

# Back to Basics

## Part 1: Pruning

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### Full Text (for reading on your own)

#### *Expectation for Finances*

I felt like some of us need to put a demand on God regarding our finances.

We have not because we ask not. We go from glory to glory. There is the broad place He brings us into but often He is moving us into a new place. Oftentimes we get into a place where we feel like “we’re good” but He actually has more for you - more flexibility, more increase, etc. So I just want to encourage some of you to hope again and put a demand on God. I understand this is not for everybody, but I am feeling like it’s time for increase and I don’t think it’s just me. We are sowing seeds of faith when we give.

We are not supposed to test God but we are supposed to test Him in this (Malachi 3). So God, I want to see the numbers. I want to see the increase. Just like a good farmer, I am sowing in faith. I’m expecting a harvest in Jesus’ Name.

Perhaps “putting a demand on God” may strike you as odd to your ear. If so, remember this: without faith it is impossible to please God. Sometimes we think of faith as an ala carte item in the Christian life but faith is THE way of life for Christians. We are called BELIEVERS after all!

Someone asked Jesus “what must we do to do the works of God” and Jesus responded “believe in the One whom He sent.” Do you hear that the answer was “faith?” What’s the work of God? Faith!

Therefore since there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4) let us labor ... and what’s the labor? To enter His rest! It’s faith! That same word did not profit the Israelites (Hebrews 3) because they did not mix it with faith! It was faith that kept them out of the promised land it is faith that gets us into the promised land.

If the word “demand” is strong for you. Look at John 16:23 in the Greek. There are 2 different words for “ask” in this section of scripture. With the Greek properly translated, it reads like this: “And in that day you will beg Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you demand the Father as something due to you in My name He will give you.”

WOW - that's awesome! Jesus is talking about a place of sonship. He was saying "you are going to be able to access *our* Father directly because you are going to be His son because of what I am going to do on your behalf. And you are going to need to re-learn how to pray in those days. To pray as a son!

That's the nature of our relationship with Him. "Son I am always with you and all that I have is yours!" When we put a demand on God it's about as bold as taking a cookie out of a cookie jar at your parents' house. It did take an act of faith. It did take a movement, but you don't expect chastisement for it.

God's looking for His sons and daughters to rise up in confidence and put a demand on Him because He sees that demand and to Him it looks just like the woman who had the issue of blood who walked up and touched His cloak! She had been telling herself "if I just touched Him ... if I just touched Him!"

What's interesting is it does not appear anyone had done that before. But after that, multiple people thronged around Him trying to touch Him. Her testimony released it and people heard about it and said "that'll work for me too!" Don't base your acts of faith just on what you've seen others do because you'll rob the world of the expression of faith that you're supposed to lead in. Eyes have not seen and ears have not yet heard what He's prepared for YOU to do.

There's a type of faith that is universal and there is another type of faith that is specific to you - and with that second type of faith you have to STEP INTO it.

If your faith is just a replica you've not yet reached the full expression of faith that He has for you. Don't just replicate other people's faith. Use that as a launching point but there are certain things that are specific to you. For instance Mark Crawford (who is a seer) can prophecy to Ana that she's a seer. So Mark can speak into that but even within that realm there are varieties. Mark is a seer too but Ana is going to be a seer different than Mark. Some of it you can get through replication but some of it you've got to get through experimentation - as you walk out you with God.

### *Testimony: "I want my flute back!" (Olin and Brenda)*

In 1996, the worship leader at the church Olin and Brenda were at mentioned that she had been praying for a flute player. She had asked several people who had told her "no" so Olin said "I'll do it if you guys would lay hands on me and pray for God to give me the gift to play the flute." So she and two other ladies prayed Olin would receive the gift to play the flute. Immediately he did and started playing with them with a flute someone loaned him!

A few months later Olin found a broken flute at a pawn shop and bought it pretty cheap, took it home and rebuilt it. He then used that flute pretty much every week at that church for the next 11 years!

A few weeks ago, Olin brought his flute out to our Friday night prayer and worship time and had a great time playing. When he got home that night he was tired and left it on the front seat of his car in the unlocked car. At 3am he woke up and remembered that his car was unlocked and went out to check and found someone had ran-sacked the car and his flute was gone ...

