (all-knowing) like God. Therefore, Satan is not privy to all the Lord knows. There are some things about you the Lord will not allow Satan to see. In some cases, it could be the oil that's upon your life.

The enemy may have witnessed the anointing for a millennium, but God has a fresh, new anointing for each proceeding generation of believers. The devil is unable to accurately predict every new wave of the Spirit. He may assume, but he

doesn't always know with assurance. The enemy may get a revelation of the oil, but it's usually after its utilization. As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:1, there is a season (period of time) for everything, even the revelation that makes its home within the anointing.

## **The Oil Is the Key to Unlocking Various Royal Domains in the Kingdom**

For every realm (royal domain or kingdom), there is a revelation. In order to receive it, you must live in the kingdom and not outside it. There are royal domains in the Spirit for which certain types of oil are specifically designed. Royal domains include, but are not limited to: revelations regarding healing, deliverance, prophecy, discernment and so on.

Access is being granted due to the oil on our lives that comes from the daily trials and tribulations germane to citizens of the kingdom. Enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ increases not only your anointing, but also your chance for admission to royal domains. By entering this domain, there will be a realization of your effectiveness as it relates to your kingdom assignment from God. The oil is the proverbial key to that certain area of the kingdom.

Our anointing gives us access, but our spoken words can delay or deny entry. Sometimes we divulge things the Lord doesn't want us to say. It may be the wrong time or season to speak it. When "Delilahs" (people who disclose your confidences in order to harm you) obtain the secret to your anointing, they may reveal it to your enemy. Once they know its architecture or structure, they're armed with information on how to deny access.

James 5:16 admonishes us to confess our faults to one another, but that doesn't include exposing the secrets of our effectiveness (oil). I'm in no way saying that you're not to

share information that will assist others in heading in the direction of their destinies. I am saying that you must prayerfully consider whom you are sharing the infrastructure or inner workings of your anointing with. For instance, does your effectiveness increase when you pray or are in a powerful prayer-filled environment? Does your anointing begin to flow when there are strong gifts of prophecy at work, or when people are getting delivered? If you know the environment or atmosphere in which your oil starts to flow, you must be careful and prayerful about revealing this to people who are being used by Satan. If the enemy gets a hold of this info, he'll do everything in his power to stop it.

In the case of Samson, he revealed his secret to the wrong person, and it led to his ineffectiveness and demise.

God has not called you tell everybody everything about your life. There are people who lie in wait just to capture your conversations and compile them together, in order to find out things you haven't openly shared. These individuals are really representatives sent by the enemy to discover just what propels your effectiveness. Once discovered, demonic strategies are devised to try to stop the mandate of God upon your life from being fulfilled.

With Samson, he used Delilah. What or whom will he use with you?

### **Wrong Association Makes the Oil Vulnerable**

Here's another perspective to consider: the company we keep. True friends and covenant partners are not sly and out to sabotage us. Delilah revealed her mission several times over, but Samson stayed in her company. It may not be so much about whether you conceal the truth and avoid being so honest as it is about fleeing the scene as Joseph did with Potiphar's wife. (See Gen. 39:1-10.)

If you are always on defense with the people around you, you

may be around the wrong people. Guarding the anointing may have a lot to do with guarding your inner circle.

When Samson exposed his weakness to his love, he was captured and his eyes were gouged out. The enemy desires strip the oil from you, then blind you so that you are unable to locate it again. All this was the result of stupidity on Samson's part, and trusting a person who evidently meant to harm him.

Once people show you who they are, believe them! Delilah, through her actions, showed her deviant motivations. While Samson was blinded by *eros* (romantic love), she was cheating on him with *mammon* (wealth). Samson's enemies promised to pay Delilah if she could obtain the secret of his anointing.

Revealing his secret hurt more than it helped. In reality, it caused betrayal, loss of vision and eventually redemption. Ultimately, the revealing of his secret to Delilah put Samson in position to kill his enemies, but it also cost him his life.

## **7 Secrets to Guarding Your Anointing**

- 1. Don't allow your oil to get tainted by prostitution (see Judg. 16:1).** As Samson went in to the harlot, his enemies were made aware of it. When we're in sin, the devil broadcasts it spiritually and naturally. Sin will taint your anointing (effectiveness). Guard your anointing by abstaining from the very appearance of evil. If you do fall into sin, true repentance to God will absolve you of your transgression and bring you into right standing with the Lord. It will be as if the sin was never committed at all.
- 2. Don't ever allow your anointing to replace your intelligence.** Sometimes we become so reliant on our oil that it trumps our intellect. When we get saved, it shouldn't dumb us down. It should "smarten" us up! The oil will never totally replace the intellect that comes

from being in relationship with Jesus Christ, the anointed one.

3. **Keep your head anointed.** Remember the sheep previously referred to? The oil that was poured upon their heads kept the insects from getting into their brains. It's the same with us. The enemy desires to infiltrate our minds because once he gets in our heads, our bodies follow. By staying "oily," demonic infiltration is less likely.
4. **Don't share the secret to your anointing with everyone.** Not everyone is saved and even if they are, they may not be for you. There are some people in the body whom you should not share the secret of your oil with, because they will use it for your demise. Remember, David stated in Psalm 41:9 (NIV): "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me."
5. **Don't allow human love to cause you to reveal something God told you to keep secret.** Love can blind you. This is exactly what happened to Samson—literally! Don't allow *pillow talk* to cause you to reveal the secret of your oil. The devil will use your appetite to entrap you and lead you to give away to dogs that which is holy.
6. **When the truth is shared outside of *kairos* (God's time), it can negatively affect *chronos* (chronological time).** Just because it is the truth doesn't necessarily mean that it should be shared. It's prudent to wait on the Lord's permission before releasing the secret of your anointing to anyone.
7. **Don't reveal the secret of your oil because it may cost you your vision.** After Samson revealed that his anointing was in his hair and Delilah had it cut off, his enemies came in and blinded him. But Samson was first blinded spiritually. He didn't see or discern the true nature of Delilah. What happened to him in the natural first happened in the spirit. Don't suffer the same fate. We must perceive in the Spirit to avoid

calamity in the natural. {eoa}

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