

R E S U R R E C T I O N

Reality



RESURRECTION

Reality



ROD PARSLEY

RESULTS
PUBLISHING

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Introduction

I invite you to join me on a journey that has taken me to places I could not have imagined when I first heard the concept of resurrection seed in 1985. Since that time, countless others have accepted an invitation to participate in the marvelous outpouring of miracles that always occurs in the forty days leading up to Resurrection Sunday.

What started as an opportunity to complete a small building project has turned into a life-changing experience for me, my family, the congregation it has been my privilege to pastor for decades, and many others across the country and around the world who have heard about the miracle of resurrection seed.

If what you see described in the pages ahead is beyond your usual experience, keep in mind that God is bigger than we have ever believed, perceived or received. I encourage you to come along as we once again survey the significance and wonder of the cross and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and discover how we can benefit fully from what He died and rose again to provide for us. I am confident that we will celebrate together as you, too, realize the power of a resurrection seed.

The Resurrection Seed Reality

“God,” the man said, “it’s not working.”

It seemed like such a simple statement, but it was sincere, and a profound reflection of a discontent that had been growing in his soul for months.

Not long before, the truth of Malachi 3:10 had struck him like a sledgehammer: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the LORD of Hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive it.”

The man was honest before God. The windows of heaven did not seem to be open to him. He had plenty of room to receive more blessing. And as he wrestled with this issue in prayer, he reminded God that he had faithfully tithed on every dollar that came into his hands since he was saved many years before.

“God,” he said again, “it’s not working! But I know that if it’s not working, it’s not because of Your Word, it’s because of me. God, help me see where I’m missing it.”

Then the Holy Spirit spoke to the man. “I will show you,” He said.

That man was me.

In the early spring of 1985, I was living in a one bedroom bachelor apartment on the third floor of a housing complex on the east side of Columbus, Ohio. I didn't have a lot of furniture, and was away from the apartment for long days and only home for short nights. I was fully occupied pastoring one of the fastest growing churches in the region, and had neither the time nor the inclination to acquire many comfortable furnishings.



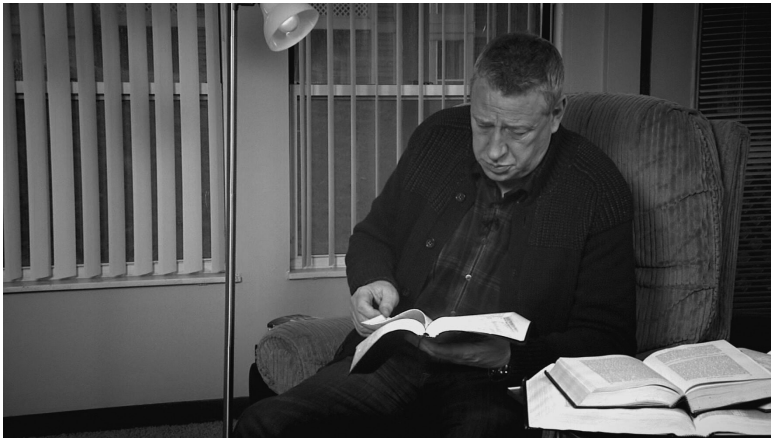
Pastor Rod Parsley in his office (1985)

I did have a large recliner, a pole lamp, and a television tray that I used as a table next to my chair. It was there that I got painfully honest with God, and it was there that He graciously met me and responded to my cry.

I am convinced that one of the reasons many Christians do not receive the insight and revelation they need from God about questions for which there seem to be no easy answers is that they are not honest before Him. I have witnessed believers kick and scream, squall and bawl, make

accusations and excuses, and do everything in the world to try to convince God that their failure is His fault. I believe a more judicious use of our time in prayer is to go to God honestly and straightforwardly and say, “God, your Word says one thing, but my experience is the opposite. Show me where I am mistaken.”

When the presence of God invaded my third floor apartment that day in 1985, He did not come to condemn me. He came to set me free. But if I had tried to maintain my pride and refuse to admit my need, I may have remained in lack for all these years. The Bible says God desires truth in the inward parts (see Psalm 51:6), and when we acknowledge the truth, even when it hurts, freedom will always be the result.



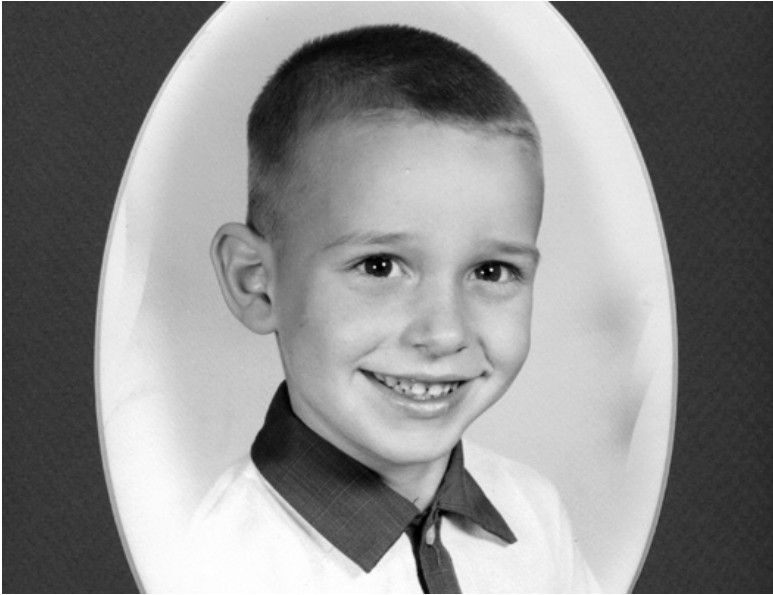
Pastor Rod Parsley in the same recliner and apartment where God gave him the resurrection seed revelation

What the Holy Ghost revealed to me there that day, and in the days to come, would result in overwhelming blessing being poured out not only in my life, but in the lives of multiplied thousands of other believers around the globe. The revelation that was sparked in my spirit became the foundation for the concept of resurrection seed that has become such a vital part of the ministry of World Harvest Church, all of its outreaches and many other congregations as well.

Winters in Ohio, as in many parts of the country, are messy. You never know what kind of weather a day will bring – it could be snow, sleet, wind or freezing rain. After months of gray skies, cold temperatures and biting winds, everyone is ready for a change. The end of winter and the beginning of spring is anxiously anticipated by all who have endured winter's chill. Of course, spring is also a time when all these who love the Lord look forward to the commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Easter Sunday.

It was in the midst of this season of natural and supernatural anticipation that God told me this: “Every year, you celebrate Me giving My best – the sacrifice of My Son, Jesus Christ. All year long, you give Me the tithe of your income. This year, as you remember My sacrifice, I want you to challenge the people to give their very best to Me on Resurrection Sunday – one week's income in celebration of Me giving My best to them. As they are obedient to My Word, I will pour out a blessing on them there will not be room enough to receive.”

This word startled me. My parents taught me to be a tither from the time I was old enough to receive money of any amount. I can still remember them sitting me down on one occasion after I had received fifty cents. They separated a nickel from among the coins and said, “This part is called the tithe. You need to honor the Lord by returning this to Him. The rest of it you can use for yourself – but don't ever touch the tithe. That part belongs to God.”



Pastor Rod Parsley (Age 8)

I thank God for a heritage that includes God-fearing parents. When I was a young child, we didn't know everything about God and finances that we know now, but we knew enough to give God the tithe first. In fact, I don't know that I ever received a dollar since I got saved at the age of eight on which I didn't pay the tithe. I'm not bragging, but I want to point out that even though we are tithers, we still may fall short of God's best for us through a lack of knowledge, as the Bible says in Hosea 4:6.

There is so much more that God wants to reveal to us beyond foundational principles. But until we master the fundamentals, we can never go on to other things. How would you feel if you were in a hospital, and the surgeon who was getting ready to operate on you had never passed anatomy class in medical school? You wouldn't have a lot of confidence in their ability. In fact, you would demand another surgeon, and probably another hospital!

In the same way, God wants to reveal truths and concepts to us that will help us move on in our experience with Him, but until we have mastered fundamental principles, we will remain right where we are spiritually, and many times, financially as well.

I received that word from God in my little apartment, and lost no time sharing it with my congregation. We were completely out of office space, so we planned to build a separate office building that would provide room for our staff. Our estimates indicated that the building would cost \$100,000, and I was determined not to go into debt to build it. We could have borrowed the money, but I felt in my spirit that it was not God's will for us to proceed in that way. I believed God had something better in store for us, based on the word I had already received from Him.



Original Church Facilities on Wright Road, Canal Winchester, Ohio (1985)

I made this announcement on a Sunday morning in our church: “We’re going to build an office building, and it’s going to cost \$100,000. But we’re not going to borrow any money to build it – we’re going to pay cash. Do we have the money? Not now, but we shall have it. Where is the money going to come from? We’re going to receive it on Resurrection Sunday morning – a one-time cash offering of at least \$100,000.”

I then went on to explain what God showed me about giving our best to commemorate Him giving His best. I talked about how I was honest with God about not overflowing with His blessing, and how God responded to me by directing me to challenge the people to give a sacrificial and supernatural seed. I articulated it as carefully and completely as I could, trusting all the while that the congregation would get just a glimpse of what was available to them as a result of simple obedience.