Brenda woke up at 3:11am and wondered what was going on. Olin shared that someone had stolen his flute. Brenda said "Peter just told me a story!" The story was that someone affiliated with Bethel Church in California had said "God I want my Mac (computer) back." Someone had stolen it and he remembered Bill Johnson sharing a testimony about Bobby Connors praying "God I want my knife back!" In that original story (about a knife) Bobby Connors cried out in a hotel room "God I want my knife back!" and the knife APPEARED right there!

Remembering the Bobby Connors testimony the person prayed "I want my Mac back!" The thief of the computer then contacted the owner and said "hey, let's meet and I'll return your laptop." It turns out the thief had opened the computer and heard a message called "I want my knife back!" I believe the owner of the computer led the thief to the Lord and it was a happy ending.

So at 3am Olin was in distress because there are thousands of hours of worship on the flute! So when Brenda woke up at 3:11 the first thing out of her mouth was "God I want my flute back!" So Brenda emailed some people that had been at the worship night and said "please pray Olin would get his flute back."

Olin reported it to the police and went up and down Broad St. to the pawn shops. It seemed as though it was gone. But Brenda knew - she had faith - "I KNOW that flute is coming back. God we want that flute back!"

About a week or a little more later Brenda got a Facebook message in her neighborhood "Brenda we have your flute ... someone was breaking into my girlfriend's car and they left it!"

The whole time Brenda was praying she was thinking "God send out those angels ... go angels and get me that flute back!"

It was hearing the testimony of "God I want my Mac back" because that person (and the thief!) heard the testimony of God I want my knife back that they stood in faith for getting the flute back! Brenda has seen that in her life: when she hears the testimony, she can believe it for me.

SO WHO WANTS SOMETHING BACK? Who has something they've lost? If you want it back you have a testimony right here! The testimony of what Jesus has done is the spirit of prophecy to release it into your life (Rev. 19) to be done again! He's the same yesterday, today and forever!

"Father I want my \_\_\_\_\_ back!" We receive from Your hand and Your provision!

## *How-to: Red Light, Green Light*

Do you ever tell people things you don't know why you're telling them? My whole life is like "red light, green light." All I know is I have a green light so I just keep talking. What is this coming out of my mouth?!?

But then you hear testimonies like "I want my flute back!" I was talking with Brenda at the worship night before Olin's flute was stolen telling her about "I want my Mac back!" Then THAT NIGHT his flute was stolen. God had sent the testimony - the provision - ahead of time through silly me. I don't know why I was telling her that story! Brenda took it and then the first thing out of her mouth at 3:11 am was "God we want Olin's flute back!" You are sowing testimonies into peoples' lives.

You have to flow with the things of the Spirit. When you are speaking with people it's red light, green light. You have peace on it, you keep going. Then when you feel like "stop" just stop. If you get peace to talk again, open it up again!

Even the sermon on the mount - likely the best sermon ever preached - do you know how it started? "Then He (Jesus) opened His mouth ..." (Mt. 5:2). Do you want to see that?

*Matthew 5:1-2 "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying ..."*

By the way, if you are looking for people to disciple, don't disciple people that don't come to you. Witness to anyone. Disciple the people that come. Otherwise you will create a co-dependent relationship where you care more about their spiritual growth than they do. God wants to give His Word in their life but it seem sHe only wants to give as much as His word as they want. He will allow the circumstances of life kind of "disciple" them back to His word.

In practice sometimes you will disciple someone for a season and they fall off the map and you wonder where they went. They call you up 6 months later and you just say "praise God, I love you, God loves you, so good to hear from you!" They may say that their life is in shambles. Well that wasn't God's will for their life but praise God He loves them just the same and the shambles in their life brought them back to His Word which you can then help administer to them.

So when Jesus was seated His disciples came to Him. That's a salient point.

In verse 2 we see "*Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying ...*" Every word in the Bible has meaning. Matthew could have just recorded "And He taught them ..." No! The entire sermon on the mount started with ONE action! He opened His mouth!

