

The Way
to the
TOP
is
DOWN

By Stan Tyra



A Publisher Driven by Vision and Purpose

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Introduction

“Who is wise and understanding among you? He should show his works by good conduct with wisdom’s gentleness. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don’t brag and lie in defiance of the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder of every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy.”

James 3:13-17 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

I remember watching when my children were young. No matter what the activity of the moment was, they seemed to often be yelling, “Me first! I’m first!” or “Mine! That’s mine!” While we believed this was mainly a product of immaturity, it is, in fact, the essence of what is evil today — yes, it is still a true mark of

immaturity. Children demand, “Feed me, change me, entertain me, pamper me, notice me.” Once, the church was so filled with this type of behavior, the Apostle Paul told them to grow up and stop acting like children. Sadly, this childish behavior is lived out by many of our corporate and world leaders still today.

Even more sad for me is hearing Christians who continually yell, “Me first” and “What about me?”

“A nation will be strong and endure when it has intelligent, sensible leaders.”

Oh, they may not say it out loud, but their actions say it

*Proverbs 28:2
(The Message)*

loud enough. It’s the drive-through crowd — only interested in what they can get and how quick they can get out of there. They walk in last minute — or late — sit, consume, and walk out until next Sunday.

I once had a woman tell me it was the church’s responsibility to feed her. I quickly reminded her that my four-year-old son could, in fact, feed himself if necessary; only an infant is totally dependent on someone to feed him and perhaps it was time for her to grow up. Needless to say, I wasn’t well received. However, many years later, that same woman

told me how important I was to her at that time and if she had it to do over, she would do it different. If we only eat once a week physically, we call it either sickness or a fast. If we eat once a week spiritually, we call it revival!

God always wants to raise up great servants who understand that *the way up is down*. This new generation of believers adopts an attitude and lives a lifestyle that places their priorities behind those of

others. These godly individuals put a greater value on God and others than they do themselves.

“Whoever wants to become great must be a servant to others.”

***Matthew 20:26
(God’s Word
Translation)***

All of us have the ability to influence people. We are all subject to living this same selfish, self-centered, self-serving life. This book is about descending. It’s about giving up our rights for someone else. If you find yourself thinking more about yourself than anyone else, you are on a path to loneliness, isolation, frustration, and contempt for all those around you.

Today, we are all bombarded with images of people falling. Every day it seems that there is another scandal that exposes a leader or group

of leaders who somehow came to believe that they were the only ones who mattered.

We find this in our corporate world, the countries of our world, our families and yes, even our churches. During my lifetime, I have seen two presidents fall — Nixon and Clinton. I have seen the Berlin Wall fall, and I have witnessed the toppling of an evil dictator known as Saddam Hussein. I have watched as countless corporations have been exposed and had their leaders fall due to corrupt business practices. As they have fallen, they have plundered the lives of all those who trusted them and looked up to them as their leader.

The stage is set for a new generation of people that excels in godly character. To this new breed of people, character will not be a noble word to toss around; it will be the very essence of who they are. They will be people of character first and everything else will follow.

A great teacher, Dudley Hall, referred to them as the Joseph Generation. Like the Joseph of the Old Testament, they stand every test and serve their way to the top. Once their character has been chiseled and perfected, they will stand with hands full of bread for a famine-struck people. They will not be vindictive but instead full of compassion, love, vision, character, and

integrity. There is a famine in our land and God is looking for good life managers.

Currently, there is one crisis right after another; one natural disaster right after another; and major economic crisis throughout the world.

Our education system is not working.

Marriages and families are not working. Rather than manage, we

believe the answer

is to throw more

money at it or try to legislate it. The

country and world is hungry for life.

There is a famine in our world – a

spiritual famine

that has countless

millions of people

looking for food

that will satisfy the hunger.

Through this book,

it is my purpose to

lay out the steps or

“tests” that every

Christian who dreams of making a difference must walk through. These steps downward, if taken, will make us greater than anything we

*“For even I didn’t
come to be served but
to serve others and
give my life as a
ransom for many.”*

*Mark 10:45 (New
Living Translation)*

*“For we are God’s
workmanship,
created in Christ
Jesus to do good
works, which God
prepared in advance
for us to do.”*

*Ephesians 2:10 (New
International Version)*

might ever do on our own. The scripture tells us that in order to *increase*, we must first *decrease*. Jesus Himself said that He didn't come to *be served* but *to serve*. He must be our example if we are ever to walk in real power that impacts people from a heart of love.

I don't write from a point of view of one who has completed the entire test. There are stages and steps that we

all must continue to walk through.

However, it would be my hope and my prayer that we might identify and choose a path that is better characterized as "descending into

greatness." We will take a look at the life of Joseph and examine the steps he took — or was taken through — to prepare him to be one of the greatest servant-leaders in history.

