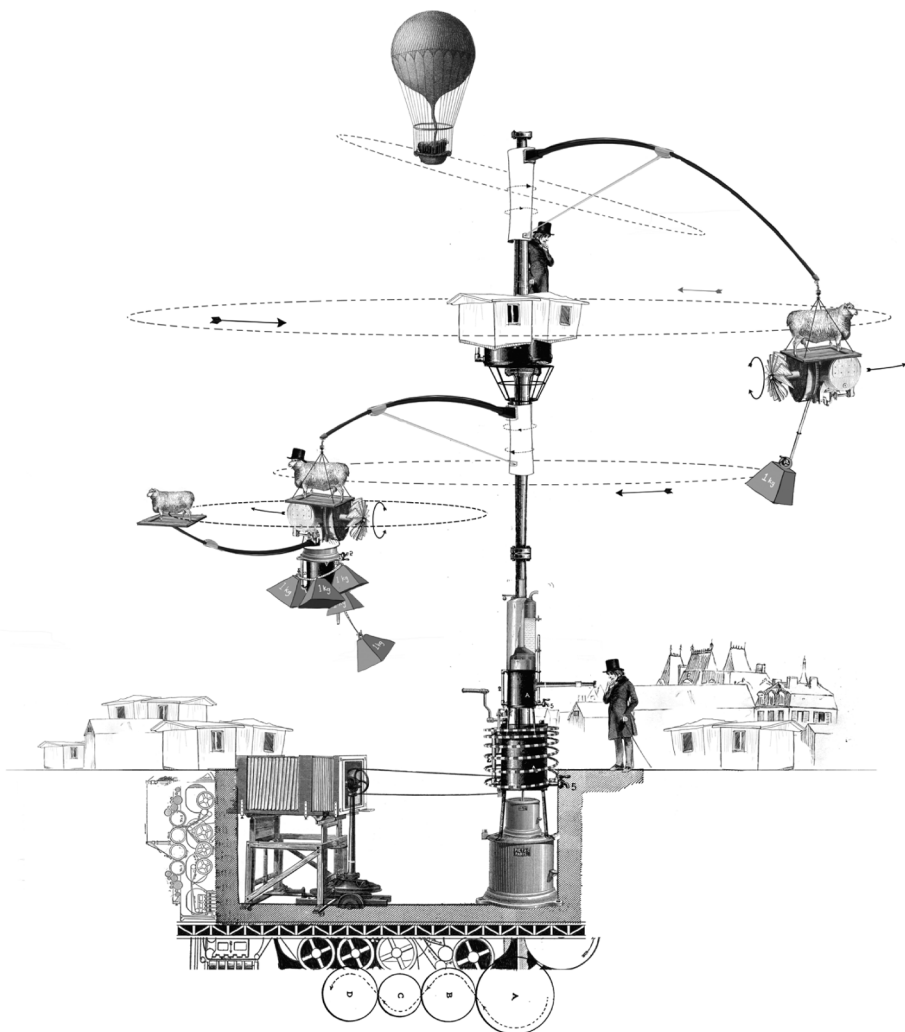


LEADING KINGDOM MOVEMENTS

the "Everyman" notebook on how to change the world



Mike Breen

~ INTRODUCTION ~

This is a book about movements.

But not just any kind of movements. *Kingdom movements.*

However, I need to say from the outset that this is not the first word, last word, best word, or only word on this topic. I do not claim to be an expert on movements. At best, as I have tried to understand what I've experienced, I find myself operating as an amateur anthropologist and sociologist.

I believe I can offer something that will give several perspectives that will help in the revelation of what we are discussing. And while I believe mine is an absolutely true perspective, *it is not a full perspective.* What I can offer to you are snapshots, not instant prescriptions.

Think about it this way: The scriptures give us pictures of God such as King, Shepherd, Warrior, Father, Adonai, Lord, etc. These are all ways of understanding who God is as we seek to be in a relationship with him.

There are many, many characteristics, and they are all true.¹

¹ For those interested in diving into this kind of thinking academically, the person who helped me understand this on a deeper level was a brilliant man named Ian Ramsey, who is most famous for his work called "The Systematic Elusiveness of I." The part of his work that connected with me the most was what he called *models and qualifiers*, which had to do with the Philosophy of Religion. His basic premise was this: Throughout the scriptures, we get various descriptions of God. Each description gives another angle on the whole, and at some point we get enough of them to have a *moment of apprehension*.

At some point, something clicks, and we understand (at least in our finite way of understanding) who God is. It isn't that we have or understand all the perspectives, but we have enough of them. It is not a full perspective, but it is one that is absolutely true.

That is what I have to offer you.

I can give you various perspectives on the landscape of Kingdom movements, and I believe these perspectives to be true, but they are not the totality.

Let's use the metaphor of the Indian guide. As the Wild West of America was being settled, pioneers would pay Indian guides to get them from Point A to Point B. These guides knew the path that would get them to their destination, but it wasn't the only path. A guide doesn't know all the paths, just the ones he has traveled before.

Can the Indian guide traverse the landscape using the particular coordinates he knows? YES.

Does he know every hill, stream, mountain, and path? NO.

The Indian guide will tell you that the journey is perilous but possible. That's how I've written this book. There are mountains, lakes, rivers, farms, overgrown paths, and tales of journeys past that I know like the back of my hand, because it is the landscape of my life. I have had the privilege of being part of a Kingdom movement for the better part of my adult life. This book is my attempt at sharing some of the things I've learned along the way.

But it isn't the only way to get there.

In many respects, this is the story of what my life has been about for the past 40 years: Getting caught up in a movement of the Kingdom that is changing the world.

So here's how I'd like to go about this. I want to share with you the story of the last 40 years of my life and what I've seen God unfolding in this world that he so loved. In the midst of that, I'll pull out practical, reproducible things I've learned along the way. You'll quickly notice that much of my story

is learning from the mistakes we've made along the way. So in that vein, let me say this: **You'll make mistakes. But make different ones from the ones we've made!** That's one reason for sharing my story.

Another reason for sharing this story is to help illuminate Part 3 of the book, which is looking to the life of Paul as a guide for how to be part of a Kingdom movement. I've spent the whole of my adult life studying the life of Paul; namely, how did he accomplish so much in just one lifetime? I think that beginning with my story it will help draw out, in a present-day scenario, what we see happening with Paul on a much larger scale.

