

Pharaoh in the Church: Pastors Must Stop Using People to Build Kingdoms of Man

God is looking for leaders who are humble, broken and driven by the fear of the Lord not the fear of looking like failures to their peers. We must be a people who trust God fully.

It's sad how much competition between churches there is today—as each pastor is working hard to keep “their people” and build their kingdoms.

This must end! As a senior leader I had an open hands policy. I never owned the sheep and I made that known. I told other pastors and leaders that they were free to come to my church and, without guilt or fear, recruit anybody they chose to leave my church to join theirs. They could ask my best leaders, most amazing musicians and most committed intercessors to leave me to join them. If they agreed, I'd bless my friends as they entered into their new assignments.

It was important for me to kill the competition spirit, that spirit of Pharaoh, quickly—and that comes as we trust God and his church building process.

A Shocking Shift in the Church

Its days are numbered. I don't know what that number is, but it isn't large. In fact, the beginnings of change are here. You can feel the temperature fluctuating as the days are suddenly growing shorter. We're in a transitional season that will ultimately result in the rebirthing and reintroduction of a long forgotten biblical structure—the church.

As I thoroughly investigated in the sister book, *Covens in the Church*, the change is not, as many believe, an exodus from relationship with Christian leaders. It is, however, most certainly an exodus. In fact, it's an exodus that will either invigorate or irritate leaders across our nation.

You see, there is a God-ordained and God-initiated revolution taking form. It is quite simple to understand that resistance to God's process is always a tragic mistake and that embracing God's process always guarantees success (God never fails). Revolution, by definition, is drastic and momentous change. It's shocking and it's shaking. It will rock every one of us as the process unfolds before us, but those who will trust God's wisdom will survive—and even thrive as humble, faithful and tested men and women of Almighty God.

I Was Done Before I Was Done

One of the most important moments of my life, without any exaggeration in the least, occurred as God was calling me into the wilderness of encounter. I planted Revolution Church in Manitou Springs, Colorado, and though it was a challenge, we were watching with amazement as the church developed and grew in one of the nation's darkest cities. You see, it has been reported that since the mid-1980s, around 15 churches have been planted in Manitou Springs—and all ended up failing before hitting the two year mark.

I received a life mission from God in the early 1990s, and that mission was to see a city taken for God. Pure revival at the city level was the mandate. I was extremely zealous in my adherence to God's instructions, and I worked hard to see Revolution Church grow in strength, anointing and in number.

We were a few years beyond the ominous two-year mark, and things were going well. I was in prayer at the church one day, and God said something that made no sense whatsoever. He said, "John, you're done."

What? How could this be? I wasn't even close to being done. There were years of progress ahead of me. The city wasn't even close to being taken and developed into a "model of revival for the nations" as another confirmed prophecy communicated.

"You're done." My brain was irritated, but my spirit was burning. I knew the second I received that message from God that I was done.

The next day, as I was emotionally undone and intellectually attempting to figure out what all of this meant, I went to a scheduled meeting with someone I had recently met. She brought a friend with her, who quite strangely remained silent for the first thirty minutes or so that we were together.

But then, she spoke. "John, I apologize for not participating in the conversation up until now, but God has been talking to me about you."

She had my attention.

"John, God says to you that he is pleased with you, and with what you have built. He sees the foundation and the walls, and he is well pleased. However, John, the Father also says, 'you are done.'"

Tears were instantly filling up in my eyes, and seconds later flowing down my cheeks. God was talking to me. He had my attention. I was shaken.

Over the next three weeks, eight or nine different people, most of whom I had never met, gave the exact same word. "John, you're done."

The word was expanded and confirmed time and again: "John, you're done. You're called apostolically to the cities of the Earth. This is very much about Manitou Springs and the vision there, and it's also about so much more."

Some time went by, and I did as well as I could in responding

to God. Practically speaking, I honestly didn't know exactly what to do, so I awaited further instruction. It came one day at the same altar where God revealed to me that I was 'done.'

"John, you are to pray. I've called you to minister to me as a house of prayer for all nations."

I understood then what the call was—the church was to rediscover its identity as a house of prayer. I've always been a zealous man of prayer, yet I know that the call was not only for me, but for the body, for those who would respond, to minister to God night and day in Manitou Springs.

My conversation with God, as I sat there alone in a dark room at the altar, went like this:

"God, I know I am to embrace and lead toward radical change. I know this body is to be a team of fiery, determined and tested people who pray on site continually. But, Lord, if I do this, the church is sure to lose people." God offered no response. I sat there in silence as the implications of such a drastic change were bombarding my mind. My fear was evident as I continued my discussion.

"And, God, if I do this, I'm certain we'll lose money." Again, no response. Surely this was an acceptable concern. If we did something like this we'd experience such a severe loss of finances through the offerings that we'd most certainly fail to responsibly pay the church's bills. Yet, God was silent.

As I sat there feeling both alone and very much in the company of Someone who was looking right into my heart, I finally said, "And, God, if I do this, I'll lose my reputation."

You see, I am a visionary leader. People had bought into the vision and had settled into the church in its current form. If I did this, I'd open the door for accusation, ridicule, mocking, disappointment and betrayal. I knew it would come, and it would be very hard.

“...if I do this, I’ll lose my reputation.” This time God responded with a message that changed my outlook on life forever. He said, “Good. My Son was a man of no reputation. Why should you be?”

I was broken in my humanness but spared the force of God as I hit my knees and prepared for the greatest shaking of my life.

Tune in Wednesday for Part 2 of this series. *This excerpt, the first in a three-part series, is taken from **John Burton’s** book Pharaoh in the Church, the follow up to Covens in the Church. (Covens in the Church is a message about the body’s responsibility to submit to authority and Pharaoh in the Church is a message calling leaders to stop using people to build their own kingdom).*

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