

Orphans in the Pulpit

We have a serious ministry problem, worse today than it's ever been. Fake ministers. Fake love. Fake faith. Superficiality and a lack of transparency.

My heart breaks and weeps when I see how some got this way.

Through abuse, rejection, forms of pride, disappointment and lack of validation, many leaders and ministers project an image they want others to see—an image of a strong, confident leader who knows the Word of God. Often their résumé contains a list of accomplishments and achievements that belie the real truth of who they are.

Some ministers and leaders need constant validation and affirmation. Their peers must know how great they are. Their peers must honor and respect their gifts and ministry. If not, they will exalt themselves in self-aggrandizement to hide the real issues, insecurities and fears of their own hearts. They are spiritual orphans in our pulpits.

These orphans can never be wrong. They can never admit their mistakes. It is difficult for them to receive correction. Their leadership or personal lives can never be challenged, even by friends. They defend their right to be who they are and justify their actions. To me, more often than not, these are symptoms of orphan hearts.

I was one, so I know of what I speak. In 2002, the Lord delivered me after I surrendered all. In an inward vision, I was looking up through a glass ceiling at all the things I wanted in ministry—power, anointing, favor, significance, influence and so on, but the Lord directed me to the floor and my foundation. He spoke to me at length about my character saying such things as:

“The reason I have not opened the doors you’ve wanted me to

open to you in ministry is because if I did, you would have ceased to be a man after My own heart."

I broke down and wept when I realized He was keeping me from greater ministry opportunities, power and influence because of His love and protection for me.

He also said this:

"Take away 'ministry' over the last 17 years and what do you have? Your character has not been sufficiently dealt the death blows that it will take to properly develop it to where I can impart to you the mind of Christ. You need more mortification to receive the mind of Christ."

When I heard this, I realized He was requiring crucifixion and death to what I perceived I wanted and return to Him as my first love.

"But I have something against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4).

Let me ask you a question: Is Jesus enough for you? If you didn't have a ministry, a vision from God, an esteemed occupation and reputation, a list of achievements you're proud of, riches and possessions, how would it be with you? And if you don't have those things why are you so desperately reaching for them? Have you found your fulfillment in Him alone? And how would you know if you have?

More heart-searching questions: Why are you always talking about yourself? Why are you always defending who you are and what you do? Is it difficult for you to recognize the achievements of others and the honor they receive? Is it painful to celebrate a friend's success and accomplishments because you don't have much? If so, you may be a spiritual orphan. You may be insecure, and need so badly to find your security in the love of the Father. When you're secure in His love and who you are in Him, you want to lift up everyone else

except yourself. You can wash others' feet as Jesus did when your security is in Him alone.

You don't need further validation or the affirmation of friends. All that has done is cover up the real issues of your heart and life, and cause the deception to become thicker. You need the outstretched hand of the love of the Father God to deliver you from the bondage of your mind and soul, and fill your heart with His glory. You need a fresh revelation of His deep love for you. You need to hear the words, *"This is my son or daughter in whom I am well pleased."*

Full healing and restoration in a man or woman happens when they receive this revelation, and then have no need to be honored or affirmed by anyone. The honor of God will be enough. Jesus will be your all sufficiency.

When they asked the people of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, in Seoul South Korea, the largest church in the world, what they loved the most about their pastor, Dr. David Yonggi Cho, they said it was his humility. When he makes a mistake or misses it with God or the church, he stands in front of the congregation and asks for forgiveness. How rare that is today, especially among leaders of large churches and works.

Why am I saying all these things? Because as I grow older, I not only want souls to be saved, but my heart grows increasingly burdened for ministers who are called to save souls. They should be the primary agents for change and reformation in the church, but often they are the main hindrances. If change doesn't happen in them, it won't happen in many others because leaders transmit and impart what they are to others. In other words, if you save a ministry gift, you save souls.

Real deep and lasting change begins in all of us when we begin seeing things as God sees them. Full restoration in a man begins when he truly repents, asks for forgiveness and

surrenders all. Then there will be nothing for the enemy to hang on to. You will cut off his access into your mind, life and heart. You will be free from the accuser and your past. Once you repent and die to your own reputation, the devil will have nothing to hold over you. You will be completely and permanently free.

The Lord saved the gifts in my wife and me from defilement in 1995 for her and 2002 for me. We humbled ourselves and came under the dealings of God. Sometimes there is a season of pain we must endure to lay everything down at the altar. As ministers, we have to even be willing to lay down our ministries and churches for a season, and be willing to reveal to the people where we went wrong.

Orphan hearts are everywhere. They fear the disapproval of men because they have not embraced the approval of God that comes when they humble themselves in His sight. Come to the Father and allow His Spirit to anchor you in His love. I can testify that many old, lifelong burdens will be removed from your shoulders and you will enjoy a newfound freedom and rest you've perhaps never had before.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

"For you have not received the spirit of slavery again to fear. But you have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16). {eoa}

My full testimony of my own deliverance is in my book, The Journal of a Journey to His Holiness. Also, Soulsh Leadership and Purity of Heart are two other books that have helped many leaders get free from pride and insecurities.