Finally, throughout the book you'll see me going back, over and over again, to what is necessary for any Kingdom leader: the journey that must happen within. It is not an easy journey or one that usually ends with fame and accolades, but it is the journey every person must take if they want to change the world.

PART 1

~ THE AGE OF ~ EARTHQUAKES

Where we are:

In Part 1, I want to identify where we are. What is the reality we find ourselves in? Perhaps the best way to shape the future is first to understand where we currently stand.

Where we are going:

I want to lay the foundation for a new, yet old, way of being the people of God. Namely, that *movements* have always best characterized the way of the Kingdom.

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~ IN THE RUBBLE OF ~ THE EARTHQUAKE

(Some of you have chosen not to read the Introduction to this book. Yeah. You should read it. This book will be a much better read for you if you do. Now...on to Chapter 1.)

I've never met someone who doesn't want to change the world.

Never.

There is something wired deep within us that longs for the gap between 'the way the world is' and 'the way it should be' to be just a little narrower after our time here on earth.

People want to change their street. Their city. Their country. The world. It's always been buried deep inside us, but now we are seeing it more and more in the language of our culture because of this innate longing.

Everyone resonates with wanting to change the world. The problem is, they also say, "I have no idea how to do it." There is a great, yawning divide between what we want to do in our lives and what we end up accomplishing with our lives. So here's my question, the one I've been asking for as long as I can remember: What are the markers of the people who want to change the world and then actually go and do it?

Now let me be clear. I don't mean they amassed some sort of impressive personal empire, be it spiritual or otherwise. *I mean they legitimately changed the world.*

I remember hearing Jo Saxton (whom we will talk about later on in the book) talk about something that deeply impacted her when she was 12 years old. Jo is from England, and she was in an English history class. Her secular textbook pointed out that because of John Wesley and the early Methodists, two important things occurred. First, the civil wars that ravaged the rest of Europe at the time never touched the shores of the U.K. Second, the abolition of slavery could be directly connected to the influence of the Methodists within English society. Right there. In her textbook. John Wesley helped change the world.

And like everyone else, I'm interested in changing the world. I believe there is a God-given longing to reverse the curse of the Fall.

So I'm interested in the markers of the people who did change the world. I've spent my life studying this and have been amazed how so many people end up going back to the life of Paul. Over and over again. So like the world changers of old, we too will look at Paul.

But first, let's set the stage.

SHAKING EVERYTHING

A little time ago, I went to New Zealand on a mission trip with my son. We made our way to Napier, where we walked around the streets with one of the pastors of the city. I pointed out to the pastor that most of the buildings had the year 1932 carved into the foundational stones and asked if that was the year the town was started.

"No," the pastor said. "The city started a long time before that. But in 1931, on February 3 at 10:47 in the morning, an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck. And it destroyed everything."

"What do you mean *everything*?" I asked.

"I mean everything. Everything was ruined. Every building fell, and as they fell, the gas mains ruptured, and a terrible inferno consumed the whole city. Believe it or not, many, many people actually survived. But more amazingly, those hills you see over there to the northwest—that was a plain. Those hills weren't

there. And you see that mountain that juts out into the Pacific? Half of it just fell into the sea.”



“Do you know where my home is?” The pastor continued. “That was the harbor for the fishing fleet. The harbor disappeared in a moment and became dry land.”

It’s hard to believe, but he was telling us that you couldn’t even recognize the geography after the earthquake.

We have seen appalling, Hiroshima-like images appearing on our TV screens from natural disasters (or man-made devastations) such as Haiti or Chile or Japan. We have seen what lives are like when people build their homes on seismically active fault lines. We have seen the difference in responses between a poor and corrupt country like Haiti and a relatively developed and put-together country like Chile or Japan. We have seen it.

But no matter what the preparation was, or what the follow-up is, these tragic events remind us that sometimes everything is shaken.

Don’t be surprised. **This is the age of earthquakes.**

IN THE SHADOWS OF A GREAT SHAKING

I always am able to best locate grounding points by starting in the scriptures. So let’s begin there.



Hebrews 12:26 – 13:8

At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised,

*“Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”
The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”
Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

*“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”*

So we say with confidence,

*“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?”*

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.



The writer of the book of Hebrews is unknown. Perhaps this is coming from the Apostle Paul, awaiting his own death in Rome, hearing of the Jewish rebellion and offering wisdom for the future to those living in his homeland.

The readers and hearers who first poured over this text were Hebrew believers in Jesus, who were scattered across the four corners of the known world. It

seems written particularly to the Jewish Christians in Israel. Before this text was written, the Jews had risen up against Rome, and the emperor was fed up the insufferable insurrectionists located in Israel. So the emperor dispatched his best general and the might of the Roman military machine to crush the zealot rebellion.

Let's be very clear on this: Slaughter and complete destruction were on the way. The Jewish people had seen it before and knew what was coming. Foreseeing this, Jesus seems to say in some of his closing conversations with his disciples, "When the eagles are circling over the city, GET OUT."² He was probably talking about the Golden Eagle sitting atop the legion's standard as the Roman army approached.

Jesus, in his youth, had seen the retribution of Rome. Not far from Jesus' hometown was the town of Sepphoris, where Rome had quelled a rebellion. A Roman legion stormed through, and, in one day, more than 3,000 people were crucified to demonstrate what Rome did to rebels. Historical reports suggest that the soldiers ran out of timber and started to nail people to the olive trees that lined the road to the town. Houses were torn down brick-by-brick, and whole villages burned to the ground. Jesus, a carpenter by trade,³ was probably one of the people who rebuilt the city. That process would have taken years.

The Jewish Nation would again live through the reality of Roman destruction but to a much greater level.

Soon the walls would be broken. The city would be sacked. The Temple and its treasures stolen or destroyed, never to be returned. The zealots would make their last stand in Masada, and by the middle of the AD 70s, it was all over.

We are right on the precipice of this as the writer speaks about the world shaking.

There was a push within Israel for the Jewish Christians to come back to their roots, to join the rebellion, to leave the sect of Christianity. They were being

² Matthew 24

³ Probably better understood as a builder or stone mason

squeezed on every side. Their world was being turned upside down, and they were starting to buckle under the pressure.

It's interesting that the writer of Hebrews lists out, almost verbatim, what emergency workers are taught to do when they triage a disaster situation.