Keep in mind, this was 1985, and our congregation, only a few hundred in number, had just come through a million dollar building project less than a year before to erect the building in which we were worshipping at that time. In addition, none of us, myself included, had ever heard of, much less participated in, a one-time cash offering of that amount. I could see some of the people looking at me and thinking, “Either our pastor has really received a word from the Lord, or he has completely lost his mind.” Before it was all over, there were times when I was tempted to think the same thing.

I was faithful to deliver the word that God gave me, and what happened in the next few weeks was one of the greatest things I have ever experienced or hope to experience this side of heaven. As I continued to write the vision and make it plain, people began to receive it—not just as

a word to me as their pastor, but as a word to them as well. As news about God's command and the promise that was connected to it spread among the people, their enthusiasm and excitement began to increase.

Before long, everyone was doing their best to see to it that God's word was obeyed. Some people took second jobs, dedicating all their income from it to their resurrection seed offering. Some people sold items, or had garage sales, or temporarily discontinued using certain products or services, all to fulfill their commitment to give God a sacrificial offering. We were all fasting and praying, and at every church service, I kept the vision before the whole church.

It seemed like an impossible goal. My faith had been stretched before, but this was a brand new experience for me. It was exhilarating, but at times the devil did his best to get me to doubt that it was going to happen. However, I was certain I had heard from God, and I knew that God would stand behind His word.

Finally, Resurrection Sunday arrived. The building was packed and jammed with people. Many came because they were confident that they were going to participate in a miracle. Some came to see what (as they thought) God was not going to do. Near the beginning of the service, I noticed some television cameras I did not recognize. I was very thankful, since I thought someone had donated additional television equipment to us. Then I noticed the symbols of national news organizations on the extra cameras, and I realized that local television stations had showed up at our service. I never did find out who contacted them, but there they were.

After a short while, the news reporters started packing up their equipment to leave. I interrupted the service and said "Wait a minute!

You folks from the news stations, just stay right where you are. I want your cameras rolling when God does a miracle.” They stopped putting their equipment away and sat down.

We received the offering, and while it was being counted, I preached a message on the cross, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and people responded. The altar was full of men and women weeping their way to salvation. It was a glorious climax to a wonderful morning. But for those who were already saved, they were expecting something in addition to the altar call – they wanted to hear whether or not we reached our goal.

As the congregation was singing, I sent an usher out a side door to the room where the offering was being counted. “Tell them I need to know the amount, because all these people are waiting,” I said.

A few moments later, he came back in the same door, shaking his head, and with a concerned expression on his face. My sister Debbie, who was seated on the second row, had seen me send the usher out, and when he came back, she thought he was indicating we hadn’t reached our goal. The implications for the ministry would be immense. If we had not achieved the goal, people would be discouraged, and my reputation as a man who heard from God might never recover. My sister put her head down on the pew in front of her and began to pray. In addition to being my only sibling, during her lifetime after I became involved in ministry, she was always one of my strongest supporters in prayer. She told me later what her petition was at that moment: “Oh God, my brother is a good man, but just this one time, let him lie! Let him lie, God, and then he can ask forgiveness later!”



Pastor Rod Parsley with his sister, Debbie

My attention was on the usher who had come back into the room. He was standing just inside the door, with his hands folded, shaking his head. I impatiently motioned him over to where I was. “What do you mean?” I demanded. “Why are you shaking your head at me like that?” “The door was locked,” the usher said. “I couldn’t get in to find out the result.”

I turned him around so fast it must have made him dizzy. I said, “You go back there and break the door down if you have to, but tell them I need a report to give these people!” He hurried out.

A few moments later, a sweet little white-haired saint who was in charge of our accounting functions at the church came in, smiling broadly as she always did, and waving a piece of adding machine tape in her hand. She approached me and gave me the tape, along with an explanation of the figures.



Mary Cunningham with Ellen, Pastor Rod Parsley’s mother

I went to the platform to make the announcement. I decided to add a little bit to the drama of the moment. I said, "I want you to know that after all our praying, fasting, sacrificing and effort, we did not receive \$100,000." The room was as silent as death.

"We did not receive \$110,000," I continued. "We did not receive \$120,000, or \$130,000, or even \$140,000." By this time, the congregation was beginning to catch on. "We received, as a result of our obedience to God's word, a one-time cash offering of over \$144,000!"

Church's Easter collection at \$144,000

Word of Life out to build new facilities

By GEORGE R. PLAGENZ
C-J Staff Writer

They are up to \$144,437.71. And still counting.

That's the amount of Sunday's Easter collection at Word of Life Church, 10165 Wright Road, Canal Winchester.

"Some people who couldn't get here on Easter morning are mailing in their offerings," says the Rev. Rodney Parsley, the church's flamboyant 28-year-old pastor. "We don't have it all totaled up yet."

Whatever it comes to, it could be the largest single-service collection ever taken at a church. How did it happen?

"We badly need a new church office building," Parsley says. "It is already going up and will cost \$100,000. I told our people on Palm Sunday that I was giving one week's salary as my Easter offering to help pay for that building. I told them God gave his best on Easter and we ought to be able to do the same."

The 2,000 worshippers at the Easter service responded by giving an average of \$70 per man, woman and child. Some endorsed their paychecks and made them payable to the church and dropped them in the plate. Others put in cash or personal checks.

"Our ushers counted it after the collection was taken," Parsley says. "It took more than an hour. Then I announced the total to the congregation." A big cheer went up, Parsley says.



TOM WILCOX/C-J

The Rev. Rodney Parsley rests a foot atop the foundation blocks for the new church offices near his Word of Life Church in Canal Winchester.

The phenomenal collection matches the church's phenomenal growth. Started by Parsley when he was 21 in the summer of 1978, the church had seven people at its first service in Parsley's back yard. Later, the congregation moved into a basement warehouse under a bar on Ohio Route 256 in Pickerington.

In 1980 the Word of Life, a non-denominational church, moved into

its first permanent home — a little wooden structure built in a cornfield on Wright Road in Canal Winchester. The congregation grew so steadily that by the time the present sanctuary was ready for occupancy last June, Parsley was conducting three services each Sunday morning.

The original church, next to the new building, is now being used for Sunday school and to house the church offices.

In less than a year, the congregation has outgrown the present 1,300-seat sanctuary and has plans either to build an addition to the church or construct a new, 3,000-seat sanctuary.

"Three architects have already showed me their plans," Parsley says. "We will make a decision soon so we can get started on the new addition or new church by summer."

Newspaper article (1985)

Immediately, the scene in that tabernacle was one of holy bedlam. People screamed, cried, threw their hands in the air, hugged each other, swung one another around, jumped, clapped, and generally went wild. God had spoken, His people obeyed, and we received a miracle.

By the time everything was added up, including offerings that were mailed to us, the total exceeded \$147,000, and we built our office building debt free. But that's not the real miracle of resurrection seed. God said if we would obey Him, He would pour out a blessing upon us that there would not be room enough to receive. And in that year, and every year since then, the greatest season of outpouring of amazing signs, wonders and miracles is during the season surrounding when we plant our resurrection seed.

However, the significance of this story is more than just one specific miracle for our congregation. The key to our victory in 1985, and every year since then, and the key to your victory now, is simple obedience to what God says. And there is no need to ask God for additional revelation until you do what He has already told you to do.

Those of you who have children can probably remember an exchange that goes something like this: "Johnny (or Susie), you need to straighten up your bedroom (or take out the trash, or put the dishes away) before you go outside." A short while later, your child comes to you and asks if they can go outside. Your first question, of course, is, "Did you do what I told you to do?" Whether it is our earthly parents or our heavenly Father, first things come first.

But even after we have done the first and fundamental things, sometimes problems remain. It is at this point that many Christians throw

up their hands and change their theology to suit their circumstances, instead of recognizing that the power of God's Word will change their circumstances. We must press on with God, and seek His continual guidance, even at times when life seems to make no sense. And it is in these times that God will speak, and reveal Himself to you in ways you could not imagine. And it is in these times that great exploits are done for the kingdom of God.

The devil came to tempt Jesus when He was in the wilderness. But regardless of what form Satan's lies took, Jesus remained faithful to the Word of God, and continued to trust God regardless of His circumstances. Great victory was the result.

In the same way, when you encounter circumstances beyond your control, and when it seems as though every demon of the hordes of hell has been given your address, you can press on through the adversity and win the battle for your mind, for your family, and for your finances. I have learned that it is in these times that God will often speak to you to do something unprecedented and extraordinary. You may look around you and say, "There is no way it will work." But when you look to God, He will assure you that it will. And when you are determined to break out of the mold that others try to put you in and obey God totally and without reservation, the devil will be defeated and miracles will be multiplied. I have experienced it in my own life, and I have found it to be true in our congregation as well. Obedience is the key to your victory, whether it is in the challenges that face you now or the ones that are to come.