Walk with me now as we learn a new model for effective Christians that we will call the Joseph Generation. There are seven distinctly different life stages or downward steps in his development. Let's take a closer look.

"God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other ..."

***1 Peter 4:10
(Living Bible)***

1 It All Begins With a Dream

Did you read the introduction? If not, take a few moments and go back. You will not fully understand the purpose and passion of this book unless you read the introduction.

Are you a dreamer? Do you have a dream that absolutely drives you? Has God said something to you that energizes your life with a sense of purpose?

Most of us have heard Dr. Martin Luther King's speech, "I Have a Dream," delivered August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. It's quite apparent that he, in fact, had a dream that created a passion that drove his activity and energized him every day. It also energized others to act.

As our story opens, we find Joseph in Israel with his family. He's about 17 years old and lives in the town of Hebron. He's living with eleven brothers and one sister. This is the story of dreams and how dreams begin. Joseph is an example of how dreams can cause us to develop. His life is the story of how dreams are realized. It is the story of how you should live your dream once you reach it.

Joseph was the youngest and the weakest. He would have been voted least likely to succeed by the family, a Daddy's boy or the "prized pig" as my friend Drew Tucker refers to himself in his youth. However, God has a way of looking beyond all man can see and recognizing a heart that is humble.

You might ask, "How do I know if I have been called?" Have you responded? Your response will confirm the call. God chooses the weak and foolish to confound the wise.

"Brothers consider your calling; not many are wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen the world's foolish things to shame the wise, and God has chosen the world's weak things to shame the strong. God has chosen the

world's insignificant and despised things, the things viewed as nothing, so He might bring to nothing the things that are viewed as something so that no one can boast in His presence. But from Him you are in Christ Jesus who for us became wisdom from God as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption in order that, as it is written: The one who boasts must boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:26-31
(Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Joseph was a man of vision. He had a sense of destiny. No matter where he was, he couldn't forget he had seen something. Have you seen something that is never far from you? Have you heard the voice of God speak so loudly into your spirit that you cannot get it out of your head or your heart? That's what happened to Joseph. He was never the same. Although maybe untimely, he couldn't stop talking about it. He wanted to tell others what he had seen no matter what it cost him.

There have been two times in my life when God clearly communicated to my heart that He was calling me to a purpose.

When I was a young boy living in Cottondale, Alabama, I would spend the days of summer at my Aunt Peggy's house while Mom and Dad were at work. I was probably around age nine or ten on this particular day. I was riding my bicycle in the woods on an unfamiliar trail. Suddenly, I came upon a sharp turn – almost 90 degrees it seemed. As many young boys often do, I was riding very fast and feeling quite invincible. However, I could not maneuver this turn. It was too sharp, and I was going too fast. I drove my bike off the embankment.

The small valley below was full of cut timber that had been pushed into the bottom. Sticks, logs, and limbs were sticking up promising severe injury if not death. I believe the small valley was perhaps 20 feet deep and maybe 20 to 30 feet across. I'm not real sure but I just remember it looked like the Grand Canyon at that very moment.

From the time I sailed off the embankment, I don't remember anything else until later – who knows how much time had passed. I woke to find myself lying flat on my back on the upslope of the small valley. I had sailed completely across the timber-filled gorge. When I woke up,

I was so at peace that my first thoughts were that I was either dead or paralyzed.

Surprisingly, I didn't have a single pain and as I looked myself over, I realized I didn't have a scratch on me. It was the eeriest feeling but yet I felt totally peaceful at the same time. I sat for a while contemplating how strange it all seemed — it was most surreal.

Next, I noticed that my bike was also lying next to me. It too had no signs of a crash — no scratches or dents anywhere and the handlebars were still straight. It was positioned as if it had been gently placed there. I looked across the gorge and quickly knew that I didn't understand what had happened, but there was no way possible for both me and my bike to fly that distance, land softly beside one another, and not have any damage to show for it.

After I laid there for a while, I picked up my bike, walked out the end of the gorge, and returned to my aunt's house. I never forgot that moment. It was and is still imprinted on my mind and my heart.

Some 20 years later, I was attending a church service with my wife, Debbie, at a local hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas. The church was a new

satellite campus of a church out of San Antonio, Texas. Debbie and I had decided to go hear the guest preacher as we had heard him preach at a Bible conference a couple of years prior. It was a great service, and we were blessed and ministered to through the Word and the worship.

As we were leaving, a man walked up to Debbie and I and thanked us for being there. We chatted for a moment and then, in the presence of my wife, he said, "I believe the Lord would have me encourage you that you are not out of His care or His purpose. The Lord wants to remind you that when you were a young boy and rode your bike over that cliff, it was Him who lifted you and carried you across as His plans for you had not yet been fulfilled."