- **Step 1.** You need to have *compassion* for the victims of the tragedy and get them the care they need as quickly as possible.
- **Step 2.** Once they've made it out of the other side, you re-connect people to *community*. Often times in disaster areas you'll see huge tent cities of refugees.
- **Step 3.** Help people grapple with the loss they've undergone and *connect them to a bigger story* so they can move forward.
- **Step 4.** Give them some firm, stable next steps (*a compass*, if you will) for re-creating a life that will need to find a new normal.

What the writer was saying is this: The world in which you find yourself is in upheaval. There is seismic change. You need to prepare for that seismic change. And as you do so, you need to attend to some basic things. That's because in a world of shaking and change, you can become self-centered. Self-interested. But you are to keep the **COMPASSION**⁴ of God burning in your hearts.

Remember to love, to stand alongside, to embrace those in greater need. Remember that in your tendency toward self-preservation, you will self-centeredly look to meet your own desires and needs. You need to keep yourself pure and to keep your own raging desires at bay. You need to turn away from self-interest and turn toward the **COMMUNITY**⁵ you are a part of. Build the community. When everything else is being broken, you need to tend to community. He's saying that in times of pressure, we tend to isolate ourselves and we need to fight that impulse.

Remember that as everything is shaken to its elemental parts, as the world and society are atomized and separated, there is a **CONNECTING STORY**⁶

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⁴ Hebrews 13:1-2

⁵ Hebrews 13:2-3

⁶ Hebrews 13:5-6. *Connecting Story*: Sociologists call this a metanarrative. We use both terms.

that connects you to all of the people of God down through the ages, that connects you to all of the Christians who love the Lord, and that connects you to those who gave you entrance to your faith.

Remember your story.

And then, in the midst of all of this disorientation, in the midst of upheaval and social transformation that can best be described as chaos, remember that you can find your way because there is a **COMPASS**⁷ that is the same yesterday, today, and forever. No matter how disoriented everyone else is, you can still be oriented toward true north.

We are the people of God. Remember who you are.

THE AGE OF EARTHQUAKES

We all know that earthquakes are not confined to the physical realm. We are in the midst of social and cultural upheaval. Social commentators, philosophers, cultural observers often use the language drawn from the world of earthquakes—talking about *seismic change*. If we've watched the news recently, we've probably heard this term.

Our world is changing. The fault lines obscured below our culture and our communities are revealed as hidden powers move.

Since 9/11, no one can argue that the earthquakes have reached the shores of the United States. As the Twin Towers fell, we all knew that the world had changed. And we all knew that the world had changed again when, seven years later, the twin towers of Banking and Finance crumbled in a slow-motion collapse that we all watched with growing horror.

If we still doubt that we are in the midst of shaking, then perhaps we need to look a bit more closely at what is happening around us. In fact, the world has been in upheaval for quite a while. It's just that this upheaval didn't reach American shores until recently.

⁷ Hebrews 13:8

LIQUEFACTION

In seismically active zones, such as the Jordan Rift Valley, there is a geological phenomenon that almost boggles the mind. It's called *liquefaction*. When a layer of more fluid strata (layer of earth) lies below a nearly stable strata, the fluid strata begins to move and rise during an earthquake, and sediments stop acting like a solid and begin acting like a *liquid*.

In other words, in certain times of upheaval, things can be shaken so violently that even the properties of the earth seem to change. Solid becomes liquid. Such events give rise to shocking images when buildings and other objects move and even sink in the fluid earth!

As a result, buildings that were built on a strong foundation suddenly are anything but stable. It's fascinating to see the pictures. These buildings will remain completely intact but now sit at a 45- or 90-degree angle, unable to fulfill the purpose for which they were built.



The church finds itself in such a position today. Even churches that were built on strong foundations find the ground beneath them turning into liquid. We have no idea what to do about it. I mean, how do you build a church when you don't even know if the ground it is sitting on is going to remain a solid?

I believe the answer is in building *Kingdom movements*. The answer is in building something that has a strong foundation but is also infinitely flexible. There are grounded, fixed points that in some ways might resemble an organization, but upon a closer look actually reveal the nimble and flexible nature of the organism.

What earthquakes can also do is show us if we are flexible enough. Earthquakes help us respond. I may even dare say that from time to time, the church needs a good earthquake. *Why? Because in the wake of cultural earthquakes, the church has often been at its most effective.*

Let's pause here for a moment, because it's really important for us to understand the nature of the earthquake we find ourselves in.

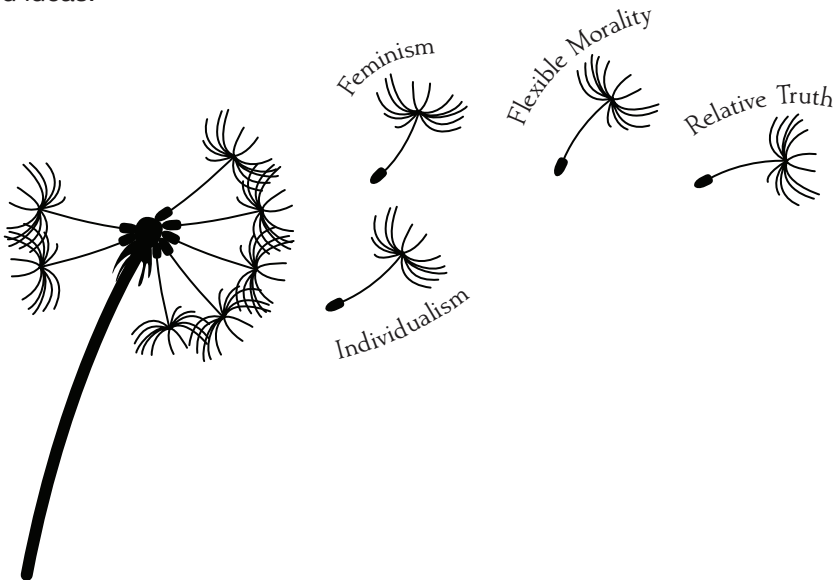
Around the turn of the 19th into the 20th century, in Paris, the great artists and philosophers of the day—Jean-Paul Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir, Pablo Picasso, and even Ernest Hemingway—gathered on the *Rive Gauche*, the left bank of the River Seine.