There has not been a year since that first resurrection seed offering in 1985 that we have not faced some sort of seemingly immovable obstacle. But God has always responded to our need with a word that, when

received, believed, and acted upon, has brought us through every trial and helped us pass every test. In fact, the concept of the resurrection seed is something we have built upon every single year at World Harvest Church. It has become such a life-changing truth that other individuals, and even entire churches, participate with us every year, and they experience supernatural outpouring as well.

God has been faithful to us for over thirty years, and has given us increase and blessing beyond our expectations. But we must be diligent to hear His voice and obey if we expect His blessing to continue to pour out of an open heaven. There is no way I can rehearse every word God has given us in the past, but I do want to encourage you with a testimony from my own experience of how God will open doors when we obey Him.

Many years ago, my pastor, mentor and spiritual father, Dr. Lester Sumrall, asked me to accompany him to the Soviet Union, where he was scheduled to hold the first gospel crusade in that nation in over seventy years. He very graciously gave me the opportunity to preach in one of the meetings. This trip wasn't scheduled at the most convenient time for me, since we had just embarked on another building project at the church. In addition, I had heard stories of what conditions were like in the Soviet Union, and my flesh was not thrilled at the prospect of traveling far, resting little and enduring much. But I knew that when my pastor asked me to do something, God always had a blessing in mind, so I rearranged my schedule, kissed my wife goodbye and went.



Lenin Sports Arena (St. Petersburg, Russia)



Pastor Rod Parsley preaching the gospel in the former Soviet Union

I held up my Bible in the middle of the Lenin Sports Arena in Leningrad, now known as St. Petersburg, just a few days after a military coup, the repercussions of which eventually toppled Mikhail Gorbachev from power. There in that arena, in a nation where the name of God had been banned for seventy years, I preached without reservation from the Word of Almighty God. At the end of that meeting, when the invitation was given for salvation and healing, an entire battalion of the Red Army came to the altar in repentance and faith. A whole row of people who had been confined to wheelchairs got up and started walking and running. I learned later that the soldiers went into the city streets and stopped public transit buses, testifying of their newfound faith in Jesus Christ. I was there when the hammer and sickle flag of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics came down, and the beautiful flag of Russia went up. But as electrifying and history making as those events were, God spoke to me on the way back to America with words that burned into my soul.

“I want you to get on every television station that becomes available,” God said, “and tell them the same thing you told them in Russia.” I didn’t know how it would be possible, but I told God I would do it.

No sooner had I entered my office upon returning home, than I found not one, but two contracts for television time being offered to me on international Christian networks. These were time slots for which we had been searching for years, to no avail. Was it a coincidence? I do not believe in coincidences, but in divine appointments. As I was faithful to sow a seed of truth into a nation where darkness had reigned, God opened a door of opportunity that no man could have opened, and no devil can close. As a result of those television contracts, *Breakthrough* the television broadcast I have been privileged to host, was eventually available to ninety-seven percent of the televisions in America, seventy-eight percent of Canada, and in most of the nations of the world. It all broke open because of one simple act of obedience.

No doubt the facts of your situation will be different than mine, but God’s Word is eternal, and He is no respecter of persons. God is full of revelation, and He has the keys to open every door to your future. Hear His voice, obey His direction, and experience victory that you have never known.



Original Resurrection Seed Notes (1985)

The Ultimate Resurrection Seed: *Jesus*

During His earthly ministry, Jesus spent much of His time explaining concepts regarding the kingdom of God. He never used terminology that was beyond the reach of His listeners, even though some of them misunderstood what He was attempting to convey—as Nicodemus famously did in John chapter 3.

One of the most outstanding examples Jesus used to demonstrate what the kingdom of God was like is found in Mark 4:26-30: “He said, “The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he does not know how. For the earth bears fruit by itself: first the blade, then the head, then the full seed in the head. But when the grain is ripe, immediately he applies the sickle because the harvest has come.”

If you want to understand the kingdom of God and how it operates, you must understand the principle of seedtime and harvest, sowing and reaping. Everything God does, He does with a seed. Something that has the power to begin again is planted in one form, but as the life within it grows and develops, it takes on a different form—one that is designed by God exactly as it pleases Him.

To fully understand the kingdom of God, you must understand the principle of seedtime and harvest.

In fact, God began the concept of seedtime and harvest as a fundamental principle of how the natural world works so that we could see displayed in all creation how His kingdom works. The wonder of the seasons is an example. During one season, a seed falls to the ground—usually in autumn. It is buried in the soil and appears to be dead over the winter. But in spring, new life springs up from what appeared to be lifeless, and grows and flourishes over the summer, until producing more seeds in the following fall season. The cycle continues year after year. Drought or disaster may interrupt the cycle temporarily, but ultimately the process will continue just as God designed it.

Even though this system seems miraculous, it is a natural phenomenon that God initiated to replenish and maintain the things that He created. Everything that God created has seed within itself so that it can propagate more of the same.

Every gardener follows this principle. If a family loves carrots, they plant carrot seeds at the appropriate season, and expect a harvest for their labors. If they want cucumbers, that is the seed they sow, and they rightfully anticipate a harvest from their sowing.

Sowing and reaping also works in the realm of money and material blessing. Paul used this language when receiving an offering in 2 Corinthians 9:6: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” He wasn’t talking to the church at Corinth about planting garden vegetables; he was talking about giving money and receiving a return as a harvest on their sowing.

But the foundational principle of sowing and reaping is not limited to plants, animals or material things. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” If we want a harvest of kindness, we must sow it into the lives of those around us. If we want a return of love, or mercy or friendship, we must plant seeds of what we desire. God is faithful to multiply our seed sown and give us an abundant harvest of whatever it is we need or want.

The ultimate resurrection seed was the Lord Jesus Christ. It may seem strange to think of a person as a seed, but the apostle Paul used the language of seedtime and harvest in his great discussion about the concept of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15. Verses 42-44 say: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

The *ultimate* Resurrection Seed was the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may not understand exactly how this happens, but that it happens cannot be denied, because it did happen just as Paul described it. Jesus was buried in the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and after three days, He rose from the dead. His body went into the tomb as a seed, but was gloriously resurrected in victory over death, hell and the grave, and began a great harvest of souls that continues to this very day. When God wanted a family, He started with a seed. That seed was Jesus, who was sent to earth as a baby, who manifested a mastery over demons, disease, and even death itself, who was resurrected as the Champion of the universe, and who is coming back as King over all creation. He is the ultimate resurrection seed.

The Reality of the Resurrection

Look back with me across the long, tortured landscape of human history. With a single sweeping gaze, cast your eye back through millennia of striving, suffering, progress, and pain. View the entirety of the timeline of mankind's sojourn on the earth—across the hills of hope and valleys of despair—and your eye will instantly note two particular geological features standing out more than any others.

First, in the most distant recesses of the ancient past, as you peer back into man's earliest days of dominion over this brilliant blue marble, we discern the outlines of a deep gorge. Look more closely. This dark and seemingly bottomless chasm is filled with regret, shame, and loss. This low point in history's rolling topography represents that awful day mankind's parents traded away the deed to a pristine planet for a bright, shiny lie. It represents the fatal blunder that ushered in the new and terrible era among men—the reign of Death.

Then the eye travels forward through the tear-soaked centuries and is drawn to a solitary peak, towering above the landscape. This soaring summit represents a day—roughly twenty centuries prior to our time—in which a lone and lonely descendant of that first couple ended Death's reign by utterly defeating it. This colossal peak has a name: *Mount Resurrection*.

The other, earlier feature on history's landscape, that yawning abyss of black despair, marks the fall of the first Adam. He and his bride's gullible embrace of a flattering deceiver's slander unleashed a flood of woe and pain upon a perfect world by disobeying the one stipulation their God and Creator had set before them. Grief and sorrow rushed in to fill the vacuum created by the loss of intimate connectedness to God, their loving and compassionate Father. Dominion stewardship over the earth slipped from Adam's grasping fingers. There in that garden paradise, humanity's parents were duped into handing over their God-granted authority and their keys to the kingdom. The terrible and tragic result was the entire earth being placed in relentless subjection to degeneration, decay, and death. The contemptible and cruel curse had commenced. From that day forward, Death reigned victorious over mankind and the once lavish, pristine earth that he had been assigned to rule.

Such is the immense depth of that valley. But that peak—oh, that wonderful mountaintop is as glorious as that abyss is dark. The Resurrection is the zenith of God's extraordinary redemptive strategy to legally restore what had been lawfully forfeited. It marks the consummation of His plan of the ages and the revealing of a mystery hidden since the foundation of the world. That mystery was wrapped up in the sinless life, matchless death, and third-day victory of the Last Adam—our reigning King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mere words stagger and fail under the burden of attempting to encompass the magnitude and glory of this event. Even so, in the words of a great circuit-riding Methodist preacher of the nineteenth century:

But who is this that cometh from the tomb?

He that is glorious in His appearance, walking

in the greatness of strength? It is thy Prince,

O Zion! Christian, it is your Lord! . . . He hath

stained His raiment with blood; but now as the first-born from the womb of nature, He meets the morning of His resurrection. He arises, a conqueror from the grave; He returns with blessings from the world of spirits; He brings salvation to the sons of men. Never did the returning sun usher in a day so glorious! It was the jubilee of the universe!

