

The Rise, Fall, Recovery of People of Destiny/Sovereign Grace Ministries, Part 1

True stories of tragedy ending redemptively bring encouragement. This is one such story, happiness to heartbreak to hope.

The challenge of covering almost 50 years succinctly is a daunting task so let's try a trilogy: "Getting Started," "Going Astray" and "God's Supernatural Intervention."

There are three lessons to learn and a legacy to leave for generations.

Getting Started

Birthered in the Jesus Movement, then launching churches, conferences, inspirational music, a school of ministry and a national magazine, People of Destiny started strong. Passing decades brought significant changes. Its current leader recently said, "When I took over, I seriously wondered if we would survive!"

People ask similar questions about Daystar TV, IHOPKC and megachurch Gateway (losing over 20,000). Our story is essential reading that provides valuable lessons.

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Dr. Che Ahn, who had been present from the beginning, believes sharing our history is part of God's church cleansing today. It's painful but necessary. He added that scores in the "Shepherding Movement" had good intentions but drifted into "heavy handedness" harming many precious saints and PDI/SGM

was not exempt.

As a cofounder, I'll do my best to walk a tightrope to tell our story honestly. Sharing flaws (without names) isn't personal but historical so others avoid mistakes we made. I contributed through pride, bitterness and "fear of man." I'm ever grateful for His mercy and grace.

"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11). Midway through our pilgrimage, I left as did many others. I identified with Ronald Reagan who said, "I didn't leave the Democrat Party, the Democrat Party left me." I say this with no malice but simply stating truth as I remember it.

Remembering the Jesus People

Pinpointing the exact date when People of Destiny/Sovereign Grace Ministry (now "churches") began is challenging but God birthed it in a season when hearts of young Christians were passionate for authentic New Testament Christianity.

At that time, I awoke to the "still small voice of God" impressing these words upon my heart: "Let it never be said of me that I presented the world a caricature of Christ." I believe something similar happened to many in The Jesus Movement.

In a turbulent time God revealed to scores of youths the transformative message of the gospel and a real Jesus who wasn't sad or mad but genuinely glad! He called us to discipleship (not mere church attendance) and a lifestyle as in the book of Acts with a countercultural message, mentality and manner of life (Acts 2:36-47).

Vision for authentic Christianity came through shared leadership (plurality vs “celebrity” model); leaders were “friends first and leaders second.” We meditated on 1 Corinthians 13 so we’d be “living in the love realm” as we practiced the 30 “one anothers” in Scripture. Agape love, unity and faith permeated those exciting days!

Our core values were Scriptural and practical: humility, unity, community, destiny, expectancy, generosity, victory, purity, modesty, integrity, hospitality, loyalty and the sanctity of life and marriage.

We declared regularly that “the church is not built on meetings but relationships” and “Christianity is not a meeting to attend but a life to be lived.” Lifestyle evangelism was our passion to “hasten the return” of our King (2 Pet. 3:12).

Starting Strong

Approaching a 50-year milestone is a time for reflection and celebration. (Next year my wife and I commemorate God’s faithfulness in our golden wedding anniversary.) It’s also time to recognize life lessons. “... it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you...” (Luke 1:3).

In 1970 I was recently converted and relocated from Cleveland for a position in D.C. A Christian woman had just returned from California where she’d experienced the Jesus Movement and prayed for its emergence in our locality.

I met Lydia Little and she asked me to join a group of youth in her home. After we moved to a “rec” center she asked me to prepare weekly sermons and “take under my wing” a newly saved “Jesus freak” and take him with me to a Charismatic conference at Notre Dame.

This launched us into a friendship that evolved into us

sharing in complementary team ministry, alternating teaching for young people 10 minutes from the White House that grew to 2,000 in a few years! Scores came to the . “Take And Give” meetings, including the son of a Supreme Court Justice, evangelist Sid Roth and Calvary Chapel’s Lonnie Frisbee.

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We disciplined young converts like former “druggie” Che Ahn who eventually departed (he disputed one leader’s claim that the Great Commission didn’t apply to all believers. He confided in me then that we’d start losing our call to reach the lost and also faith for the supernatural, healings, miracles and gifts of the Spirit. Che had faithfully prayed for the sick for years after every meeting and saw scores of healings! Dr. Ahn today leads a ministry serving scores of churches worldwide and just defeated Gov. Newsom in the Supreme Court!

Along the way others left like prophetic leader, Lou Engle, who for decades has been a catalyst, filling stadiums for massive prayer events and our call to repentance, revival and reformation. Some of our leaders viewed him as a “loose cannon” and said “he needed to go get a job.”

In the mid-70’s 20 “trailblazers” met in our apartment to begin transitioning the . gathering into a Saturday evening church. Later, following the biblical pattern of multiplication, I entrusted our young church to my “yokefellow” and took our first pioneering church planting team to Cleveland.

After starting the new church, I asked one of the men I disciplined to remain as leader and returned to our church home. Over time we recognized an “apostolic team” of leaders, planted and adopted churches throughout America, hosted conferences and launched a school for pastors and a national

magazine.

There came a seminal moment when I returned from my year in Cleveland. I experienced an unexpected soft explosion for which I was totally unprepared.

Lesson #1 Watch out for the subtle sins of comparison and competition.

Look for Part 2 soon!

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