There, they cultivated a culture that had been emerging in Paris for quite some time after the French Revolution. They used that newfound freedom to find a philosophy that influenced so many of the thinkers in that culture. On the *Rive Gauche*, they explored a different world. They imagined a world that existed separately from the anchor points of the past. This world, in their minds, was liberated from the thinking of old.

“What would it be like if we understood morality from the point of view of the individual?” Sartre asked.

Simon de Beauvoir argued, “Surely we should liberate women from the servitude they have been subjected to for so long.”

The *Rive Gauche* cultivated and promulgated these ideas. Before long, like a wind blowing on a dandelion head, these thinkers scattered their thoughts and ideas.



These ideas first gravitated to the wealthy of Europe and England in particular, who, because of their wealth, funded salons and academies throughout Europe, including the universities of my native nation, Oxford and Cambridge. There the thinking spread and grew. The artists and thinkers began to imagine a different world. With the dawning of a new century, in these great centers of learning Europe began to feel an earthquake that shook every strata of society. With the breaking came the release of these ideas.

At the close of the Second World War, and the rise of a more mobile and more educated population, these artists and thinkers continued to gain acceptance in these centers of education. The growing world of *mass media* soon allowed these ideas to become more mainstream.

Baz Luhrmann's brilliant film *Moulin Rouge* is an interesting movie that depicts this happening. In it, we see this Parisian life come alive and Paris becoming the epicenter of a new world. It's fascinating, however, that the music of the movie isn't from that time, but from ours. We see how this Bohemian culture produced the soundtrack of our lives; that this culture discussed the things we now all believe. The flash cards that come up during the movie drive this home:

TRUTH.

BEAUTY.

LOVE.

And although the following lyrics are not part of the movie's soundtrack, songs we know so well illustrate the philosophy of the Left Bank:

*Imagine there's no heaven. It's easy if you try. No hell below us. Above us only sky.*⁸

Perhaps another: *All you need is love. All you need is love. All you need is love. Love. Love is all you need.*⁹

⁸ From John Lennon's song *Imagine*

⁹ From The Beatle's song *All You Need is Love*

Some of the most famous popular songs in history came from the philosophy of the *Rive Gauche* more than 150 years ago.

SHAKING AMERICA

Our world has been in the midst of seismic change for quite some time. But it hadn't really reached the shores of America until the 1960s began. Amazing things happened as the world strained and stretched, as old ways of thinking were broken. In some ways, that was good. But in other ways was anything but.

On the good side, we have the emergence of great movements led by illustrious leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example: a great man. But at the same time, an upheaval, particularly in the youth culture, led to Haight-Ashbury and the psychedelic revolution. It was all happening at the same time. The epicenter was in Paris rippling to Monterey, Woodstock, and beyond. But the earthquake has rumbled on. Its intensity has increased. Its power to change has multiplied. And the magnitude of this earthquake demands that we attend to it.

If an earthquake occurred in your city tomorrow and left devastation everywhere, what would you do? Would you assume you were the victim or the rescue team?

We are the people of God. *Remember who you are.*

What would we do if we were the rescue team? What would we do if we were the only hope? What would we do if, even though we've been shaken, our lives had not been completely destroyed because where we stand is far more secure than where others stand?

Refugees need a place of safety. Victims of the earthquake need a place where they can run. As they run, it feels like a refugee camp. The megachurches of North America are, in many ways, refugee camps. Our societal upheaval has paralleled the growth of megachurches. These giant churches are often a feeding program to keep people alive.

We don't need to pick on them.

I don't believe for a second that running a feeding program is at all what pastors of megachurches want to do. Instead of aiming easy criticism, perhaps we should ask, "What would happen if the people of God became a movement again?" Just imagine what would happen if the megachurches became movements changing their cities.

In the early 1990's at St Toms, we rebuilt community through something now called missional communities (originally we called them 'Clusters'). As we followed our 'compass', Jesus led us back to the city. As we embraced our community story, we decided to embrace a much bigger story and came to function as the rescue team. And do you know what happened? Eventually that simply became the identity of the people. That's how they understood themselves.

Put megachurches aside. What would happen if even a small percentage of all the churches of Western culture started to mobilize themselves as a movement of the Kingdom? What if churches in the midst of this disorientation and upheaval saw their primary responsibility as being the rescue team?

What if, in the shaking, the thing that was revealed was that our foundation was unshakeable? The writer of Hebrews said that all things are being shaken so that what is unshakeable will be revealed. Surely those who have been the most untouched by the earthquake have the greatest responsibility to care for those found in desperate and dire circumstances.

Surely they would be the rescue team because there was no one else.

And so we are.

COMPASSION

So what does the rescue team do? Well, we do the same things that emergency workers would do in the midst of a disaster area.

We go and survey the destruction, observe the state of things, and triage the circumstances. But with all of this our first response is COMPASSION.

Why are people so disoriented?

Because they are in the midst of an earthquake! Do you judge them for that, or do you have compassion for them? Do you alienate them because they are shaken, or do you reach out to them? There is an upsurge in sexual disorientation in our time—do we judge, or do we have compassion?

We must answer this question, because the devastation is all around us. We could decide to do one of two things. We could look around us, gather those like us, and build a ghetto because we have “secure” footings. Or we can decide that we’ve been enlisted as the rescue team.

I don’t know what compassion looks like in your context. Where is the Spirit prompting you, as the rescue team, to show compassion in your context to the victims of the earthquake? What is it? Where is the compassion of Christ?

In the late 1980s, Sally and I moved to serve in Arkansas. And believe it or not, it was really fun being in Arkansas. We were there when the Razorbacks won the NCAA basketball tournament. We were there when Bill Clinton won the presidency. We were right in the middle of history, and then we moved to Sheffield, England, which is decidedly not in the middle of history!

Sheffield is in the north of England and it quite similar to the city of Pittsburgh in the United States. There, we did similar things to what we had learned in the other places we had served. Let’s just say that in Sheffield, going to church was one of the least popular things to do. Maybe about 2 to 3 percent of people attended church at the time. We were in a deeply depressed city. The steel industry had collapsed, lots of people had left the city to find jobs, and unemployment constantly hovered around 12 percent.

We were in one of the suburban areas (not a wealthy area), and like Rome, our city was built on seven hills. The church of St. Thomas Crookes, perched on one of those hills, overlooked the city.