The jubilee of the universe. This wasn't hyperbole. In Old Testament Israel, God instituted the jubilee year as one in which all debts were canceled, prisoners released, slaves liberated, forfeited property restored, and scattered families reunited. (See Leviticus 25:8–34.) As we're about to discover, these remarkable blessings are all present in abundance at the summit of Mount Resurrection.

The day Jesus vanquished Death, man's greatest foe, represents the apex of God's patient, brilliantly executed, redemptive program. In other words, the event we commonly call the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most significant ever to transpire on this or any other world.

Christians of every creed and culture readily affirm this assertion with a "Yes, amen," yet most would be hard-pressed to explain precisely why, or in what way. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was dead and buried, and then He was alive again. "Of course, He's alive," we think. "He was the Son of God!" This is the story of Easter every eight-year-old Sunday schooler knows.

The Resurrection is the zenith of
God's extraordinary redemptive plan.

Yes, but what made the Resurrection the linchpin of God's grand design to wrest control of the earth away from that ancient deceiver? Why did divine justice demand not only the death of an unblemished innocent but also the conquest of the grave? What really transpired in those hours between that late Passover Friday afternoon and that Sunday morning? Was the spirit and soul of the Lamb of God sleeping? If not, what unseen drama unfolded in that seemingly silent span between the moment witnesses watched Jesus of Nazareth expel His final labored breath and that extraordinary Sunday morning when He entreated a delirious Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father"?

These questions represent profound mysteries to most believers. Our understanding of the Resurrection is a mile wide and a quarter-inch deep. Were we to truly grasp the answers to these questions—if the eyes of our understanding were opened to what really happened that weekend and what one man, in one tomb, on one Sunday accomplished for us—it would transform everything in us and around us.

It would revolutionize the way we *think* about our lives, turning our priorities upside down and causing us to "leave our nets" (our ideas and agendas) to follow Him, just as the disciples did!

It would change the way we *worship*, moving us to push aside every hindrance and pour out every ounce of adoration and adulation we could muster upon heaven's Crown Prince as we remember and reflect on His furious love toward us and the dear price He paid to redeem us.

It would change the way we *believe*, invigorating our faith and infusing every fiber of our beings with holy boldness. We would tolerate no more status quo Christianity as we flowed in a current that is forever contrary to anything and everything ordinary.

It would change what we *expect*, filling us with confidence that God's mercy and favor flow toward us, and that we are instruments to be used by Him for His glory. We already know that the atmosphere of expectancy is the breeding ground of miracles!

It would change what we *experience*, transforming our lives into ongoing public demonstrations of God's divine power. We would contract a heavenly contagion and become carriers of a communicable disease called Holy Ghost power!

It would change the power of our *witness*, sweeping us into the highways and byways of this sin-sick culture, proclaiming the truth of the gospel with the power to shake whole cities and even entire countries into revival as we lift high the name of Jesus to rescue a generation, restore a nation, and revitalize a civilization.

In other words:

The resurrection of
Jesus Christ is not only
the apex of redemptive
history, it should be
the apex of our faith.

The Sorrow

But first, we must witness a scene of unspeakable sorrow.

A handful of grief-stricken individuals stare in disbelief and horror at what remains of a man they loved, hanging limp and breathless from a blood-soaked beam.

Over the previous eighteen hours the blameless Son of God has run a vicious spiritual, emotional, and physical gauntlet. It began in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the war of self-will was waged and where the capillaries of His face burst at the thought that He might fall short of accomplishing His Father's will by dying there, having never made it to the cross. He had been arrested and bludgeoned beyond recognition while in custody. He had been mocked, spat upon, insulted, and reviled.

Sleepless and dehydrated, He endured an unspeakably violent and grisly scourging by a Roman torturer who expertly wielded a specialized whip called a *flagrum*. The cursed whip consisted of a long wooden handle attached to several strips of leather with a series of stone beads or metal balls spaced periodically along the length of each strand. At the tip of each strip was a jagged fragment of sheep bone hewn and filed sharp as a razor.

He carried the beam of His cross as far as He could through the hilly cobblestone streets of Jerusalem, ultimately arriving here at the place of execution just outside the city wall.

Mary was there. So was Beloved John. The Son had expended some of His precious final breaths to address these two directly. To her He had gasped, "Woman, here is your son." And to His best friend, "Here is your mother." (See John 19:26–27.) In His dying moments, with the sin of

the entire human race crushing down upon His soul, He paused to arrange for the ongoing care of His widowed mother, who had selflessly and lovingly cared for Him from the moment the angel surprised her with the divine news of His imminent birth until now, the time of His humanly departure from this earth. We can better appreciate how important it was to the Savior to deliver this message if we understand that for a man undergoing Roman crucifixion, each uttered word exacted a terrible price in pain. To breathe, let alone speak, required lifting Himself up on those nail-sundered hands and feet and sliding His mangled back up that splintered beam. Yet He did so, to connect for life these two who had stood with Him to the very end.

Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils, was surely there at Mary's side as well. For six excruciating hours they'd witnessed the slow motion execution-by-torture unfold, their hearts and minds torn with grief and agony as they watched the beloved Savior endure inconceivable and inhuman suffering that seemed as though it would never end. Then, when it was nearly over, two additional figures joined them there at the crest of the skull-shaped outcrop. Two men, both well dressed and clearly influential, stood with John and the two Marys in silent witness of Jesus of Nazareth's final moments of life.

Joseph of Arimathea was both wealthy and a member of the powerful Sanhedrin—the rabbinical court of elders that served as the “supreme court” in religious matters among the Jews of Judea. At some point in Jesus's three-year ministry, Joseph had become a secret believer in and follower of the wonder-working teacher from the north. Alongside him at the cross stood Nicodemus, also a member of the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee. Intrigued by Jesus's power and message, Nicodemus had come to the Rabbi under cover of darkness to learn more. His ears may have been the first to hear Jesus describe the possibility, yes, the absolute necessity, of

being “born again.”

In those fevered times—with Jerusalem filled with zealots, fanatics, and overheated Messianic expectation—it was dangerous to be associated with a man accused of blasphemy or inciting insurrection. Jesus had been falsely indicted for both. But these men were powerful and well connected. They had little fear of arrest or reprisals from their fellow members of the council or the high priest’s guard.

Sadly, the same could not be said for Jesus’s closest friends. Save John, they were in hiding. The disciples who had left their nets, their fortunes, their families, their friends, and their futures in order to follow Jesus up and down the coast of Galilee had deserted Him when the authorities and the crowds turned against Him. Peter, their ostensible leader, had boasted of his fierce loyalty. Yet his bravado evaporated like morning mist in the face of a few questions from a servant girl.

Thus those witnessing the death of the loveliest soul to ever grace the soil of this planet, as He made the noblest sacrifice ever undertaken, were pitifully few. The few there who loved Him found themselves far outnumbered by the foul-mouthed executioners, the mockers, and the gawkers.

Huddled together for comfort, they’d looked upon Him as death took its toll. With unfathomable pain and excruciating discomfort, our bleeding Savior had raised Himself one last time and cried out, “Abba . . . !”

This is the Aramaic word that most closely correlates to our English words “Daddy” or “Papa.” It is a child’s name for a dear and trusted father. Indeed, in many Arabic speaking countries today it remains

an infant's first spoken word, just as babies in the English-speaking world babble "Da-da."

[Abba], into Your hands I commit My spirit! —Luke 23:46 ...for those who were there to hear that prayer launched heavenward, it must have been a startling, jarring moment.

Yet no sooner had Jesus's final words echoed back from Jerusalem's stony outer wall than they saw the Master go utterly limp. No more writhing in pain. No more struggling to rise up on nail riven hands and feet in a desperate quest for breath. No more suffering. Suddenly silence ruled the hill, save the moans of the two criminals to His left and right whose final moments were rapidly approaching. If Jesus was God incarnate, "the Word made flesh," as John described Him—and He most certainly was and is—then this was the moment God was dead. And if Emmanuel, God with us, had left us, then how could anything ever be good again?

How could anything ever be sweet again? Surely, never again would you press the flushed cheek of a child against yours and feel the vibration of life. Never again would you hear the laughter of children in your home. Never again would you smell the fragrance of a rose. Never again would the flowers bloom. Never again would the joyful sounds of victory be heard. Never again would there be comfort. The death of the Son of God was surely also the death of hope, joy, and peace. The Father Himself, who carpets the valley in green and nourishes the baby raven, had turned and walked away and left His Son hanging there. Unseen, the demons and the filthy legions of hell's darkened underworld began to clap their fettered hands. In jubilation they hissed at the best heaven had to offer, "He's dead!"

The Burial

By Jesus's day the Jewish practice of burial was well established and had two phases, separated in time by a year or longer. The first phase involved cleaning the body and anointing it with fragrant oils, waxes, and spices. Then the body (all but the face and head) was wrapped in strips of linen cloth. After this, more of the oil and spice mixture was applied to the wrappings. Then the whole process was repeated. In this way, several layers of spices and cloths might be applied in total. Finally, a separate piece of fabric, sometimes referred to as a "napkin," was placed around the face and head. So with Jesus's body washed as well as possible, and Nicodemus having arrived with a staggering quantity of oils and spices, the alternating rhythm of anointing, wrapping, and then anointing again commenced with haste.

