

Surprising Ways God Builds His Kingdom – Part 4  
**THROUGH STAYING TRUE IN OUR JOY, LOVE AND MOTIVES**

Nehemiah 8: 9-12, Ephesians 2: 1-7, and I Corinthians 4: 1-5

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Final Challenge to the Third Annual IWD Conference

Haven't we been sweetly fed these last two days as God has ministered to our souls and spirits through Carl Moeller? I magnify the Name of Jesus for directing me in Whittier, California to call Carl and I magnify the Name of Jesus for you being willing, Carl to obey the voice of God and come to speak to us. Never object to the intense sensitiveness of the Holy Spirit of God as He is speaking in you. Our hearts must ever be Christ's home. The Holy Spirit is ever educating us down to the last scruple of our lives. God continues to stamp us as His saints as we waive our rights to our own path to obey the Lord Jesus! The theme of our Third Annual IWD Conference has been – "Surprising Ways God Builds His Kingdom. We have heard how God builds us from the inside out, not the outside in. We have listened intently to stories from North Korea and Iraq and Chiapas and Orissa in India and from the house church movement in China—reminding us that God builds His kingdom through the privilege of persecution. Then we have been awakened to how God builds His kingdom through tiny, mustard seed faith. Today I want to close this theme with another surprising way God builds His kingdom, through staying true to God in our joy, our love and our motives. Monday morning, the Lord awakened me to impress on my soul the title and substance of this message today. The Lord commended our staying true to Him in our doctrine, but He showed me that sound doctrine alone will not build the kingdom. He commends us for holding tightly to the ancient boundaries set years ago by our Free Church forefathers. Proverbs 22: 28 is so clear, "Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set." Before we share the Lord's Supper as a gathered district, let's examine our joy, our love, and our motives. Are we staying true in them?

**ARE WE STAYING TRUE TO GOD IN OUR JOY?** (I.) The first of our three texts today is found in Nehemiah 8: 9-12. God's people had survived a hard time of exile and discipline by the Lord. They were back from exile to their home in Judaea, in Jerusalem. Though they had but a little strength, they obeyed the Lord under Nehemiah's leadership and finally had completed building a protective wall around Jerusalem. It happened as the nation of Israel was catching its breath behind their newly protected walls, that they were called together at the Water Gate to hear Ezra the priest read from the law of Moses—something that had fallen by the wayside for many decades. As Ezra read, many men of God gave the sense

to the people who stood to hear the law of the Lord from early in the morning to midday. Now the people understood the word of the Lord, the doctrine, in essence, they stood together looking over their statement of faith. Now hear this first text. “And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.” And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.” Beloved, staying true to the Word of God and to our doctrine must never eclipse our joy. Paul tells us in Philippians 4: 4, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!” You can be right, and even dead right, but not be happy in Jesus, not rejoicing in your soul.

Philip Yancey wrote a book entitled, “Disappointment with God.” On page 157, he wrote, “The weekend before she went into the hospital for the last time, Peggie came home all excited about a quotation from William Barclay that her minister had used. She was so taken with it that she had copied it down on a 3 x 5 card for me: "Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory." She said her minister must have had a hard week, because after he read it, he banged the pulpit and then turned his back to them all and cried.” We have been through some difficult things in the Intermountain West District in the last three years. God wants us to turn these hard things into our glory and joy. We are a tiny fellowship of churches. The Evangelical Fellowship of Free Churches only has 10 churches at the moment, 8 in America and 2 brand new churches planted in south central Mexico—in Los Rodriguez and Silao. But God has reminded me, that small as we are, in April of 2010, our Evangelical Fellowship of Free Churches did not exist. God wants to turn our hearts away from any suggestions of the enemy that ministry in the IWD is too hard to rejoicing and being able to say, “Thank God, this is our story, Lord, and we rejoice.” Nehemiah's city wall construction team had many team players. If any one of the workers had ever tried to do his or her work on the wall alone, they would have never made it. They would have never finished the job. Building a capital city wall was too daunting a project. They had to work together. They had to be enjoying each other as they worked. Nehemiah, bless his heart, passed up the opportunity to eat better food than his workers. Instead he chose to live in the same quarters, eat the same food as he became one of the

workers on his team. As everybody chipped in with faithfulness, the joy of the Lord became more and more evident, until in only 52 days, the walls of Jerusalem were back up, standing strong again. Beloved, if we allow the hard work we have to do to be unto the Lord, the joy of the Lord will be our strength. Paul reminds us in Romans 14: 17, “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” On February 5th, 2013, I was walking down one street that God impressed me to walk in the city of Los Rodriguez. That day, with the Los Rodriguez pastor as my interpreter, we walked that street together. Then I knew why God had awakened me in the night and spoken to me in my spirit about walking that street. That day 27 people living on that one street came to faith in Jesus. In those 12 days in Guanajauto State, 103 people came to faith in Christ including Juan Elias and his wife. Juan has resisted the Gospel for 28 years. This old drinking buddy of Pastor Zaqueo before he was saved is now a believer. Among the new believers was the wife of man who killed Pastor Zaqueo’s father, Margarita Rodriguez and her grown daughter. On February 3rd, the joy of the Lord was our strength as we baptized 19 new believers at the brand new baptistry of our new church without a roof in Los Rodriguez. Last October, as I was up in the night, to build up the fire downstairs, God spoke to my heart with a question—“Are you willing to see the IWD grow overseas, or must it just be in the United States?” My answer to the Lord was laughter. I told the Lord, “However You wish to grow us, here or overseas—I rejoice. Beloved, it is surprising that we are growing first with two church plants not in America. Isn’t God paradoxical, as Carl told us? Bless His holy Name! Secondly,