Every day, after I walked to my parish church, this old stone building, I gathered my team to pray. Sometimes we’d gather in the clock tower in the church, where you could see the whole city, and we’d just ask, “God, what should we do?” And the Lord said, “Just start building community here, and I’ll tell you what to do next.”

All the time, God was building our concern for the city. We had been out on

the streets, we gave away stuff, we had kindness initiatives, we shared with people who were hungry, and we wrapped people's Christmas presents for free. We found anything we could do to connect, just to be out there.

And then the Lord said, "I want you to call the city back to me." We looked at the city and thought, "How can we call the city back to God? We live on the rim of the city. We'll have to move into the city."

COMMUNITY

Here's the thing about earthquakes: When all the buildings are destroyed, no one wants to go in them anymore.

No one.

They don't feel safe. When people have seen all the institutions fall to the ground, they no longer feel safe entering them. Marriage. Economics. Family. Religion. Politics. These institutions, being far too rigid, have collapsed, one by one, in the last hundred years. People feel the inflexibility of institutions, and out of a gut, instinctual reaction, they say to themselves, "*These 'places' just can't be trusted.*"

If you were in the earthquake and you continued to feel the aftershocks, would you feel inclined to go into a building you thought might crash on your head at any moment?

During times of upheaval, we need community. And these times force us to think afresh about what it means to build flexible, portable communities. The reality of our time is that 'the Church' does not feel like a safe and secure place for victims to go. People look at this fallen institution and think, "*This thing might fall on my head, and I don't want to get crushed.*"

People still need a place to gather, a place for family, a place to call home, a place to find identity and meaning. However, they need places that feel safe and secure, away from the shaking and insecurity associated with the earthquake. And most are actually looking for faith. Something to believe in.

CONNECTING STORY

When an earthquake happens, everything that people base their life on is destroyed. Homes. Jobs. Families. In other words, *what most people base their understanding of identity and self on is completely removed.*

Most of all, they have lost their story.

There is a story that is bigger than us, and in that story, we make sense of our life and existence. The word often used is *metanarrative*. Because of the metanarrative, the connecting story, we know our place and how to function with meaning. But for most people, in times of brokenness and tragedy, the story is interrupted and perhaps even destroyed. It has all crumbled away. Devastation ensues, and the story of ourselves all but disappears.

When the screaming (in the midst of the earthquake) stops, the processing begins. How do you live with the cries in the rubble that you cannot do anything about? How will you live with the degree of brokenness that is in your life? Your metanarrative, the story you found yourself in, has been utterly shredded. Your identity was defined by your community, your culture, your story, but now it is forever changed. Where do you find your identity now?

People need a connecting story that is defined not by loss but by redemption.

We need to connect them to a greater story, a redemptive story that reaches into their world and into the rubble. The story of God and his people stretches through the ages, and we are part of it. As we embrace it, the story is continued and extended through us. Where once there was calamity, people now find the connecting story of redemption. We are now part of the rescue team. And so our life has immeasurable value and meaning.

COMPASS

In times of disorientation, the default mechanism we need to learn is finding our compass bearing again. But where do we go when the maps don't work anymore? It has all changed.

Metaphorically, I was given a whole bunch of maps at theological college as I was trained to be a vicar in the Church of England. The training was intended to teach me how to lead the people of God. One day, soon after I was ordained, I got these maps out again, blew the dust off, and suddenly realized that they bore no resemblance to the world in which I lived. *I was trained for a world that no longer existed.*

So the best I could do was to find a compass for myself and for my family—one that I could put it into the hands of everyday, ordinary people. What I found was called *discipleship*. Follow Jesus. And then teach others how to follow Jesus. He’s the compass we can all follow.

Follow him. That is the message we carry.

Victor Hugo, in his immeasurably great book *Les Misérables* (which became the musical that everyone knows), had a fascinating insight. Reflecting on the upheaval of the French student riots in Paris, picking up on the metaphor of a ship adrift in the ocean, he says, “The ocean seeks to lead it astray in the alarming sameness of its billows, but the vessel has its soul, its compass, which counsels it and always shows it the north. In the blackest nights, its lanterns supply the place of the stars.”

If we don’t have maps, we have to have a compass.

As disciples of Jesus, we are the compass carriers. We carry, in ourselves, in the words of scripture and in the Body of Christ the spirit of Jesus himself, the compass that points north. “The Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead is now alive in you.”¹⁰

And that compass is the same yesterday, today and forever.¹¹ It will always guide you to true north. At the end of the day, after all of this is done and all fades away, it’s about Jesus.

¹⁰ Romans 8:11

¹¹ Hebrews 13:8

THE GREAT MOVEMENT LEADER

It's worth noting that there seem to be seasons where the world doesn't just need to change, but is actually longing for it. It's aching for it, desperate for it. That's how the world was in Jesus' time. And I believe we find ourselves in that world today.

We're not just talking about movements for any old time, but especially for the times where there is rubble lying around. In times when earthquakes have struck with such devastation, that it seems as if the only recovery is a sovereign God releasing a movement of his people.

History is a funny thing. It constantly repeats itself.

Leading up to one of the greatest movements in history was a time of unbelievable uncertainty and upheaval. The movement that would come out of it? The Reformation. What people a lot smarter than me will tell you is that everything that was present for the opportunity for the movemental change of the Reformation has happened again. Everything present for the sweeping change of the early church is present again. We are on the precipice of a new Reformation.

The question is, are we up for it?

Sometimes in these bigger moments, we point to one person or figurehead at the root of it; but really, it's the amalgam of many people and many things colliding together.

Think of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

When we think of the fall of the wall, we usually remember Ronald Reagan: "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."¹²

¹² Excerpted from Reagan's famous speech, delivered June 12, 1987, set against the backdrop of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, delivering a challenge to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Yet this was one moment in time. We can't ignore all that came before it. Decades of work, strategy, and opportunity. The crisis moment of Chernobyl playing its' role. And we can't forget that the wall did not fall for a few more years when Reagan was no longer in office.

But here is where I think the rubber meets the road if we are seeking a movement of the Kingdom of God. In one place, where the wall still stands today, it reads: "Many small people doing many small things in many small places can change the face of the world." Long before the wall came down, a reformation was rumbling around in the hearts of people, forcing them to do many small things in many small places over and over again.

There is such a restlessness in the people of God today. They sense there is a drift, they sense a threat, and they long to be connected to a Christian faith that understands itself as part of something bigger, something movemental. Something of the Kingdom.