Before the job could be completed properly, Nicodemus entered the room. They were out of time. The sun was sinking over the western hills. They could still get the body into Joseph's burial cave before it disappeared completely, but only if they left immediately. The women were dismayed. There was more anointing to be done, and a large quantity of the oils and spices remained unused.

The body of Jesus, wrapped in His winding sheet, was lifted from the table of preparation. The garden awaited.

Men gently carried the hastily wrapped and anointed body of the Son of David through the nearby garden and into the waiting tomb. Perhaps Joseph and Nicodemus carried Him personally. If not, Joseph's servants were given the task.

Mary and the other women waited in the small outer court of the sepulchre. It would be unseemly in this culture for women to be in such close proximity to the men in public. Besides, the tomb itself was a very confined space.

When John wrote of this moment many decades later, he took pains to point out that this was a freshly carved tomb, and added the detail, “in which no one had ever been buried” (John 19:41). He made sure future skeptics and doubters would know that no other bodies were already undergoing decomposition in this space, nor were there any ossuary boxes filled with bones stacked inside. It was a thoroughly empty tomb into which Jesus’s body was laid.

So, one of the niches within the hand-carved cave was selected, and the linen-wrapped body was carefully laid to rest there. Now the final step, the wrapping of the head with the linen napkin, could commence. Perhaps His mother entered to perform this task.

After this was done, she exited, and every present male was recruited to assist in rolling the *golel*, the great stone, into place.

Then a second smaller stone, called the *dopheq* was wedged in place at the base of the larger one, much like wooden blocks are sometimes used by mechanics to “chock” the wheels of vehicles today. The purpose of this smaller stone was to keep the larger stone from shifting or rolling out of place.

Now in the hills of Judea a new Sabbath had begun. For six days in Jerusalem Jesus carried out the work of redemption, fulfilling prophecy at every turn. That work culminated in the grueling sixth day, now completed. The heroic and herculean work of redeeming mankind was

done. The Author of redemption had ceased from His labors.

Indeed, just before He expired, He declared, “It is finished.” Now came the day of rest.

The witness of Scripture is absolute and undisputable. The cross where Jesus shed His utterly innocent blood is sufficient for the redemption of mankind. When Christ gave His life upon the cross, He did all that needed to be done.

This means that His trip to the realm of the dead was a journey of unparalleled victory rather than one of continued suffering. He arrived in Paradise a victor bringing good news for the righteous souls gathered there, and a sobering announcement for the spirits imprisoned on the other side of the “great gulf.” (See Luke 16:26.) His work was complete. All that remained was to await the appointed moment of reemergence from that dark, dank tomb.

Jesus’s trip to the realm
of the dead was a journey
of unparalleled victory.

The Resurrection

Meanwhile, heaven, earth, and hell waited in silent expectation. Breathlessly the angels kept watch over the rocky hillside garden, staring transfixed at that massive sealing stone, straining to detect the slightest hint of movement. The pervading question permeating all of creation still remained, “Will Father God veto the crucifixion of His only begotten Son with a resurrection?”

As it turned out, hell was the first to know.

It began with the creaking and groaning of ancient metal on metal, as the King of Glory lifted the gates of damnation off their rusty hinges, flung them aside, and waded through the layered ashes of bygone millennia. With one hand, He gripped a ring of primeval keys. The other hand He lifted heavenward to the Father, and He shouted in a voice that rolled like thunder through labyrinthine halls of Hades and dwelling places of Paradise:

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.
I am He who lives, though I was dead. Look!
I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the
keys of Hades and of Death.
—Revelation 1:17–18

“You’ll have to excuse Me now,” He continued as He looked upward. “I have an appointment, and I must not be late.”

Far above Him, the stillness of the chilly night was suddenly roiled by an earthquake. For the Roman soldiers, the smooth, familiar monotony and boredom of overnight guard duty instantly shattered into a thousand little pieces of alarm and confusion. Concurrent with the earthquake, a flash of radiant light erupted within the tomb and shot out from around the edges of the massive sealing stone, momentarily bathing the garden in brilliance like that of a lightning flash. Then the whole area was illuminated once more as two massive men dressed in blinding white suddenly appeared before them.

The moment the earth began to move, the soldiers instinctively unsheathed their broad Roman swords. But those weapons clanged and

clattered on the stony ground as they were dropped by hardened, seasoned fighting men experiencing a deeper terror than any they had ever known in their lives. They staggered backward and fell to the ground, unable to speak, or even move, much less run away. The paralyzed soldiers stared dumbfounded as one of the magnificent beings in white extended two fingers and with a flick of his wrist rolled the stone away and took a seat upon it.

What they saw next caused them to faint away like dead men. On the third day, the removal of the *golel* revealed a man standing in the opening of the sepulchre.

God indeed vetoed the Crucifixion with the Resurrection for “it was not possible that He should be held by it [death]” (Acts 2:24). This became an unanswerable demonstration of the central fact concerning Jesus of Nazareth. It is a fact unsearchable in its profundity and implications, yet it is so simple a five-year-old child can grasp it. That fact is, He lives.

He lives! The British evangelist G. Campbell Morgan found three key messages in the Savior’s emergence from that dark tomb that Sunday morning:

The value of the resurrection as a Divine act, is three-fold. First it is God’s attestation of the perfection of the life of the Man Jesus. Secondly it is God’s attestation of the perfection of the mediation of the Saviour Jesus. Thirdly it is God’s attestation of the perfection of the victory of the King Jesus.

He is not here, He is risen, as He said. (Matthew 28:6)

The Resurrection Perspective

The famous “Roman Road” to salvation begins at Romans 3:23 with, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” It then winds through Romans 6:23, where a signpost informs the traveler that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It then takes us directly to Calvary and to a battered, bleeding sin offering where love is on display. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” says Romans 5:8.

That blessed highway to heaven ends at Romans 10:9. There even the vilest sinner discovers, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (emphasis added).

Notice please that here in the heart of Paul’s master treatise on New Covenant theology, he declares belief in Jesus’s resurrection to be one of the twin pillars of a profession of saving faith. Paul understood what many today have forgotten or never knew: without the Resurrection, there is no gospel. No Christianity. No church. No hope. No transcendent meaning to be found in life or living.

The Resurrection distinguishes our vital, world-transforming faith from mere religion and self-help sects. Without a literal, physical resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, our faith is just another empty creed among the world’s thousands of cults. Jesus Christ declared Himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without His resurrection on the third day, we may as well stand Jesus on a platform beside Buddha, Muhammad, Krishna, and all the rest, a sorry spectacle over which the

angels of heaven would hang their heads in solemn sadness and weep for eternity.

As Paul declares in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, if Christ is not risen:

- Our preaching is empty (v. 14)
- Our faith is in vain (v. 17)
- We are still in our sins (v. 17)
- Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished(v. 18)
- We are of all men most miserable (v. 19)

No, you cannot remove the reality of the Resurrection and have anything left but a pile of lifeless platitudes. Denying Christ's complete victory over death renders the Bible little more than the world's oldest self-help book. To remove the ever-living Christ from the gospel message is to tear the heart out of the faith.

Is it any wonder then that the reality of the Resurrection is so frequently the focal point of Satan's attacks? The enemy of mankind detests the doctrine of the Resurrection more than any other. Why wouldn't he? His losing battle to retain death's hold on Jesus's soul was his Waterloo. His defeat in that struggle of the ages not only kicked open the door of hope for all of humanity, it also sealed his eternal doom.

Denying Christ's complete
victory over death renders the
Bible to be little more than the
world's oldest self-help book.

Eventually everyone who experiences the regenerative miracle of the new birth must come to a place in which they say, with Job, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25, kjv).

That place, located at the terminus of salvation’s Roman Road, is a place of faith, not facts. You arrive through spirit conviction, not mind persuasion.

The reluctant, fearful, doubting disciples came to that place. So has every lost and wandering soul who ever found mercy and healing at the foot of Calvary. That journey doesn’t end at the cross, however. It invariably takes each of us down that cruel hill to a nearby garden where a tomb stands empty. There you and I, and every person ever given an opportunity to hear the gospel message, have a decision to make.

You see, the angel didn’t roll that stone away so Jesus could get out. He removed it so we could look in and, having seen that it is empty, choose.

One of God’s greatest gifts to mankind is that of free will. Deuteronomy 30:19 reminds us that He sets before us life and death, and then, in His infinite wisdom, He admonishes us to choose life. As for me, my decision is made. I confidently say that He lives!

In the opening verses of his letter to the Romans, Paul states plainly that he writes to them “concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:3–4). Here we have the conundrum

of the incarnation.

The infinite God somehow subjected Himself to the limitations of human flesh. He “was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,” indicating His humanity, but “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Jesus Christ was the God-man. Not merely deity humanized. Not merely humanity deified. He was both and neither. At once, all God and all man. Our limited minds stumble and stagger to grasp this precisely because there is not another like Him in heaven or earth. Thankfully we don’t need to understand God to worship and adore Him.

