

DML921 Following in Step with the Spiritual Mentors

Dr. Martin Sanders

May 5, 2023

LE 2B Pathways to the King by Rob Reimer

Jim Om

Summary:

This was the second time reading *Pathways to the King*, which was much more impactful than the first time a few years ago. The themes of listening to the Lord's leading through a number of ways were much clearer than before. The chapter on identity and value from the Father in the beginning of the book solidified the foundation of who disciples are as co-heirs with Christ and the calling/purpose believers have as sons and daughters of God.

"It's love that motivates us to give ourselves fully to God," (25) and it is the love of Christ which compels people to lay down their lives for others. When believers surrender all they are and all they have to the Lord, they are able to experience the presence of God in deeper ways, including the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. "Until we experience the reality of our identity in Christ, we will never realize the potential of our destiny in Christ." (33)

Therefore, the identity believers experience in Christ as his children, leads Christians to their greatest calling. "Pursing that love affair with God is to be the number one priority of our lives. God is the most important person in the world, and your relationship with God is the most important relationship in your life. Everything flows from the first love affair with God. Pursing God is costly, but it is worth the price." (44)

The section on pruning reveals some of the costs of pursuing God. Pruning is never easy and almost always is quite painful for the one going through it, but the process brings about greater fruitfulness, which glorifies the Lord. It is the Spirit who leads people through these difficult times of sanctification, which results in purification of believers and clarity in their spirits to discern the direction of the Lord.

"The gift of the Spirit is about a direct experience with God. We will hear God's voice – through dreams, visions, and prophecy – and that will authenticate the presence of God and draw people to

direct experience with Him.” (68) In preparation for deeper intimacy with God, believers are called to rend their hearts to till the soil of their souls to receive the revelations, which the Lord wants to give to His people. As Christians experience the Spirit of the Lord in deeper ways, they will have deeper personal and corporate worship and prayer. Joy will increase, and they will have various manifestations of His presence, including renewal and even revival. Believers will also be able to resist the temptations of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil in increasing measure.

The chapter on Praying Kingdom Prayers was particularly eye-opening because of its emphasis on valuing what the King values. Many believers are caught up with the earthly and temporary, but as people draw closer to the Lord through His Spirit, they will begin to long for what the Father longs for, the salvation of all nations, the healing and deliverance of all peoples, and victory over sin and death, which is the power of the Kingdom.

The concluding chapters on the promises of God and the fruit of greater intimacy with the Lord through His Spirit are empowering for believers to press on and not give up. When Christians experience difficulties and challenges, it is relatively easy to throw in the towel. However, because of God’s promises which are everlasting and through the power of His Spirit, He enables people to persevere and grow in Christ’s likeness. In fact, Rob Reimer believes that “God often leads His people to the brink of disaster in the name of faith.” Those struggles that are the most difficult often produce the most fruit of the Spirit as believers trust in Him and His promises. Therefore, when Christians suffer for the name of Jesus, they have deeper and sweeter fellowship with Christ.

The last section on spiritual warfare is an important reminder that the Church is not struggling “against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV) “We have to recognize who we battle and who won the battle. Paul wants us to know that God has won the victory.”

(180) Christians must become more aware of the reality of spiritual warfare and how to combat the enemy using the authority Christ has given His children, so that believers would not only discern His direction, but to also fulfill His will of building His Kingdom.

Reflection:

Even as I was writing this paper, I sensed the Lord calling me to step away from the computer and pray for a couple of hours. This book was one of the first books I read in preparation for the D Min program, but my understanding of its contents and application of the practices have developed over the past three years. However, I know there is so much more to go. I feel I am just beginning to grow in His Spirit and hearing His voice. Even as I finished reading Pathways to the King, I felt the Lord was saying reread River Dwellers to go deeper in His Spirit. I was so moved by River Dwellers that I will be using it as the main book to develop a course on the Holy Spirit with Fellowship Church and Riverside Community Church, two churches that we are looking into building a partnership with this year.

I was greatly encouraged by the passage on seeking God for revelation because that was something that I was never taught in my Presbyterian upbringing nor at Westminster Theological Seminary. When one of the speakers at the Holy Spirit Weekend said before giving the message, "Give us EYES to SEE and ears to hear," it gripped my heart. I certainly heard the phrase, "give us ears to hear," from my reformed friends, but rarely have I heard from the pulpit, "give us eyes to see." I need to seek the Lord for revelation in heart, mind, eyes, ears, and possibly even taste. He is a full sensory God, which I am beginning to grasp.