This book isn't about one movement, but a series of movements that form a larger whole that is the Kingdom of God. Lots of people. Lots of places. Doing lots of things. Chasing after where God is already at work.

And this is nothing short of what Jesus was after.

What we see in Jesus is the ultimate movement leader. He was someone who, in three years, unleashed a movement that would change the course of human history. What we see in the early church, and specifically in the person of Paul, are people who did something very simple that has profound meaning for us today: **They simply did what Jesus taught them to do.**

In his parting words, Jesus said this: "Go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything I have taught you."¹³ That obedience piece is pretty important, isn't it? It reminds me of a G.K. Chesterton quote: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and not tried."¹⁴

What I want to suggest to you is this: Jesus taught his disciples how to lead

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¹³ Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁴ From Chesterton's (1910) book *What's Wrong with the World*.

a movement that would change the world. And it worked. As we think about movements, we must begin with Jesus because he was the most gifted movement leader who ever existed.

I have spilled much ink in a few other books on how Jesus was able to release a certain kind of discipling movement that always leads to Kingdom mission.¹⁵ So for the purposes of this book, I want to show how, when people take the teachings of Jesus to heart, they too can learn to be part of a Kingdom movement. As you will see, one way we will explore this is in the life of Paul.

It is difficult to imagine someone who took the “and obey everything I have taught you” more seriously than Paul. If Jesus said it, Paul took him at his word. For sure, Paul was an extraordinary man, but his capacity to lead a movement didn’t happen overnight. The Lord shaped Paul for a task, over years of time, and formed him into the movement leader we see in the New Testament. On the road to Damascus, Jesus arrested Paul in a pool of light and with a booming voice. That was his compass-turning experience. Paul suddenly had a new normal.

The Lord is looking to do the same in us.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, I will use the backdrop of some of my story to help us explore the life of Paul. Then we will get to Paul. For so long, the story of Paul has been embedded deep within me, so it is a labor of love to share some of the things I’ve found in his life.

But before we get to Paul or my story or a discussion of Kingdom movements, it might help to return to the ‘times’ we are in and to use them to define what I mean by *Kingdom movement*. There are many ways to define a movement, but I think it would be helpful for us to consider several vantage points.

DEFINITIONS

As the team I serve with and I have considered this idea of Kingdom movements, we have come to some defining realities that we believe are central. Again,

¹⁵ Most notably, in the books *Building a Discipling Culture* and *Multiplying Missional Leaders*

these are not THE defining realities or the ONLY defining realities; they are simply the ones we have experienced. We'd like to use these as a grounding point and explain them further as the book progresses.

Ultimately, a Kingdom movement is a community that functions as a portal to the new world that God wants for all his children. Put another way, a Kingdom movement is a community of disciples who passionately seek the expansion of God's reign here on earth through the reproduction of disciples, seeking the transformation of the places they inhabit.

- Kingdom movements are focused on making disciples of Jesus who can make disciples who can make disciples
- Kingdom movements are scalable and sustainable
- Kingdom movements are highly reproducible on every level of group size
- Kingdom movements are lightweight and low maintenance
- Kingdom movements are about low control and high accountability
- Kingdom movements have strong and flexible leadership patterns
- Kingdom movements often find identity expressed through axioms and icons
- Kingdom movements live on the continuum of Organized and Organic. These are not separate compartments that force us to live in an either/or reality but a sliding scale of the same reality

CONCLUSION

There can be little doubt that we live in a world of earthquakes, in a world of seismic change. We live in a world where even the substance beneath our



ULTIMATELY,
you've got a movement on your hands when the Kingdom DNA of something is so transformative and so reproducible that the Kingdom of God continues to expand with little-to-no direct effort from the "center." In other words, it takes on a life of its own.

feet can seem to change properties on any given day. However, in the midst of it all, we are reminded that the future often lies in the past. And with the history of the people of God, we find a deep and rich past that uncovers our own future. Movements not only survive but also thrive in times of upheaval.

Why? Because Jesus Christ, our great movement leader, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And as he calls us to himself to learn from him, we say with one voice:

“We are the people of God. *Remember who you are.*”

PART 2

MY STORY

Where we've been:

We've identified where we find ourselves as the people of God. I have laid out the vision for one of the principal forces the Holy Spirit has used in times of seismic upheaval throughout history to change the world: Kingdom movements.

Where we are going:

In Part 2, we will look at my story and how these ideas have played out in my life. In addition, at key points in the story, I will make sure to stop to examine a few of the things I've learned along the journey.

2

~ THE BREAKING ~

The first book I ever read was the Bible. I was 16. It's not that I wasn't intelligent enough to read, but I had lived with dyslexia for all of my life, which made it nearly impossible to read. Somewhere between 15 or 16, the Lord rewired my brain, and suddenly I was able to read—and I picked up the Bible.

I wasn't a Christian. I hadn't grown up in a Christian home. But that was my first book.

The first Christian girl I ever met was a spritely young lady named Sally. I thought to myself, "If this is what Christianity about, I'm definitely in." We have been friends ever since, so to speak—she's now my wife!

We lived in England, and *post-Christian* doesn't begin to describe the religious carnage that has left this society in tatters. It is post-modern, post-Christian, post-... well, we could probably follow those descriptions with another 20 "post-somethings."

Maybe 4 to 5 percent of the population is in church.¹⁶

They are a group of people who have never really heard the Gospel.



**YOU'LL NOTICE
that in Part 2
I capitalize and
bold certain
words. This is
purposeful as
I will explore
those same
words in the life
of Paul in Part 3.**

¹⁶ A report from September 2012 now finds attendance at 6 percent and attributes much of this increase to the mid-sized, missional communities that you will soon read about.

I felt pretty quickly that God was calling me into full-time employed ministry, and so I entered theological college at 18. Now the natural decision for someone who was from my family background was to join the Church of England. It's a very broad church, so it has everything from the most conservative Christians all the way to the most liberal.

The college suggested I be ordained, very soon after my 21st birthday. I thought that was a bit young—since I had started shaving only the year before! I thought it might look a little silly, me being a boy among men. So I went into the inner city as a youth worker for a few years. While I was there, I did some research for a degree as a Student of Theology, which was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury. I then completed my post-graduate work at Durham University.

After a few false starts regarding where I was going to serve first in the church as an assistant,¹⁷ I ended up in Cambridge (and not the university part of it but the town side of it, where many of the shift workers were).