Please notice that, according to Paul, the act of resurrection “declared” Jesus to be who He claimed to be, that is, the only begotten Son of God. The Greek word Paul chose here is *horizo*, one that means “to establish the outermost boundary or limit.” It obviously serves as the root source of our English word *horizon*. Paul uses the past tense version of this Greek verb and therefore proclaims, in a sense, that Jesus was “horizoned” by His resurrection from the dead. Perhaps there is more here than we have appreciated.

As a boy growing up amid the gently rolling hills and abundant trees of central Ohio, I never got a proper look at the horizon. Vistas never stretched more than a mile or two before being interrupted by a building, a hill, or a stand of trees. Only a trip to the ocean afforded me my first-ever glimpse of a true horizon—the edge of perception where sky meets sea.

For the ancients, the horizon was viewed to be the outermost boundary—the limit beyond which no one could pass. As voyagers ventured further and further from land, they realized there was more to the world than their senses could perceive from a fixed point. As a result, the

wild postulations of brilliant dreamers who had dared suggest the world was not flat seemed less preposterous. In other words, the limits of human sight did not represent the limit of human existence. There was a new world waiting for man just beyond the horizon.

Death, of course, was the ultimate horizon. It marked the terminal limit of our human senses. No person could see beyond the veil of death. No one could perceive what lay behind that thick, black curtain. Death represented the last, impenetrable boundary for earthly men. For countless generations, no one escaped its unyielding grip. No person who entered that realm ever returned to report about its contours or its climate.

Yes, some cultures cultivated myths and legends of existence beyond the grave, but they possessed no tangible proof that such tales were true. Even Jesus's disciples instantly surrendered to despair upon seeing His lifeless body. They locked themselves away and trembled in fear to see Him who commanded wind and waves, demons and death itself, lying cold on a slab of stone. The Roman spear pierced more than Jesus's side that day. It killed their hope.

Hope lay cold and lifeless in the ground for two days. The Lord of Life had stepped beyond the horizon. Then Sunday morning came and with it a message to startled women bearing anointing oils. "Do not be afraid. For I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:5–6).

He is gone. Because
He lives, hope lives.

No matter what you've done, no matter what your circumstances, no matter how dark your midnight, that same resurrection power is available to you right now. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. If God is able to get Jesus out of the grave, He can deliver you from death in all of its profane and destructive manifestations.

You see, what the ancients thought was the end isn't really an end at all—just as the horizon is not the edge of the world, and death is no longer the necessary end for you and me. In traveling to the realm of death, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, sailed beyond the horizon. In returning with the keys of death and hell in His possession, He removed the constraints of man's perception, knowledge, and understanding. Now, in Him, the sons and daughters of Adam could go beyond the limits that had held them in spiritual paralysis since the Garden of Eden.

The Apostle Paul got a peek beyond the horizon. Once caught up into "the third heaven," he was shown things few if any living men had glimpsed. Fortunately, he did not keep the mysteries to which he was uniquely privy to himself. He wrote to friends like you and me, saying:

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality. When this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then the saying that is written shall come to pass: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where
is your victory?”

—1 Corinthians 15:51–55

I know the answer to Paul’s final two questions. Death’s sting has been rendered impotent by the overpowering impact of the Resurrection. The grave’s victory has been turned into total defeat as the Prince of Life arose victorious over all its power on Resurrection Morning. The greatest of our Almighty God’s displays of omnipotence has provided the centerpiece of our faith. As the angels announced to the women who tarried at the tomb, “He is not here. For He has risen, as He said” (Matt. 28:6).

He is gone from there but has ascended to heaven. He is absent from the tomb, but present in the hearts of all who have accepted Him as Savior. He is no longer shrouded in grave clothes and hidden behind a stone, but displayed in glory and majesty for a skeptical world to see.

He did not vanish by a conjurer’s trickery, nor was He banished by a royal decree. His departure was into the future of all believers who have the hope of His returning burning as a beacon in their hearts.

The same departure from the clutches of death that filled His adversaries’ hearts with dread challenges each of us who believe to spend our lives in a manner that is worthy of His rising. We are confident that soon we too, from the trouble, toil, and tumult of a world waiting for its promised redemption, will be *gone*.

The Resurrection Seed Fast

Of many maligned and misunderstood subjects in the Bible, fasting certainly ranks among the top. Some people declare that it is a curious and outdated practice relegated to a few austere ascetics whose influence is negligible in our postmodern world. A few emphasize it as more important than almost anything else, and claim special status based on how long, how often or how completely they participate in it. Most believers, especially in developed nations, ignore it altogether.

In contrast to these extremes, I believe there is a balance that can be drawn from the pages of the Bible about fasting, and its relevance to us today. But before I can explain more about fasting, I want to mention a few things about the unique place food has had in human history, and the influence of what I call the food culture that has become prevalent in many places in the world.

When God created the earth, He made abundant provision for every creature to have a supply of food. On the sixth day of the creation account, God spoke to the man He made about this. Genesis 1:29-30 says: “Then God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is on the face of all the earth and every tree which has fruit yielding seed. It shall be food for you. To every beast of the earth and to every bird of the

air and to everything that creeps on the earth which has the breath of life in it, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.”

Other than one significant exception God made in Genesis 2, Adam and Eve had a divinely created cornucopia of unlimited food that grew everywhere and was theirs to partake of as they wished. Hunger and lack were unknown. There was no need to covet or hoard anything. It was truly a paradise.

But then sin entered, and death, the unwanted intruder, weaved its corrupting influence through all that God had created. The curse upon the earth caused blossoms to turn to dust. Instead of healthy plants with nutritious fruit, there was now blasting, mildew and disease. Fields that had once been fruitful produced nothing but thorns and thistles. Before the curse, man’s most pressing decision was which fruit he would partake of that day. Afterward, man could no longer hope for a harvest without expending unending toil and backbreaking labor. God said in Genesis 3:19: “By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, because out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you will return.”

That is why all of Adam’s descendants have struggled to find enough food to sustain their lives from that day until now. And despite all of the recent breakthroughs in food production, and all the efficiencies that modern technology affords, the quest for food may consume more time and effort worldwide than any other endeavor. Hunger is still a deadly visitor in many countries in the world. Millions in our lifetime have already died due to the lack of food. Millions more are at risk every day. The dark shadow of famine lurks not far from every cycle of sowing and reaping. Just one natural disaster or catastrophic calamity has the potential to

hurl multitudes of humans into the skeletal specter of starvation—a slow, lingering and painful death.

Lamentations 4:9 says, “Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger, for they pine away, stricken for want of the fruits of the field.”

Those who have experienced nothing but abundance have a hard time appreciating the benefit of adequate food resources. But those who have seen true hunger, especially those who have been cut off from any kind of life-sustaining food supply, have little trouble recognizing food for the gift that it is. An epicure may disdain the finest pastries, but a starving man will be thankful for a few kernels of grain.

For many people, food has become more than a means of physical sustenance. It has instead taken on meanings that go far beyond its primary purpose. To multitudes, food means survival—at least for another few days. Food may also mean security—a sort of guarantee of the future. If there is food to eat, there must be a life ahead. For others, food represents comfort, or even reward. Many people can remember a favorite dish being offered to them during a difficult or challenging experience, or a special treat becoming available after accomplishing a necessary task or on a special occasion.

For many believers, food is associated with fellowship. Christian gatherings often center around some sort of food being shared, whether it is an afternoon tea, a backyard barbecue or a potluck dinner. In fact, food, or the lack of it, may represent someone’s reputation. If no food is offered, it could be seen as a sign of lack, either of money, or graciousness, or both. On the other hand, an abundance of food being shared indicates financial success and generosity.

Food can also mean progress—that someone has conquered the poverty and lack that haunted their lives until they came to the point that they experienced more than enough. Unfortunately, food can also represent superiority—with the “haves” eating the finest fare while the “have nots” must settle for a few scraps.

In many places in the world, especially in developed nations, food has become an industry. In many cases, food is so processed and manipulated that it bears little resemblance to anything that can be grown, either animal or vegetable. Many children have no idea where food actually comes from—they are convinced it all originates in a supermarket. Empires have been built around food—growing it, harvesting it, processing it, packaging it, manufacturing it, marketing it, distributing it, cooking it, talking about it and more. Cookbooks are perennial best-sellers. Entire broadcast networks feature shows about food. Eating contests reward champions with notoriety. Chefs compete with one another to create new and sometimes bizarre dishes in order to attract an increasingly jaded public. Culinary tours and vacations are increasing in popularity.

These factors and many others all contribute to resistance when someone suggests they fast for a few days, or even a few hours. In fact, to even mention fasting is an offense to some people. They recoil in horror and anger at the prospect of going without food for any length of time. What they need, and in many cases, what their bodies have been accustomed to wanting is more important to them than any benefit they would gain by restricting their intake in any way.

There are some people who have medical or physical conditions that could be complicated or made worse by fasting, and I would never suggest that anyone put themselves at risk unnecessarily. However, for most

people, going without food for a brief season will not constitute a threat to their well-being. If you have any doubt about it, check with a trusted medical professional before engaging in any kind of fast.