There's a scripture! Open wide your mouth and I will fill it says the Lord! (Ps. 81:10) That is such a strong word for witnessing and discipling!

### *Testimony: Word of Knowledge Hoped for and Received!*

Before service I felt a pain in my left shoulder blade area - on top of my shoulder. David raised his hand and those around him laid hands on him and commanded the pain to go and the shoulder to be healed in Jesus' Name. The congregation agreed in prayer.

It was such a distinct thing ... I had this pain down my left shoulder and I said "Lord, if that's a word of knowledge cause the pain to go NOW." Instantly the pain evaporates without me doing anything! (Think of this about words of knowledge like that ... the pain evaporating like that instantly is actually a testimony for what God will do for the person who has the real condition!!!)

I turned to David now "is it healed, is it better?" David indicated it was!

David now shared this amazing testimony: "So probably 6 years ago, I had scoliosis in my back. I was about 16. I had thrown my back out and couldn't raise my hands above my shoulders and I came into church and you (Peter) had a word about backs! So I came in (to church) this morning and I had been dealing with this (shoulder) for about 3 or 4 days and I tried to work out on Friday night even though it hurt - it was a swollen mess ... I came in this morning and thought 'wouldn't it be cool if Peter got another word!'"

Wow! Christian Recreation! That's just fun!

### *More on Demanding (Lori speaking)*

We've been fighting for prosperity in our business and God had given so many words I felt like it was done and it wasn't done. So I went back to God and said "God what's my part in this?" He's been showing me strategy and one of the things He impressed upon me was "put a demand on Me!"

One of the main words God had given over the business was *Zachariah 10:1 "Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone."*

I knew in the New Testament that "ask" has a component about it that means "demand" in certain places. I had never looked that one (Zac 10:1) up and it is even stronger! Demand it of Me! Put a demand upon Me!

### *More on Words of Knowledge*

When you have a word of knowledge or you think you might have a word of knowledge you have to put a demand - it's a faith thing - and step out.

One time I was at the pool on a Sunday after I had preached. I had taught, then we went to the boys t-ball game and then we went to the pool. I was tired!

I had run into this old friend I had not seen in 20 years. He was telling me that his wife and him had just moved back to town 3 months ago. About 20 minutes later, as I was standing there talking with him, a surprising phrase almost JUMPED out of my mouth ... “where does your wife live now?”

As it about explodes out of my mouth I pulled it back in and chide myself in my mind “what are you doing! I know you are tired but get yourself together -that would have been wildly offensive ... he just told you he moved back to Columbus 3 months ago with his wife!”

Within 20 seconds he says “my wife and I just separated.” How powerful would that have been if 20 seconds previous I had not pulled back a word of knowledge because I was leaning on my own understanding!

I took that experience as an encouragement not a condemnation by the way. Holy Spirit tried to rocket that thing out of my mouth! I was the one who pulled it back in. How often does Holy Spirit move in our lives and our soul (our mind) pulls it back in.

That’s why I’m saying it’s “green light, red light.” Jesus said that if you are led by the Spirit you are like the wind. I am not saying you are a flake because you are grounded in the Word and you test all things. It’s green light, red light. This feels “go” and this feels “stop.” I stopped something the Spirit was wanting to do and missed the opportunity.

So word of knowledge even requires faith. You just have to step out.

### *What is Old and What is New*

Matthew 13:52 says *“Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”*

It’s just got to be both. If you are going to operate KINGDOM it’s just got to be both. Old AND New.

What have I bringing forth the last 2 months or so? New.

We are about to bring out the old. You may think “that sounds worn and dilapidated.” Wine is not like that. New wine is the type that can sometimes be a little bitter, a little astringent, not quite mild yet. New wine has typically not reached its full potential yet. It may have a few flaws to it that haven’t worked themselves out yet. That’s the nature of new. Jesus knew this. That’s why He said that if someone has had old they generally will not go for the new!

So I’ve spent 2 months talking about how we are going to go for the new - and we have been growing in it! I’ve been hearing it in conversations and seeing it in testimonies! I am seeing that new growth and it’s so beautiful. Do you know what the Lord did with me this week? He pruned!

