

Pastor Keith Craft: Helping People Discover Their Divine Fingerprint

Keith Craft is senior pastor of Elevate Life Church in Frisco, Texas, just north of Dallas. After building what many are calling a “European-style cathedral” in Frisco, he’s just released a highly acclaimed new book, *Your Divine Fingerprint: The Force That Makes You Unstoppable*. Recently, media producer and consultant Phil Cooke asked Craft about his life, his church and his new book.

Phil Cooke: You’ve never had a “normal” background in ministry. As a child, you almost died. Then you became an athlete, eventually leading the Power Team and traveling nationwide showing great feats of strength. How in the world did you transition into becoming a pastor?

Keith Craft: I did not come from a ministry family. I was called into ministry when I was 9 years old and did not have a frame of reference as to what that meant. All I knew is that I had an intense passion for God and to make Him known in the world. As I grew up, I just wanted to be used by God.

After graduating from college, I became a youth pastor in a church that hosted the Power Team. As I traveled the country, working through the local church with this true evangelistic ministry, God connected my heart with His church throughout America. I began to understand the role of the church in the world and came to believe that the greatest hope for the world was and is the local church.

When I was 37, I knew I had the gift of leadership and was not sure how that translated into pastoring, but that I would answer the question when I was 40. We launched our church on January 9, 2000—my 40th birthday.

At 40, I realized my best and highest use was to create a leadership culture in the context of the local church and create a place where not only people could connect with God in a relevant way, but where the emphasis was not just on conversion but transformation. As the lead pastor of Elevate Life Church, I see my job as a cultural architect to create an environment where people can encounter and connect with God.

Cooke: The men's ministry at Elevate Life Church has become somewhat of a sensation. How did you build it, and how do you achieve such high levels of motivation with the men in your congregation?

Craft: The two greatest influences in my life were my mother and my grandmother. Growing up in church, all my Sunday school teachers were women. My father was a good man but not a godly man. He went to church every weekend, and yet what I came to realize was that the church never engaged his heart.

The bottom line? The way church was done did not reach my dad's heart or the heart of very many men that I observed.

I knew I was called to ministry early, but it was different. God gave me a heart to reach men. I began to look at the life of David and saw men around him called "mighty men." I began to ask myself the question, "Where are the mighty men today?"

I believe that every problem in the world is a "man" problem! It all goes back to the Adamic nature and what I believe is the original temptation for every man: passivity. Everything you see in the world—from poverty, crime, broken families, gender confusion, wars, identity crisis, etc.—is a "man" problem!

The enemy is afraid of men understanding that they are a son of God. He is afraid of men finding out the path that God has for them. Fathers, for the most part, have failed to give their sons a path because they had no path given to them.

God has given me a path, through the funnel of His church, to awaken the mighty men [Joel 3:9]. God has given me a mandate to introduce men to their warrior nature [Ex. 15:3] so that they can know how to “fight the good fight of faith” [1 Tim. 6:12] for their marriages, families, business, finances—for their future—and learn how to become like David, a man after God’s own heart.

Cooke: You’ve just opened one of the most visually stunning cathedrals in the country as your new worship center. Has the Christian community in general missed something when it comes to excellence? Should we be ashamed that we’re spending so much on buildings, or do you believe our facilities are another form of worship?

Craft: My philosophy about building God a house is based on the heart of David as described in 1 Chronicles 29. David wanted to build God a palace, and so did I. I was not trying to compete with anyone or prove a philosophy. I appreciate anyone’s heart in advancing God’s kingdom however they see fit. Multisite churches were born out of necessity originally. The kingdom of God was advancing through God’s church faster than guys could build buildings. I respect all models that advance God’s kingdom.

However, I was in a position in an emerging community to build God a palace! We were very strategic in our approach, and based on where we were called and planted, I wanted to make a statement for God in our region. I did not want the banks, hotels and business buildings that were being built to be the nicest buildings in our community. I wanted to build God a cathedral, which means “the elevated seat of Christ.” The building is not only a statement in our community of Christ’s place in our community, but is a reflection in the natural of our cathedral thinking. We built God a cathedral in Frisco as a form of worship to Him and to honor who He is. We believe that as we build His house, He will take care of our house [2 Sam. 7].