For about two years, I lived in utter desperation. I had learned an awful lot during my training, but had gained very little. In all, my training took seven years, and I had three theological degrees, but I really knew less about how to engage with the Lord and do his work than I did before I entered theological college. The situation truly was desperate.

I can clearly remember an old lady saying to me, in a rather pietistic fashion, that she was praying that, at some point, God would give me *some kind of fruit* to demonstrate that I was called to ministry! She was trying to be encouraging, but it really came across as a double-edged sword. Obviously, she also was wondering if I had been “called” to this work. (For her, the jury was still out.)

I used to practice and prepare and do the best I could on Sundays and visit people in the hospital and try new things—I did everything I could think of, everything I knew how to do. And absolutely nothing worked. NOTHING. A growing feeling of failure and a looming sense of catastrophe were just over the horizon.

¹⁷ It's called a Curate in the Church of England.

It felt like trying to push water up a hill with a rake.

One day I was clearing the backyard because our firstborn, Beccy, had started walking. I decided we needed to clear the undergrowth that was quickly consuming the yard. The grass was getting so long that you could almost hear the noises of the jungle. Who knew what kind of wild animals might be hiding in the tall grasses?

So I got a double-handed scythe (perhaps you've seen one in old photos) and began to drive back the wilderness and chop down all of the grass. As I did this, I came across two nests of red ants. We don't have many biting ants in England, but these definitely were. I could see visions of my toddling little girl being overrun by carnivorous insects. I thought to myself, "I really ought to kill these things."

I looked at them but just couldn't think how to kill them. One at a time was certainly too time-consuming. My mind was absolutely blank. Then I thought, "I wonder what my dad would do in a situation like this?" The answer probably reveals my limited gene pool. When I asked him later what he would have done, he said exactly what I thought was the solution: gasoline. In England, we call it petrol.

I went into the shed and got the gas can. Now Sally (my wife) was taking a walk with Beccy, so there was no one around. It was the middle of August and a sunny day (a rarity there). I splashed the gasoline around on the two anthills. Apparently, this would have been enough to kill them. After all, ants don't prosper too well while drowning in petroleum. But I wasn't done—I went to find some matches.

For the life of me, I couldn't find them. Sometimes I wonder if God had placed an angel in the house, desperately trying to hide the matches to keep me from perpetrating the foolishness that was about to ensue.

Finally, I found some matches on top of the cabinets, and I went out into the yard and struck a match. I discovered you didn't even need to throw it because immediately everything was burning. The whole yard. Flames were leaping everywhere. I stepped back in horror (the poor ants had their own private Hiroshima), and I saw a trail of fire all the way back to the gas can. I looked at that and thought, "You know, that's really not good."

I needed to get that can away from those flames, and quickly. So I grabbed the can, which of course was hot. Now if you want to make a flame-thrower, you get a can of gas with a spout, and you light the spout, and then you eject the contents of the can through that spout. I know because that's exactly what I did when I dropped the burning hot can. Now there were gouts of flames leaping from the can all over the backyard and onto me. My feet and my trousers were on fire. Everything slowed down at this moment. I had NO IDEA what to do.

All I could think about were those BBC public information films that we used to watch at school: "In the event of a household fire, stop, drop, and roll around on the ground."

Well, I couldn't exactly do that.

The ground was all on fire!

"Get a blanket," the public service announcer would say next. There was no blanket! The only thing I could do was take my trousers off. Now I had been trained in the Church of England, and running about the yard without any trousers was not what a good English clergyman was supposed to do. I had a brief moment of hesitation, but I had no other options. I flipped off my running shoes (which were also burning), and *of course* one of them went over the fence into my neighbor's yard.

Now *his* grass was on fire.

And just as I was about to take my trousers off, completely at the end of myself and with nothing left, I shouted at the top of my lungs, "Lord, HELP ME!"

In an instant, everything stopped. As I looked down, I saw that not only were the flames on me extinguished—they were also out in the yard, which was fantastic. I went back into the kitchen and did the thing that all Englishmen do in a crisis: I made a cup of tea. The kettle was almost boiling when my wife got home and said, "What's that smell? There is this terrible burning smell." I told her the story.

"Let me see your legs," she said.

“They’re fine.”

“Show me.”

I complied, and as I took my trousers off, I looked down and to my horror saw large folds of skin on the bottom of my legs just kind of hanging there. I looked at Sally and said, “That doesn’t even hurt.” She was ashen at this stage, and she ran and called a car so that we could rush to the emergency room. As I got to the ER, the pain hit. Up until that point, my body had been in complete shock.

Over the next three days, the third-degree burns got infected and became septic. In the operating room, they scraped off all the burnt stuff, and took a huge piece of skin from my thigh. They put that piece of skin into a fridge until the burnt areas were ready to take it. Then I was put in isolation.

They left me at a 45-degree angle, all alone, not able to see Sally or Beccy or anyone. Every once in a while, they would get to wave to me through a small glass window. Once a day a nurse came in and, as far as I could tell, tortured me. She had to remove the bandages to see if I was still bleeding. “Is there no way to find out without taking the bandages off?” I asked in what I’m sure was a completely polite tone. It was just unbelievable pain.

I lay there, day after day. This hospital was one of those more British, stiff upper lip institutions where they didn’t think that television promoted healing. No television. Someone smuggled in a tape recorder (yes, I’m that old) with the testimony of John Wimber on a tape. As I lay there, feeling so stupid and desperate, I kept asking, “Is this really what it’s going to be like? Is this what I’m destined to do for the rest of my life? Frustration? Failure? Nothing happening. I am so stuck. Is this it?”

And in that quiet stillness I heard the Lord say, “Let me do it.”

Let. Me. Do. It.

That moment, everything changed for me. I slowly started to realize that Jesus is much better at the work of discipleship and life than I was or ever would be. He had given me some gifts and some abilities and skills, but I had absolutely no idea how to use them—not in a way that could produce the transformation the Gospels spoke of.

It may sound silly or simple or strange, but almost everything that I want to share with you is how to learn to let God do the work that he is already doing. He is already at work in your life. He is already at work in the life of your family, your community. He is already breaking in and breaking through.