**ARE WE STAYING TRUE TO GOD IN OUR LOVE?** (II.) Our second text is exceedingly familiar in Revelation 2: 1-7, but we need to hear it again. “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lamp-stands. “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for My name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” Beloved, having our doctrine right, and staying true is not all God wants. He wants our joy, and yes, He

wants our love, our first love. God wants what we once gave Him when we first came passionately to know Him. In Jeremiah 2:2, the weeping prophet spoke of Judah's apostasy saying, "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, "I remember concerning you, the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown." Jesus warned His disciples that in the last days, this same tragedy will occur. In Matthew 24: 12 Jesus prophesied, "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold." Beloved, when I returned from Nigeria last November, we had seen over 250 people come to faith in Jesus in fifteen days. What I saw over and over were thousands of people who took off work for a week at Camp Bethlehem in Lagos. These people work all year long to ask their bosses for a week off to go to camp for a week. With primitive facilities, and the men in separate quarters and the women in separate quarters, they still love the Lord so much they take off a week to come together – 100 churches and sing together and listen to the preached word. How many of us would choose a week of our vacation time each year to stay in a primitive camp where we could worship God together for a week? Jesus is their first love. It is possible to be dead right—theologically, but without joy, and yes, to be without our first passionate love for Jesus. It would be better for us to deny Jesus our love honestly, than to feign our love, when it is obvious, in our hearts that we aren't passionate for Him and His work and His will. How often I watch it in God's service—we as disciples can become less and less faithful in church, we can read the Bible less and less, pray less and less, and believe it or not, honeybees that God has made us to be for Him, we can turn into stinging bees, without joy and love. We can actually start speaking negatively about our spouse, our church, or the future of our own district. Beloved, I charge you—Let's return to our first joy, and our first love. Thirdly, and lastly,

**ARE YOU STAYING TRUE TO GOD IN YOUR MOTIVES?** (III.) Our last text is found in I Corinthians 4: 1-5. "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the motives, or the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." So often our motives are self-serving, which means we get by with what we can, until we are forced to change.

At a busy dental office, one patient was always late. Once when the secretary called to confirm his appointment, he said, "I'll be about 15 minutes late. That won't be a problem, will it?" "No," the lady told him. "We just won't have time to give you an anesthetic." He arrived early.

What must God do to purify our motives so we are willing, ready, and able to grow—to reproduce for the Lord? I know of couples who don't want children, but God grants them children anyway. I know of others who long for children, but they are still barren, praying, pleading and begging God for children. In Nagpur, in 2002, I trained 30 students in evangelism and I departed for Nainatal, India in the Himalayas for special meetings. When I came back to give a final exam to them, I asked for reports of what God had done. Many had had the joy of seeing people come to a saving faith in Jesus. Never will I forget a girl I would so love to bring to the US. In India she may never get her teeth fixed. She is a beautiful young lady, but her front teeth are exceedingly bucked teeth, sticking almost straight out. I watched her as she sobbed as the class were telling success stories. Finally I asked her what her story was. She told me she had witnessed to many, many people but none of them had received the Lord. Then she sobbed loudly. I was moved to tears and cried. I asked her to come up and stand beside me. I told the class that above them all, God had burdened this lady with Godly motives for witnessing and she was weeping for souls. I told her to keep praying and witnessing because those who sow in tears will reap in joy." (Psalm 126: 5)

I close with an intimate story of a drummer you have met at this IWD conference. I was your superintendent back on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997 when I got a call while on an IWD trip, eating in a café in Soda Springs, Idaho. The call was that it appeared my daughter Heather was ready to give birth to a baby with severe renal failure. If the child lived at all, there might have to be a kidney transplant or the child might die. Jinny and I and all our family prayed for Pastor Kevin and Heather. That's where my journal came in as I read it yesterday afresh. These are the words I wrote the next day, after our humble pleading as a family with the Lord, begging for God's mercy and healing. We were praying with right motives. My entry was small the next day. I got permission from the drummer to read these words and I quote, "Sunday, Week begins—9-28-97. 2:36 AM. Andrew Gustav Kneeland. Welcome to our family! 6 pounds 10 ounces, 19 and a half inches long. Just got the message. A few tears. Andrew has urinated 3 times—all is okay. His kidneys are working fine. When Jesus fixes His gaze on you, do what He says." Beloved, let's stay true in our joy, our love and our motives. God has fixed His gaze on the IWD. This is a pivotal conference. Let's do whatever He says. Bow your heads.