## *Pruning: Back to your "Place of Strength"*

Let's look at John 15. For some of you this may be review but that is exactly what I'm talking about. The things that are review are actually the finest things - the mature wine.

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away (lifts up); and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."* (John 15:1-3)

NKJV footnotes make it clear that "takes away" can actually be translated "lifts up." I know my Father and if you are one of His children and you are not bearing fruit He doesn't take you away, He lifts you up. That's our Daddy.

So this section is talking about 2 cycles of life that believers can be in. You may be in the "lift up" cycle because you have been in some struggle and the Father is lovingly lifting you up. This is historically accurate from what I understand. If a branch was down in the muck and mire (in the dirt) and not receiving the beautiful sun but instead covered by mud ... a storm had pelted it down and it had got in the mud and now mud is splashing and splashing on it ... no longer does it have beautiful clean grapes and the leaves aren't getting light any more.

What did they do? Did they leave it down there? Just pick it up. Tie it up. Wash it off - or the next rain will wash it off - the washing with the water of the Word ... our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience (Hebrews 10). Jesus says (v.3) "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

There's two modes: the one is where you are getting "lifted up." The other is right after that "*and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*" When you bear fruit, you get pruned. Why? So you can bear more fruit.

Bill Johnson says it like this: when God prunes you, He reduces you to your place of strength.

That's what I've experienced recently. We got a new church space. The Lord tells me to release the vision. I loved that since I am a visionary! I was getting great feedback, I felt the Spirit moving powerfully on what we're doing. Awesome, right? Yes! That's growth! God was even stretching me in how I was teaching. I was having a lot of fun with it. Growth! I was experiencing things in God personally and as a pastor I had never experienced before. That's growth. I'm hearing testimonies from multiple people in the body. Growth!

What is growth met with? Snip.

The example of it is this ... Jesus sends out His disciples and they do signs and wonders. "We did it! We did it! We did it! We did what You do!" They had been watching Jesus do it and now they did it!

Picture this: they had been out for some days doing signs and wonders. During the walk back to Jesus they were thinking some thoughts - particularly “which one of us is greatest?”

Think about the back drop. They had seen Jesus do miracles but watching someone else do it is way different than going to do it on your own. They surely would have left on their ministry journey with some level of fear but here they are coming back with these testimonies! “It happened! People are healed! Demons left!”

So they are walking back to Jesus. And somewhere on the way walking back, having done the will of God, having had growth in their life, and having produced Kingdom fruit, they start having a new thought! They start really looking at some of these new branches and new fruit they have going on and they say “oh, it looks good! That’s pretty awesome stuff. This is awesome! God look at this! This is sweet! Look at this stuff on me! I’m pretty great!”

“Wait, you guys are thinking about how great you are too? That’s just what I was doing!” Then they are talking with each other as they are walking back. “So which one of us do you think is best? I mean we are all pretty awesome ...”

They come back and God (Jesus) doesn’t say that what they were going after (wanting to be great) was bad but what Jesus immediately says is this “whoever wants to be greatest among you should be the least.”

SNIP.

They had growth. They produced fruit. What does God do? He comes in as the perfect Vinedresser and reduces them to a place of strength.

The strength is always in the vine - it’s never in the branches.

When branches are fruitful, our tendency as branches is to say “by golly, this is goin’ good!” God will come in and SNIP and you think “uh, that thing I was starting to trust in isn’t hear anymore. Where did it go God?” He says “just draw back into Me. This was your place of strength from the start. Let’s just come right back to here. That out there (branch growth, great fruit) was only ever caused by this ... do you remember? I know you forget right now, but do you remember? It was only ever produced by this connection so let’s just come back to this.”

Why does He do that? So that you can bear more fruit! That’s the process.

This pruning for me happened pretty fast. It took me a few days to walk it out emotionally. It was like “what just happened?” I told the Lord “Father, this feels fast.” I heard Him say instantly “I trust you.” Pruning is not a sign of something bad - it’s a sign of something very very good. It IS the process of promotion.