I started to notice something very odd. The more time I spent listening to God, and the more time I spent asking him to show me where he was already at work, the more spiritual breakthrough I saw in my life and in the life of our community. The closer I was to God, the more breakthrough I saw. It was absolutely amazing. By simply paying more attention to where God's Kingdom was already breaking in, and by resting in him, I spent far less energy and produced far more fruit.

It was like one of those things we hear Jesus say in parables but never quite get because it's so counterintuitive: In God's Kingdom we get more of a return than what we originally invested. We invest two and get four back. We invest five and see a return of 100!

That had never been my experience before this point. My experience was that it was always like pushing a boulder up a hill. My experience was that I had to crawl, scrap, and scrape for every inch of spiritual breakthrough I'd ever seen.

But this period of breaking in my life was a linchpin for everything that was to come.

Psalm 102:23-28 really helps me understand what was going on in this part of my life.



***In the course of my life the Lord broke my strength;
he cut short my days.***

So I said:

*“Do not take me away, my God, in the midst of my days;
your years go on through all generations.*

*In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

*They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.*

*Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.
But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.
The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you.”*



BROKEN TO LEAD

What is certain is that God uses all the circumstances of our lives for our benefit—even the circumstances that lead to our breaking. It’s important for us to understand that there is a deep and significant role of breaking in our lives.

As I survey the pages of scripture and look over the vast majority of Kingdom movements in the last 2,000 years, I see one striking reality: At the center of each movement were leaders who had been completely and utterly broken in such a way that they came to rely completely on the Lord for everything.

Peter. Paul. James the Just. Augustine. Patrick of Ireland. Jackie Pulinger. Aidan. Abbess Hilda of Whitby. Mother Teresa. Luther. Wesley. The list goes on and on.

You see, people are not born movement leaders. My observation is that the people who go on to help lead Kingdom movements are those who have been willing to embrace an unbelievably difficult breaking experience in which God was able to form something deep within them by constantly returning them to this truth: “Remember, my power is made perfect in your weakness.”

In this breaking, we come to the utter bankruptcy of our capacity. We are unable, in our own strength, our own skill, our own competency, to do one more thing. We can’t fix the situation. We can’t solve the relational dynamics. We can’t keep the community from disintegrating.

These situations occasionally come into our life, and we find ourselves so completely bereft of emotional, spiritual, and physical energy that we can barely stand up against these things, much less defeat them.

“In the course of my life, the Lord broke my strength.”

What’s the purpose of these things in our life? To discover a greater strength.

One of the things that we will naturally do because of the disposition of our fallenness is to look at ourselves as the solution to any problem. Since the Fall, each person has been looking toward himself or herself as the center of his or her own universe.

In the end, this really is a vain pursuit.

When we get to the point of incapacity or inability, either we give up (which is what often happens), or we give God the opportunity to do something in our lives. And sometimes, we actually need to do both.

This breaking is a pattern we see in scripture in the great heroes and heroines. It’s certainly a pattern I see in my own life. I can’t even count all the times I came to a place where I just didn’t know the way forward. The only way that something could get fixed was if God stepped in, because obviously he is slightly more resourceful and powerful than me! *But I had to choose to let him.*

From what I’ve discovered, this is my practical suggestion: Learn to recognize the signs early.

Rather than coming to a place of complete spiritual, emotional, and physical exhaustion and utter dereliction, recognize the signs early that you are coming to the end of yourself.

The scriptural word for that is **humility**.

In other words, **you don’t wait for everything to be broken to recognize that everything is broken. Rather, you continually step into a posture where you realize that, if left up to you, you’ll break everything anyway.**

We need to get to the point where we surrender our desire to fix everything and our sense that we are the solution to our lives. We’ve all been in situations where we’ve had the opportunity to learn that, but letting that lesson graft into our heart is something else altogether.

In the Chinese church, one of the great saints of the 20th century was a man named Watchman Nee. He told a story that gets to the heart of what we are talking about. One of his disciples said to him, “Do we have to be continually broken over and over again so we learn this lesson?”

With his characteristic wisdom, he simply said, “No.”

“Well, how then does it work?” his disciple asked.

Nee asked the disciple to hand him one of the shortbread cookies on the plate next to them (we’d call it a biscuit in England). The disciple picked up the cookie and handed it to his teacher.

“Often,” Nee said, “we feel like this cookie,” as he held it up in front of him. Then he broke the cookie, which is not difficult for an adult to do with something so fragile.

“That’s what you feel like when you’re broken. You lose your sense of togetherness. You lose your sense of inner integrity. You lose your sense of anything that makes you feel like you have any coherent identity.”

Then he put the cookie back together in the palm of his hand. “Can you see where it is broken?” he asked.

“No, I can’t,” the disciple said.

Of course, you know that when you put a shortbread cookie back together, it fits together perfectly. You can’t even see the little hairline fracture in it.

“Look at this,” Nee said. “All I have to do is touch the cookie with the *lightest* of touches, and you’ll see that crack again. Here’s the thing: Once you’ve embraced true brokenness, you don’t have to experience it again and again. All God has to do is lightly touch you, and it reveals the tiny crack. That’s the key.”

That’s what is revealed in Psalm 102. The psalmist had been brought to this place of brokenness, and he felt as if his days had been cut short. But immediately, the brokenness forced him to look at the capacity of God. The psalmist’s inability helped him look at the ability of God. The psalmist’s temporary life allowed him to view an eternal life. He was able to hold them

in balance. He realized that an eternal perspective is not found in his own brokenness but in the strength and completeness of God.

The ultimate reality lies in God.

As the psalmist did all that, his life turned from hopeless to hopeful.

Paul remarked about what it's like to bear in oneself the suffering and affliction of Jesus—about what it is like to come to the end of oneself and truly recognize that if the Kingdom is going to advance, it'll be God doing it and not us. This is the realization that in my own strength I actually don't have anything to offer.

At the end of the day, you aren't smart enough, gifted enough, charismatic enough, relational enough, strategic enough, disciplined enough, or loving enough to release a Kingdom movement. You simply don't have it within you.

And that is a good thing.

Because when I am weak, he is strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9 (and the verses around it) became my life verse during this period.¹⁸

I imagine you have already had great breaking experiences in your life. The question is not necessarily whether you've had them but what you did with them. Did those experiences do something in you in such a way that all the Lord must do is tap the cookie of your life and the hairline fracture of brokenness appears? Is there a posture of humility? Or is there still a fundamental belief that you've got it within you to do this thing?

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 12:9-10: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."