People groups the world over have incorporated fasting into their cultures—on many occasions, for religious purposes, but at other times with no apparent religious connection. Of course, it is not hard to see how some people have been without food during times of crop failure, deprivation, disaster, displacement, war or other economic hardship. While this can certainly be regarded as fasting from a physiological standpoint, it is not voluntary, so doesn't really qualify as fasting as we normally think of it.

The word translated fast in Hebrew means to cover, as the mouth—meaning not eating. In the Greek language, the word used for fast means simply to abstain from food. A survey of the occasions where fasting is mentioned in the Bible suggests that there are several general categories of fasts—a total fast, meaning taking neither food nor water (see Esther 4:16); fasting that involves eating nothing while drinking water; and a selective fast, meaning abstaining from certain foods while partaking of others, as indicated in Daniel 10:3. This verse in Daniel deserves additional mention, since the text says, “I ate no tasty food, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all until three whole weeks were fulfilled.” “Tasty food” is rendered pleasant, desirable, rich, fancy, good-tasting, delicacies, choice and savory by other translations. This has traditionally been understood to mean that Daniel refrained from eating anything but the most rudimentary of food during this time, and also avoided all meat, and beverages other than water. Some believers choose to follow this example and not eat meats or sweets during what has become known as a Daniel fast.

In addition to these, there are fasts that individuals enter into for personal reasons, as well as corporate fasts, which involve large groups of people. In the case of ancient Israel, leaders sometimes declared fasts that included everyone in the nation. The city of Nineveh repented with fasting after hearing the preaching of the prophet Jonah (see Jonah 3:5-8).

There are only three people in the Bible who abstained from all food for forty days—Moses, Elijah and Jesus. In each of these cases, they had supernatural aid and assistance to enable them to accomplish this. In the case of Moses, the narrative in the book of Deuteronomy indicates that this happened on three different occasions—and these fasts involved neither eating nor drinking anything. Not eating for forty days would be a difficult enough task, but not drinking for that period of time would be physically impossible. The only answer is that Moses was sustained supernaturally by the presence of God, and needed nothing else to keep him alive.

I Kings 19:5-8 says that Elijah was fed by angels before his forty day fast, and Jesus was no doubt assisted by His fellowship with His Father during his temptation in the wilderness, and later ministered to by angels, as recorded in Matthew chapter 4.

The Old Testament does not prescribe any fast days, with the exception of the Day of Atonement, as found in Leviticus 16:29-30. Even though the Bible does not use the term fasting in this passage, it does say that God's people should "humble themselves." This term is associated with fasting elsewhere in the Old Testament. In any case, Jews have fasted on the Day of Atonement since antiquity.

It was customary for God's people to fast during times of national or personal crisis. David mentions fasting in the Psalms enough that we can see it was something he engaged in frequently. The prophets mention fasting in connection with repentance and prayer. Isaiah chapter 58 deals with fasting in some detail, upbraiding Israel for becoming involved in fasting for the wrong motives, rather than using it as a time of self-examination and engaging in acts of compassion.

In the New Testament, fasting was well known and widely practiced. The Pharisees fasted twice every week, although presumably with tainted motives themselves (see Luke 18:11-13). Jesus engaged in fasting, and told His disciples that certain kinds of ministry would not be successful without it, as in Mark 9:28-29. He spoke about fasting as though He expected His followers to continue the practice (see Matthew 6:16-18; Mark 2:18-20). Even Gentiles fasted, as in the case of Cornelius in Acts 10:30. Paul fasted often (see 2 Corinthians 11:27). Church leaders fasted and prayed before making decisions, as mentioned in Acts 13:2.

This brief overview is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the subject of fasting. There is much more than time and space will permit me to cover here. I do want to mention some of the purposes of fasting, and to clear up some misconceptions about the practice. I need to assure you that fasting is not a hunger strike to try to persuade God to do something He is not inclined to do. There is no effort, however noble it may appear, that will change God's mind concerning His purpose for you. Fasting that is used in this way is nothing more than a vain attempt to try to please God by means of the works of the flesh. That has not ever worked, and will not ever work. God is not obligated to do what you want just because you haven't eaten for a day or two—nor is He more likely to hear your prayer just because you are fasting. Fasting is not intended to change God—it changes those who participate in it.

Fasting must be engaged in by someone with a heart that is right with God. As Isaiah 58 demonstrates, God will not regard your fasting when it is prompted by selfish motives. You should never fast in an attempt to gain an unfair advantage over a fellow believer, win an argument with another person or prove your spiritual superiority.

What fasting will do is sharpen your sensitivity to spiritual matters, while relegating your flesh to the subordinate position it should occupy all the time. If you think your physical body has no voice, just tell it to do without food for a day, or a few days, and listen to the objections that it raises. You may be surprised to find that you can get along just fine without that mocha cappuccino or sweet treat that your body has become accustomed to every day. Once the clamor of your body subsides, you can hear with greater clarity the communication that is coming your way from your heavenly Father.

The word of God indicates that fasting is most effective when it is coupled with other spiritual disciplines such as repentance, prayer, worship or giving. Many people use the time they would have spent eating in prayer instead. Others use the money they would ordinarily spend on food and make a charitable contribution to their church, an evangelistic outreach or a missions program. Others use the time to worship God in natural and supernatural languages. By all means, use the time that you are fasting for a spiritual purpose, rather than binge watching old movies or playing the latest electronic video game.

The Bible does not prescribe any specific rules regarding the length or timing of a fast. If you are unfamiliar with fasting, I suggest that you start with an achievable goal, rather than trying to go without food for a week. Begin by fasting a meal—that is enough of a challenge for those

unfamiliar with fasting. After you have achieved success at that, try fasting for a day. Then fast for a more extended period if you desire. I don't advise abstaining from food longer than a few days at a time, unless you have carefully considered the matter and checked with your doctor before beginning. In any case, you should be prepared to drink plenty of water during a fast of any duration, so that you avoid dehydration and all the problems that can result from it. In addition, a season of fasting can involve restrictions on other areas besides food. Every year, we encourage all who wish to join us to eliminate certain privileges or practices to which they may have become accustomed in order to hear the voice of God more clearly and seek Him with greater fervency. It has been our custom to do this for forty days leading up to Resurrection Sunday, when we celebrate the glorious victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over death, hell and the grave. There is no better time of year to also win victory over habits, thoughts and distractions that too easily become "...the little foxes that spoil the vineyards..." as the Bible says in Song of Songs 2:15.

The number forty in the Bible involves a time of probation, trial, testing and examination. The flood of Noah included forty days and nights of rain. Moses was in Pharaoh's house for forty years, then a shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks for forty years, and finally, the shepherd of Israel for the last forty years of his life. As already mentioned, he spent three separate forty day periods in Mount Sinai with God. Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years after their failure to go into the Promised Land after the spies came back with their report at Kadesh-Barnea. Incidentally, the spies were in the land for forty days. Jesus was tested for forty days in the wilderness before the beginning of His public ministry. He revealed Himself to His disciples for forty days after His resurrection.

What this says to me is that if you can maintain a discipline for forty days, you have passed the test. What happens so often is that people begin a new initiative or regimen, only to abandon it after a few days or weeks, and go right back into the habits or lifestyle that they need to escape. I encourage you to change your future by changing what you are doing right now. Some habit or practice may be trying to cling to your life, sapping your spiritual vitality and keeping you from making progress in the things of God. Set it aside during a season of consecration, and watch what God will do in you and through you. And when the forty days is over, you may enjoy your newfound freedom so much that you will never have the desire to pick that habit up again.

Here is a natural example that may help you understand the spiritual significance of denying yourself for forty days. Most homes in temperate regions have unwanted and unwelcome visitors known as fruit flies. These little winged pests are tiny, but they are extremely persistent and also very prolific. They may not appear to be life threatening, but they are constant annoyances and do have the potential to spread disease. Their small size makes it seem unreasonable to spend a lot of time trying to eliminate them. But the alternative is living with their continued presence. The next time you are tempted to put up with them, think about their habits. If allowed to remain, they will lay eggs on your ripening bananas or whatever other food source is available to them. Of course, then the eggs hatch wherever they are laid, and the result is tiny little maggots writhing around on your food—almost too small to notice, but disgusting nonetheless.

Several strategies are involved in eliminating fruit flies, including trapping them, spraying them, eliminating their food sources, and the time-tested remedy of whacking them with a fly swatter. However,

whatever methods you use must remain in place for the entire life cycle of the adult fruit fly—which is forty days. A few days or even a couple of weeks of diligence will not change your kitchen’s condition. Only forty days of effort will break the cycle by eliminating an entire generation of fruit flies.

In the same way, the only way to eliminate some threats to your spiritual well-being is to continue your steadfast efforts for forty days. Your adversary the devil is known by the name Beelzebub, which means lord of the flies. He will persist in sending annoyances and much bigger problems into your life until he understands that you are serious about stopping even the smallest of his hindrances, so that you can attend to the things of God without distraction. I encourage you to spend forty days in consecration to God, and at the end of that time, I believe you will discover that the cycle of habits that have plagued you, sometimes for many years, has been broken.