Cooke: You spend a lot of time speaking to corporate America. How did that happen, and why do you do it?

Craft: I think the church has done a pretty good job at reaching the “down and outers” but not a good job at reaching the “up and outers.” I feel like one of my mandates is to reach corporate America with a message that relates to them. As an avid reader, I realized by the late 80s that the church at large was not speaking the language of corporate America or strategically to the needs of a corporate man/woman.

I began to develop a core values-based message that resonated with corporate America and began to be asked to speak into businesses. This experience opened the door for me to speak in the world’s largest business seminars on subjects of core values, next-level thinking, alignments, and helping people to identify and define the most important things about their next level.

I do it because my personal mission statement is “To be a loving leader, motivator and mentor of biblical excellence to help people elevate their thinking so they can elevate their life and reach their full God-given potential.”

Cooke: Your new book is *Your Divine Fingerprint: The Force That Makes You Unstoppable*. Where did the idea for the book come from?

Craft: My father was a Dallas policeman—a crime scene investigator who worked in the fingerprinting department. I grew up with a recognition that every has a unique fingerprint. Through the years, I began to realize that the only way mankind knew how to use a person’s fingerprint was to identify them at the scene of a crime! I began to think about the reason why each person would have a fingerprint that no one else has. The answer to that question has become a life message I believe God has given me to deliver to the

world: "God has given you a fingerprint that no one else has so you can leave an imprint that no one else can leave."

Cooke: One of the key principles of the book is that genetically there's really only 1 percent difference between us. And yet that 1 percent is the difference between failure and success. Explain what you mean.

Craft: Ninety-nine percent of our DNA sequence is the same as everyone else's. There is only a 1 percent difference between everyone that has ever been born or that ever will be born. I believe it is the glory of God evidenced by your natural fingerprint. In Jesus' longest-recorded prayer in Scripture, Jesus prayed, "And the glory which you gave to Me, I now give it to them" [John 17:22].

I believe that each of us has been given a deposit of God's glory that is unique to us, evidenced by our fingerprint and the 1 percent difference between us and everyone that has been born and ever will be born. It is up to each individual to discover, develop and deploy what I call "your 1 percent," which is your X-factor for success. It is the force that makes you unstoppable.

Cooke: You may be one of the most enthusiastic leaders I've ever met. And yet statistically, it's alarming, the number of pastors leaving the pulpit every year. Why are so many pastors frustrated, defeated and ready to give up? And what's the answer?

Craft: I personally believe there are many pastors who go into full-time ministry because they have a gift to teach or preach, but they never develop themselves as a leader. There are really only two kinds of leaders: natural-born leaders and situational leaders. Neither is more important than the other, but you have to know which one you are or you will burn out.

For instance, Moses was a situational leader. The situation demanded that he lead. But his own father-in-law had to school

him to get some help or he was going to burn out. Joshua, on the other hand, was a natural-born leader, and declared, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord ” [Josh. 24:15). He knew it was about *we* and not *me*. Pastors are frustrated, defeated and many ready to give up because:

- They have not identified what kind of leader they are.
- They are focused on their gift more than their personal growth and development.
- They have not learned the art of self-leadership.
- They are trying to do what God has called them to do alone—they are not building teams.
- They are not creating transformational cultures and are focused on conversion only.
- They are running on empty because they are not growing personally, and you cannot give out what has not been poured in.
- They are focused on being liked rather than leadership.

Cooke: You’ve built a great church, speak to corporate America, launched a media outreach and now released a new book. What’s next for Keith Craft?

Craft: I really have a heart to help leaders in the body of Christ grow and develop so we can all better grow and expand God’s kingdom. I have been embraced and speak in the largest business seminars in the world and yet do not feel like I am making a significant impact and specifically “imprint” with my fingerprint in the church world.

In my opinion, the greatest need in the body of Christ is leadership. I want to help and hope that I will get more opportunities in the church to help pastors become better leaders.