He said some other stuff but, to tell you the truth, I didn't hear anything else. I was overwhelmed with what I had just heard. My wife heard it, and thankfully, I had shared the story of my bike accident with her although I had never told anyone else about it. I stood in tears and awe that the Lord would so clearly and distinctly speak to me. There was no denying it — I couldn't explain it away.

I never saw that man again, but I have never forgotten the night that the Lord confirmed His call on my life. He put a dream in my heart that I have never gotten over. It is that word that drives me when I get discouraged. When nothing seems to make any sense in my life, I thank the Lord for speaking so clearly to me that I will never forget it.

There was another time the Lord spoke to my heart to confirm a purpose or destiny. This time was only recently. My wife and I were in Chicago, and I was awakened during the night by a voice. I was extremely startled as it seemed as though someone was in the room. I then realized that my Heavenly Father had spoken a fresh word into my spirit so loudly, I could never deny it. It renewed my faith that what the Lord had started in me, He would perfect. He had chosen to awaken me in the middle of the night, and there was no denying it was the voice of the Lord. I quickly recorded it in my journal so that I would never forget that moment. I wanted to make sure that whenever the word was proven true in my life, I would have a record of that night to renew my faith once again and encourage my destiny.

Perhaps you have never had an experience as strange as what I have described for you. I only share my story to encourage your faith that God has a purpose for you. When you want to give up, remember the Word of the Lord to you, His plan, and His purpose – a God-sized destiny that only He can fulfill.

Perhaps you say, “I am a nobody with little to offer.” Then praise the Lord, you are a perfect candidate for God to use to feed a famine-struck society! Thankfully, He is not a respecter of persons. He can and does put His fire on some of the most unlikely candidates according to the world’s standards.

Joseph was just a young man when God put purpose in his life through a vision. I believe, more often than not, purpose finds you instead of you finding purpose. Purpose comes as a result of vision. I think it is important to note that the road from vision to purpose to activity is a journey.

Vision drives the purpose; purpose drives the passion; and passion drives the activity. A lot has been written on vision – what it is and what it is not. Without over-simplifying it and without discrediting many great books written on the

topic of vision, let me state it simply: vision is getting pregnant – period. That’s it! I know you think I have lost my mind. Let me explain.

No one is ever neutral on pregnancy. They are either very excited about it or very sad because of it. The ones who are happy are the ones who wanted to be pregnant. Here is the question for you today: are you pregnant with some vision, hope, or promise that produces incredible joy of coming life?

In the physical sense, we call it expecting – expecting what? It means expecting or believing that something is on its way. In the spiritual sense, sadly most Christians aren’t pregnant – they aren’t expecting anything except to hopefully go to Heaven someday.

What a tragedy! Here is what I mean: I look forward to Heaven, but I want abundant life now also. I want to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and make a difference today! Getting saved for the purpose of *only* going to Heaven is not embracing the total work of Jesus on the cross. It is a very shallow motivation.

Isaiah 54 states that our husband is also our maker; therefore, we should stay pregnant and always be in an expecting mode. Peter Lord,

Pastor of First Baptist Church in Titusville Florida, preached a message once as only Peter can called, "God Won't Move In With You until You Marry Him." His point was that we can't get pregnant spiritually until we marry God or make a covenant with him — the same thing a marriage contract is. It's a covenant. Then, out of love and intimacy with and for God, we get pregnant with the life of God.

Does your life reveal that you're pregnant? Do the activities of your life reveal the expectation of coming life? When my wife, Debbie, became pregnant with our first child, our life changed drastically even before he was born. We started shopping a lot. We were buying nursery items, stocking up on baby clothes, painting the nursery — getting ready. We also talked a lot about it. If you want to know if someone is spiritually pregnant, just listen to what they say or probably more importantly, what they don't say.

When we get pregnant by the Spirit of God, we talk a lot about that also. Our conversations reveal the expectancy of life as do our activities. Our conversations are full of hope, life, and joy.

Contrastingly, you can get pregnant by the devil. Whoever you are intimate with is who

you will get pregnant by. This pregnancy is death — no hope, no promise, no joy of expecting life, just death. Do you know people like this? Sure you do. We all do.

Each of us chooses the level of intimacy we want with God. Listen carefully; you are as close to God as you want to be. Many people blame their lack of intimacy with God on a shortage of time, bad genes, fatigue, demands of children, and the list goes on. The fact is we really need to evaluate how important intimacy with God is to us.

If the doctor told you that you needed heart surgery or you were going to die within the month, you would not say, “Oh well, I will get around to it someday when I am not so busy.” It would become your top priority! We must view intimacy with God the same way.

