

The Rise, Fall, Recovery of People of Destiny/Sovereign Grace Ministry, Part 2

This is the second part of an article covering the nearly 50-year history of a ministry that impacted hundreds of thousands, but then sadly veered off the “straight and narrow.” If you missed Part 1 it’s essential reading to familiarize yourself with how things got started and the three lessons we learn before continuing the never before published story.

Going Astray

On my study wall, there’s a plaque that reads: “I would not be the man I am without your care and example. Your Yokefellow...”

That was then but something started to surface – the toxic trap of a fleshly contest. Was it due to insecurity... pride... envy... jealousy ... I really didn’t grasp what was simmering.

In returning, my partner preferred “Gone with the Wind” to “Welcome Back Kotter.” He relished his role as senior leader, challenging me: “C’mon, how about now just let your boy do it!”

The sin of satanically inspired competition simmered and spread subtly culminating in my brother eventually threatening to leave. We sought counsel from apostolic leaders in England who knew us well, with one causing near whiplash in my brother when he rebuked him: “You have an evil and unbelieving heart!” “When jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil thing” (James 3:16).

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Satan stoked the fires and as a last resort we were counseled: “He’s saying he’ll leave if you don’t, so let him do the only thing he says he wants to do – be the senior pastor – so you focus on outward expansion of the ministry, returning home to share and enjoy relational support like Paul did!”

Nice on paper, not in reality. The day inevitably came when I posed the ultimate question, “Brother, I need to know not if you need me but do you want me here?”

His silence was deafening. Doris knew intuitively the reality of what was unfolding. “Larry, they want you gone.” Within a short time, with deep sadness we moved our family to a sister church where they said they wanted us. We left without any real explanation to the church (a year later they did gather a handful of leadership couples for a quiet “send off”).

Calvinism Controversy

So there’s no misunderstanding, I love and respect my brothers in Christ who embrace Calvinist/Reformed theology. Historically problems arise with Calvinist extremes and rigid application of this system. John Calvin was a controversial figure who was expelled from Geneva for the legalistic implementation of his doctrines.

My fellow leaders felt I didn’t “fit” so something needed to be done. My anointing centered on prayer, evangelism, faith, fulfilling one’s destiny and unity with the wider body of Christ. My involvement with Promise Keepers was viewed as being too “eclectic.” We needed to view things through the lens of 5-Point Calvinist/Reformed theology emphasizing God’s sovereign “election” of people with an emphasis on “indwelling sin.”

Calvinists highlight two foundations: God is Sovereign and God is good. We concur but celebrate a just and fair God who is love (not arbitrarily & capriciously predestining people for heaven or hell) who gives us freedom upon hearing the proclamation of the gospel to repent. "God does not want anyone to perish but that all come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Leaders emphasizing Calvin's (Reformed) doctrines of his five points () caused division. "Does God want everyone to be saved?" "Does God predestine people to hell?" Years later when the successor of my yokefellow left Christianity as a heretic many struggled legitimately: "Wasn't he in the 'elect'?"

My friend stressed, "Everything we do is shot through with sin!" and encouraged the reading of Puritan literature to grasp our "total depravity." Our softball team's leader suggested "Worms" as our team's name so we could "share with inquirers on God's wrath and salvation!"

I was given a teaching by theologian R.C. Sproul in which he said "Charles Finney was not a Christian if he didn't accept certain Calvinist doctrines." My father-in-law warned our now divided family, "This is heresy!"

I was marginalized in ministry and my book "Divine Appointments" was removed, labeled as "too man-centered" (also why our ministry name had been changed).

Many departed the ministry calling themselves "survivors" viewing Calvinism as a virus that infected the ministry. It was much deeper.

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RC Sproul wrote on "The Death of Calvinism" in his Tabletalk

magazine. “We are now so weak – only about 10% of Christendom embrace this system... to know how to regain the sway and influence we had it’s important to know how we lost it!”

Years later, under new leadership, changes were encouraged among the “family” of churches, softening the prominence of Calvinism to be more welcoming and less controversial as “gospel centered” churches.

Behind the Curtain

It didn’t happen overnight but there was a subtle slippage from “the simplicity of devotion to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). Legalism, man pleasing, conformity, fear of man, misuse of spiritual authority (domineering vs servant leadership) and sexual abuse scandals surfaced, eroding the fabric of the church.

When some issues arose during the turbulent teen years (in time all the “apostolic team” leaders faced parenting challenges), the leaders convened a private meeting, summoned me in (after five hours) and stated they’d “lost respect for me in leadership” so I should submit to their spiritual authority, “step down,” write an approved letter to be read to churches (affirming their care) then appear in public with my yokefellow who told me to nod approvingly as he “hit” key points.

They told me to “prove my humility” by submission (I tried for six months), being warned that if I refused it was “disloyalty and pride” and if I simply left the process that would prove it (yet that’s exactly what my yokefellow did years later, quickly relocating to another city). Finally, when my fellow leaders threatened me with a certain coercive pressure tactic, we confronted them. After 25 years invested in a ministry “the handwriting was on the wall” – it was time to go.

Lesson #2 Resist intimidation/manipulation and remain true to

biblical convictions.

To be continued in Part 3.

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