As I read Pathways, I also grew in intimacy with Christ. He is showing me and helping me to experience more of His love for myself and for others. He is helping me to be more at peace as I talk with non-believers. In previous conversations I was always thinking of what to say to co-workers or

students who don't believe, but now I am more relaxed and ask the Spirit to give me the words, as I am speaking with them. I am often surprised at the insight that comes out of my mouth, which I know is from the Lord. God is opening doors at Fairleigh Dickinson University and the greater community through His Spirit.

I have also been experiencing sweeter joy and peace in personal and corporate worship. I am enjoying His presence, which both heals and builds up. My eyes have shed more tears in praise and prayer in the past five weeks than in the past five years. I know the Lord needs to continue to melt my heart with His love and grow in me His humble confidence that comes from being a secure son of the Most High.

He is also giving me insight into resisting my shadow mission of "making a name" for myself by developing a multi-church ministry. One of my idols is achievement, especially doing something that is not often done or very challenging, but the Lord has been showing me what it means to deny self and to take up His cross and follow Him through this season in my life, especially as we prepare to take River Church to another depth of relying on Him in ministry.

The section on the cosmic battlefield and the passages on spiritual warfare, expanded my views of spiritual warfare as well as demonic oppression. There have been some recent challenges among some of the River Church leaders about not getting "too into demonization," but I sense that the Lord is using this for all our leaders to process more the reality of spiritual conflict in the heavenly realms and here on earth. We need to grow in the authority of Christ and how to use it to address the demonic influence in our communities and congregations.

I love how during the Holy Spirit weekend, Fairleigh Dickinson University's basketball team (the lowest seeded team in the NCAA) upset Purdue, a number one seeded team. I wasn't able to watch the game until a few days later. As I watched the recording of the game, my heart was pounding because I

was anxious, when FDU was trailing by six points in the second half, but then I remembered that FDU pulled off the greatest upset in NCAA basketball history, and my joy returned. How much more, when we read Revelation and know for a fact that God wins. We don't have to be discouraged that things aren't going the way we planned or that we are trailing in the second half. Christ wins and He has given us the victory. I need to grow in living my life in the light of His triumphant return, and continue to follow the directions of my King with joy.

Questions:

One of the first questions that came to mind as I read Pathways was "How do I grow in listening to the King?" First, I have to realize that He is my King and not just my buddy. There is something of a too familiarization in our egalitarian American culture. We don't usually do well with the authority of kings. However, the Lord is the King of all kings and obedience isn't optional. He is the King of all kings who humbled Himself to become the lowest servant. Lord, help me to grasp the sacrifice You made because of the love You have for me. Allow that love to motivate me to lay down my life for others. Help me to listen to Your voice and be empowered by Your Spirit to do Your will and minister in Your name.

Another question that came to mind was, "How can I be patient during the pruning process?" When the Lord prunes, it is rarely pleasant, often hurts, and even causes confusion. However, as I trust the Vigneron to cut away what He deems best, He will increase my fruitfulness. I know His pruning of when I left the Redeemer network and the denomination I grew up in, was the hardest thing in my life, but I am thankful for what it produced in my heart and soul, deeper forgiveness, humility, and joy in seeking His glory. I know that there is much pruning ahead, especially in the light of the multiple congregational model that we are taking steps towards this summer.

A third question that came to mind was, "What is God calling me to do with His Kingdom in mind instead of my little fiefdom?" It would be easy for my flesh to derive worth from this multiple congregational model that we will be moving towards this year, but the Lord is making it clear to me that it isn't about me, but about Him. He will use an imperfect broken pastor like me to bring His living water to multiple congregations and multiple communities in Northern New Jersey. There will be a daily dying to self and taking up the cross and following Him each morning, noon, and night. He is the Vine, I am His branches, when I abide in Him and He in me, I will bear much fruit, but apart from Him, I can do nothing.

Action Steps:

The time frame for the multiple congregational model would be to dialogue in May and June so that we can coordinate a 10 AM service with Fellowship Church and a 11 AM service with Riverside Community Church from mid-July to mid-August. After a number of weeks of worshipping together, each congregation will meet with their own members to discern whether we are to move forward to next phase of sharing leadership and discussion of restructuring the congregations' ministry teams. The second phase would be at least six months. The summer could be seen as a dating phase between our churches, the fall, winter, and possibly spring, could be seen as the engagement phase, and if the process is affirmed by the Lord and all His people, there would be a marriage of the churches. However, it is still not clear whether we would be two separate merged churches or one church in two locations, but we know the Lord will direct our path.

I am look forward to a personal retreat in the poconos for 3-4 days to pray and seek His face in the second week of May. I will then have a two day retreat at the same location with my current two assistant pastors to sense His direction together for River Church and the possibility of developing

partnerships with Fellowship Church and Riverside. I know that there are many moving parts, but we know He will guide us step by step to build His Kingdom and see revival in this region.