God led his people out of bondage and provided everything they needed, yet they chose to stay at the bottom of Mount Sinai. Paraphrased, they said, “Moses, you go on up there with God. We will stay down here, and then you can come back and tell us what God said. That’s as close to God as we want to be. In fact, God looks like a consuming fire up there.”

Please notice that to Moses, the fire was a purifying fire. He got face to face with God. The scripture says he talked with God face to face as one friend talks with another.

Only the people who were standing a long way from the presence of God saw the fire of God as scary and preferred to keep their distance. People are still the same today — they stand at a distance choosing to let someone else always hear God and tell them what He said. They never hear God for themselves. When you stand at a distance, all you can see is a consuming fire. Desire for intimacy with God, will allow you to stand in the fire knowing that it is a purifying fire that draws you ever closer and closer to God himself.

When we choose to stand at distance from God, and He doesn't meet our needs or expectations, we tend to form a new god out of whatever is valuable to us at the time. This is what the Hebrews did, and we still do it today. We take the valuable things that God himself has given us, make them our god, and worship an image we created. We will worship *the God* or we will make *a god* for ourselves. To what or to who is your knee bowed today?

When God gave Joseph the vision of his destiny — got him pregnant — he did not understand it and he did not do anything to fulfill it. He just lived his life with awareness and expectation. When things came along that seemed bad and very trying, the expectancy Joseph had in his heart allowed him to move through the trial. It doesn't mean it was without pain; it just means there was always hope. In fact, the birth process is one of contractions and pain that forces the life to become evident.

Unfortunately, abortion is an option. If the pain and inconvenience of a coming life is a cramp in our selfish lifestyle, we can get rid of it. Many Christians want to be on some form of spiritual birth control. They only want to be pregnant when they get good and ready and when it in no way disrupts their “me-first” mentality they have. One product of vision is always hope — hope that will allow you to move through the worst of circumstances. Hebrews 12:2 says, “... Who for the joy (hope) set before him, He endured the cross ...” It was the hope of His destiny and the hope of His vision that allowed Jesus to endure the cross.

The reason it may have taken me so long to realize my destiny is that I took some detours along the way that made the journey longer than it had to be. God's people did the same thing in the wilderness. Moses did it trying to fulfill his destiny in his own way and his own power. I once heard that an armadillo can put a pregnancy on hold until more favorable conditions exist. The Hebrew people put pregnancy on hold for 40 years!

While God's plan for you was written before the creation, it is not written on your heart by the Spirit until you give your life to Christ. In Christ, it moves from *outside* the heart to *inside* the heart. People who do not know Christ also have destiny, but it is written in their minds. It doesn't produce lasting hope. It's not empowered by the supernatural power of God. It may produce activity and a measure of success, but it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

I want hope that is bigger than I am! I want hope that allows me to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Moses went from being a man of strength and power to being a shepherd before God used him in a mighty way to deliver His people. Do you see how he descended into greatness?

The communication of your destiny to others should be a cautious thing. Joseph told his family that they would someday bow before him. That did not settle well with all those around him. However, everything that happened to him afterward pushed him toward his destiny. He had to grow into his destiny while his destiny grew within him.

Right now, you are probably confirming the destiny in your heart or you are questioning your destiny. So many people say, "I do not know what my purpose here on earth is." I wonder if those people really want to know or would they prefer to just roam aimlessly through life and blame everyone and everything for their hopelessness.

If you have invited Christ into your life, then ask Him to reveal your purpose. Scripture tells us that we have the ability to hear the voice of our Heavenly Father. Trust that voice — He does have a purpose for you. Start asking God to show you the detours you have taken that have slowed down His purpose in you. Then, repent and follow God. Repentance will immediately put you back on the right path. It may still take a little while to get back on the right road, but at least you will be going in the right direction.

When the prodigal son finally came to his senses — that means he got as miserable, lonely, and unfulfilled as he could be — he acknowledged that he had taken a long detour, got up, and started walking towards his Father. One step at a time, he walked. Along the way, while humbled, he assumed he had forfeited his destiny and he was going to have to settle for second (lower) status in the family. Man, was he surprised when he got home! Even though he had a long and convincing speech planned, the first thing his father did was reaffirm his destiny — his sonship. He was a son before he left, he was a son while he was away, and he was a son upon his return. While he was gone, he sacrificed the benefits of sonship but not the bloodline or the destiny.

I would be remiss to not point out here that his older brother was also doing the same thing — it just looked more religious. His brother was standing outside the house complaining about not having a destiny. His father went out to him and also reminded him of his destiny. However, he refused to come to the party. Many Christians are standing outside claiming to be religious and are missing the party inside with the Father. Worse than that, they are pointing the finger at others and judging as