

Prophecy for This Summer: It's Time to Raise a New Standard!

Although we are entering the summer of 2019, I sense that we've been in an extended season of preparation for what the Lord has been readying many hearts. On April 23, 2018, I had a dream multiple times throughout the night. Every time I went back to sleep, I had it again. In that dream, God was preparing a new pathway, a new road, because He was about to open the eyes of the blind, and many of them were people everyone thought would never respond to the gospel, people who could not be reached. I realized how often we don't recognize the newness of things and how we take things for granted. But as we gathered in that private, quiet place on our knees and took the posture of pulling down strongholds, God began to do something. In fact, I kept repeating in the dream, "Pull down the strongholds! Pull down the strongholds!"

At the first signs of breakthrough prayer, the chant changed to, "It's time to raise a new standard! It's time to raise a new standard!" Then I saw thousands upon thousands across the nation converging on the public square. They didn't even know why they were there, but they were being drawn to hear message of the gospel—the new standard that was being raised. Many of them were scoffing and jeering. My daughter, Ashley, was standing next to me as she prepared to lead worship, and I encouraged her not to be distracted by the naysayers but to keep her focus on worship and let God do the rest. Though I was speaking to Ashley in the dream, I sensed it was a message to her generation.

I believe that it was a window God has given us to prepare, through a summer season of focused prayer and worship, for what He is about to do. And as I've shared the dream through

social media and other avenues, it has resonated in the hearts of many others.

What Is a Standard

Historically, a standard serves at least three purposes:

- To identify a group (tribal or national).
- To claim possession of a space or territory.
- For festivity or celebration.

Each of the 12 tribes of Israel had a standard or flag identifying its tribe, in camp and in battle. In battle, a standard is used to identify regiments or platoons and to communicate a variety of messages, including nationality and instructions to advance or retreat.

A standard is also a banner, and God's banner over us is love. Jesus has already set a standard over us and is calling us to raise that same standard of life, love and purpose for others to follow when the world is getting dark. It's a standard of hope!

In the Battle of Iwo Jima, amidst the bullets and the carnage, five American Marines and one Navy corpsman grabbed the American flag, raised it and set it in the ground as if to say, "We will not be defeated!" The moment was immortalized in a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph that speaks a thousand words even today as an act of courage and inspiration.

In the same way, when we are unashamed of the gospel and unwilling to compromise the Word of God, we are tearing down strongholds and raising a new standard high for all to see. And as we move forth in courage, others are encouraged and inspired to persevere.

Roots of Unrighteousness

We can blame it on Hollywood, education, music or guns, but the real root is moral decadence from a society that says, "We

don't need God." The root of the issue needs to be uprooted, but the answer will not come from man, politics, good ideas or theories. We need Jesus back on the throne of our hearts so His reign can manifest in our environment, through the hearts of God's people.

As a nation, we've lowered the standard, and it's time for us—you and I—to raise that standard once again. Many voices of compromise are out there, but the Bible is our standard for truth. We must set up His Word as our own standard, raise it and follow after God with our whole hearts.

It's time to create a new narrative because those who tell the story define the narrative and create the history. We need to be telling the story of the Lord, the Gospel of Good News, that brings salvation, healing, deliverance and freedom!

Preparing an Ark of Refuge

As I prayed and processed the dream, the Holy Spirit led me to Scriptures about the harvest:

"Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38).

"He said to them, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (Luke 10:2).

Years ago, Steve Riggle, pastor of Grace Community Church and president of Grace International Churches, preached a powerful message on the God of the suddenlies or *Baal Perizim*, which means "God of breakthroughs." Personally, I believe we're on the verge of a breakthrough moment now more than ever.

Just as Noah, in simple obedience, built an ark before there was any sign of rain, we need to build up our churches as arks of refuge. Like Nehemiah, we need a weapon in one hand to protect from the enemy's attacks while we also get things in

order so transformation can take place. God is calling His church to be an ark of refuge to receive all He is about to do!

Deeper Consecration, Higher Expectation

In 38 years of ministry, challenges and storms, I've learned two things that have sustained me: First, we must keep our vision of hope and destination.

All of us go through difficulties and have storms to overcome. It can be distracting and disheartening if we do not have the right perspective. King Solomon said, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." But he also said, "A merry heart is good medicine."

Daniel 11:32 tells us, "The people who know their God will be strong and take action."

The original word for "know" here is "yada," and it means knowing in a very interactive and personal way. When we know Jesus this way, we can call upon His name because we have a relationship with Him. His name brings the power of heaven to earth because He is pre-eminent. He is Creator of all things, and He desires to give that same authority to us: "so that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Eph. 3:10).

We carry the family name, so we also carry the authority.

Second, we must keep our expectation level high.

One of my daily personal prayers is this: "Help me go deeper in consecration, higher in expectation."

When we keep our vision of hope, God gives us promises and a destination; then He gives us expectation beyond our human comprehension. We have peace that surpasses understanding, peace that prevails in our hearts. And in that place of

expectation, our vision of hope remains alive. When we have great expectations beyond our circumstances, He gives us His perspective of the storm; when we rest on His shoulders, we can see from a higher vantage point.

David prayed: "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Jesus is the rock of our salvation, the rock unshakeable, the rock of ages.

Albert Einstein said, "Weakness of attitude becomes weakness of character." The character of any kingdom emanates from character of the king. When we keep His perspective, His attitude, stay in the Word and maintain fellowship with Him, circumstances don't dictate our response. Our response comes from our relationship with the King and His kingdom.

Nothing is impossible when we are in God's manifest presence. He brings undoneness, but at the same time we experience His amazing, abounding and great grace. He picks us up, dusts us off and commissions us with His authority so we can see our generation, our communities, our cities, our nations impacted with the gospel. {eo}

Doug Stringer is the founder of Somebody Cares America and International, author of many articles and books, including Leadership Awakening, Foundational Principles for Lasting Success, In Search of a Father's Blessing and others. Doug's podcast, "A Word in Season with Doug Stringer and Friends" can be heard on the Charisma Podcast Network and other outlets. A version of this article originally was published in January 2012.