I have included a list of things that people have found it liberating to go without during a forty day period of prayer, fasting and consecration. Ask God to give you wisdom about what you can do during this season that will strengthen your spirit and keep your flesh in subjection. When the forty days is over, we will celebrate together as we anticipate a future filled with God’s presence and abundant blessing.

Suggested items to fast for 40 days:

Coffee/tea	Eating out	Sweets
Soda	Fast Food	Movies
Cable TV	Lunch Hour	Texting
Social Media	Online Shopping	Salon/Barbershop

The Miracles of Resurrection Seed: *Testimonies*



Rose (*Healing – 1994*)

In 1994, Rose really put her faith to work when she took her foster baby home. Janitria was born hydrocephalic, with scoliosis and brain damage. The doctors said because Janitria’s brain was not fully developed, she was also blind.

Rose watched Pastor Parsley on Breakthrough every day. As Easter approached, she felt the Lord leading her to sow a sacrificial resurrection seed specifically for Janitria. As Rose recalls, “On Easter morning she began to cry uncontrollably and the Lord said to lay her down. When I did, she immediately fell asleep. When she awoke her bulging left eye was in place. That night as I bathed her, I realized her spine was straight.”

The doctors confirmed Janitria’s spine was indeed straight and everything on her left side was healed to God’s glory!



Mike & Diana (*Debt-free – 2007*)

Mike and Diana have a family-owned and operated business. But after ten years they found themselves struggling just to keep the doors open. Says Diana, “We really needed a breakthrough. We didn’t even know if we were going to be able to keep our house or have to sell off things. That’s when we

determined to sow the most significant resurrection seed we had ever sown -- specifically for a turnaround in our business “We couldn’t come close to affording to sow that seed,” explains Mike. “But we knew that if the money we had wasn’t enough to meet our need, it must be our seed. We went from being almost bankrupt to doing millions of dollars of business in one year!” Mike and Diana’s business has continued to thrive for over a decade now, and they are on target for 2018 to be another record year for their business.



Cookie (*Healing – 2010*)

Cookie, a vibrant wife and mother, woke up one day unable to hear out of her right ear. After repeated trips to the doctor and many tests, the diagnosis was that her hearing loss was permanent and hearing aids would be no help to her.

Tortured by the nonstop ringing and given no hope from the doctors, Cookie struggled to accept that her life may be changed forever. But then Cookie and her husband, Russ, heard Pastor Parsley talk about a seed that changes everything. They didn't hesitate. They took a step of faith toward God during this supernatural resurrection season with a seed.

The very next day, Cookie's ear began to pop and crack, and she could hear again. When she went back to the doctor to be retested, her hearing had improved by 80% and her word recognition was back to 100%. The doctor told her that in all his years of practice, he had never seen such an amazing recovery of hearing. But all Cookie could think of was what an amazing God she serves.

Jonette (*Healing – 2001*)

In 2001, Jonette went for her annual gynecologist exam, but this time it wasn't routine. The doctor called with the results. She had uterine cancer and they needed to schedule surgery. Jonette and her husband, Harold, immediately went to the Lord in prayer for God to be the physician and cut the cancer out of her body so that the possibility of having to go under a surgeon's knife would never come to pass.

But they didn't stop there. Breakthrough and Pastor Parsley was a vital part of their lives, and they determined to sow a seed in faith toward Jonette's miracle.

Jonette remembers, "After I had sown that seed, I knew almost instantly that I was receiving my miracle. I called the doctor and scheduled another biopsy, and there was not a trace of cancer anywhere. Jonette says today with assurance, "It is our faith that moves the mountain even in the midst of the storm."

Harold was overjoyed that his wife was resurrected from a death sentence from the devil. "As she sowed that seed, it not only blessed her, but it blessed me, and the miracles keep on coming, as a result of sowing that seed in Pastor Parsley's ministry."

As time went on Harold and Jonette were able to purchase property for what is now Destiny Missions Church in Indianapolis, a thriving community of faith that is making an impact of eternal significance throughout Indianapolis and beyond.

Roy & Ann (*Deliverance* - 2003)

Roy and Ann's son, Jim, had been addicted to drugs and alcohol for almost 15 years, progressing from marijuana as a teenager to cocaine and crack as a young adult. For three years he didn't work and slept in his truck and under bridges. They rarely knew where he was, and dreaded every time the phone rang. Counseling and nine months at a Christian drug rehabilitation center had no effect.

Roy says, "We had been doing everything we knew to do, but yet we were not getting the results that we really needed in our son's life. So we decided to plant a resurrection seed into Pastor Parsley's ministry, and that's when the difference really came. That's the path that it took to unlock the lock for Jim to really come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord of his life, and for all the addictions to be 100%, totally broken off of him. It was approximately two months after we had sown our seed that we actually saw the complete breakthrough of our miracle. Jim no longer had an a desire for alcohol drugs. He said, 'Dad, I don't need it anymore. It's not a part of my life.'"

Nearly two decades later, Roy can attest that Jim is a totally different person, inside and outside. "When you look at him he has the glow of the Lord upon him and the glow of the Lord within him, and he is very excited about doing things for God. He's active in church and in evangelism."

Chester (*Sowing and Reaping* - 2005)

“At one time in my life, I was doing really bad financially. We had just been through a disastrous farming year. It was at that time, while watching Breakthrough that God spoke to my wife and me at the same time to sow a \$10,000 seed. We didn’t hesitate. I sat down and wrote out the check to Breakthrough. I said, God, I planted a seed. I’ve been obedient to you. I’m asking you to give me a gross of \$3 million on my part of our farming operation. The amazing thing was, we have to project our crops each year for our marketers. At the end of that year we had grossed in more than \$3 million on that crop. When you operate in God’s biblical principles, He will open doors that you never imagined would ever be opened for you.”

Joe & Angie (*Miracle* – 2009)

Joe and Angie have experienced over a decade of answered prayers and life-changing teaching from Pastor Parsley. But what has made the biggest impact in their lives is the principle of sowing and reaping. From breakthroughs in their finances to their family, God has worked miracles large and small through the power resident in a seed sown in faith.

When Easter rolled around in 2008, they sowed specifically for the child they had been trying to conceive for 3 years. When their faith grew weak, they stood on God’s word. And when they heard Pastor Parsley release a word about “decorating your darkness” they made that word their own. The door to the unused room they had reserved for their child was almost always closed. But after that word, they went to work redecorating – and building their faith in the process.

Just weeks after Easter Sunday, they received their answer to prayer, and baby Michael was welcomed into the world on December 29th – a “child of ‘08”!

Marcus (*Miracle - 2005*)

As a young married couple, Marcus and Tonya were given devastating news. There was a strong possibility their first child would be born with Down Syndrome. They were urged to consider terminating the pregnancy, but they determined to hold onto God's report and trust Him for the victory. They began a tradition of sowing a resurrection seed offering as an extension of their faith. Says Tonya, "Our first-born, Marcus Goins, Jr., enjoyed a party in my womb during that Year of Jubilee in 1998. He was born healthy, nothing missing and nothing broken.

As the years went by the Goins continued so sow every Easter for Marcus and his siblings. As graduation approached in 2016, Marcus Jr. had his sights on attending the #1 institution in Sports Medicine. That year, Marcus and Tonya sowed their resurrection seed months before Easter for their son's education. They soon learned that before that seed was even in the ground, Marcus Jr. had already received the harvest -- a full scholarship to the school of his dreams!

Curtis & Reanna (*Finances - 2009*)

Curtis and Reanna sought the direction of the Lord in prayer for financial increase that led them to consider beginning a carpet cleaning business. But as Curtis soon discovered, "Just the minimum amount to get started with a van and the necessary equipment would be about \$30,000. We didn't have the money for that."

Curtis had watched Pastor Parsley preach about how God delivers with a seed, and they sowed a \$300 seed into the fertile soil of Breakthrough. Curtis says, "After we sowed our seed, we met a man who had a carpet cleaning company who was ready to get out of the business with nearly

\$20,000 worth of equipment. Much of it was new. We made an offer of \$6,500, and I'll never forget the look on his face of surprise. But God touched that man's heart. He accepted the offer, and then the funds were provided as a gift to pay that off. We were able to begin our new business debt free!

Martin (*Finances – 2003*)

Pastor Parsley's ministry has been ministering to Martin since 1992. Martin testifies that, "many times I've been overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit watching him preach." When he heard Pastor Parsley minister on the power of a resurrection seed, he says, "I knew that I needed to call right then and sow my seed, because that seed was going to instantly bear fruit." And it did! Martin and his wife discovered a CD worth over \$7,000 buried in a stack of papers that was about to roll over and not be available for another 10 years. Soon after, Martin also sold two expensive pieces of machinery that had been sitting on the shelf for months – on the same day within an hour of each other. Martin's resurrection seed reaped a harvest beyond his expectation, bearing fruit in his marriage, his finances, and his life.

ROD PARSLEY is the author of more than seventy books, and host of the daily television broadcast *Breakthrough*, viewed by millions worldwide. He is the founder of various ministries, including Valor Christian College, Bridge of Hope missions, and City Harvest Network. The role closest to his heart is that of senior pastor and founder of World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio, where he resides with his wife, Joni, and their two adult children.

Learn more about Rod Parsley at **www.rodparsley.com**

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