## *Pruning: The Process of Promotion*

Let's look at one more scripture and then we will stop there.

*So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." <sup>16</sup>He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. (John 21:15-17)*

Do you remember what Peter had claimed? That He would never be the one to desert Jesus! Now Jesus asks "do you really AGAPE (God sort of love) me MORE THAN all of these?" Peter responds with honesty "you know I like you as a friend. I'm fond of you as a friend." (It was a different Greek word).

Notice what that's met with! "Feed my lambs."

Was Peter in the business of feeding anyone at this point? No. He felt disconnected from the Lord. Jesus said "cast your net on this side ..." and Peter realized "that was God!" He swims in and they have breakfast together and Jesus gets at the heart of the issue, which is "you know how you were really going strong with Me and you were one of those on the Mt. of Transfiguration and you had this branch out here that was going pretty awesome and I was telling you I was going to be crucified and you were rebuking me for it ... and then how you said I'll never leave you ... how you claimed to be different and better than all the others in that ..."

Jesus came right back in that context and asks him "do you really AGAPE Me more than all of these do?" Peter says "you know, I'm fond of You." The honesty of Peter in this moment gave him a promotion. What's the promotion? "Feed my little lambs." The humility of Peter allowed him to start to minister again.

Watch the next exchange: Again Peter honestly says "I am fond of you." Jesus now says tend my sheep (presumably older ones in the Lord). You have to know more to tend sheep.

When Jesus asks a third time He changes His word choice. This time He asks Peter "are you fond of Me? Is that where this is at?" Peter is grieved at this point "yep, that's where this is at. I hate that you had to say it, but that's where this is at; I can honestly say that's where this is at." Now Jesus says "feed my sheep." So now Peter is not only feeding the little ones. He is not only tending the big ones but he is also feeding the big ones - the leaders. This Peter who then writes to the overseers in his letter. Peter is even tending and feeding the leaders.

How did that promotion happen? Peter got back to a place of strength. He thought he was hot stuff and he was growing. Growth, which is GOOD, is met by snipping - to reduce you back to your place of strength - so that you can become this 70 or 80 year old grape vine that has a huge trunk and a few gnarly sort of stubby branches that have been pruned over and over ... but when the new growth comes onto that it is explosive, healthy, deep growth!

The scribes trained in the Kingdom bring out what's new and what's old.

I've given you the new and we are going back to the old.

### *Gospel of Grace*

Do you know what the old is? The gospel of grace! Right back to who we are in Christ! What's God say about you? Who are you in Him? Is there any judgment left for you? These are those foundational truths!

I felt like my son David prophesied this morning. I was seeking the Lord about the message and as I walk out of my office and into the house I hear David saying "this shirt was in the basement and now it's musty." We can be wearing the robe of righteousness but if it hasn't cleansed by washing that comes from the water of the Word recently it can get a little bit musty so-to-speak. It needs refreshed. We never leave the foundation.

Paul said there is no other foundation that can be laid than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. We come back to that foundation and all other revelation comes out of that. Hebrews 5 says that people can't get the meat of the Word because they don't yet have the Word of Righteousness. There is ONE revelation that you need before the other revelations can come to you.

Paul Himself says in Acts 20:24 that "*the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*" This is Paul who wrote about food sacrificed to idols, wisdom about marriages, how to administer the prophetic, about words of knowledge, gifts of faith, angels, etc. He wrote about all these things which we would probably call the meat of the Word - even Peter thought so in saying that some of what Paul wrote was tough to understand.

Yet Paul himself did not think of his ministry as the meat of the Word. Instead Paul said he saw his ministry as simply this "*to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*"

All of the power in the Kingdom exists in ONE message. There are many good messages but all the power in the Kingdom is only in ONE message: Romans 1:16 shows us which one. "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is **the** power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*"

It could become easy to become ashamed of the gospel if you think you've progressed past it. This is what I am saying ... the Lord was pruning me back to the one place of strength. I was full go into the new and SNIP "let's go back to the old." I'm making the shift in my heart. This message is to say "let's go back to basics. Let's go back to 101."

Every form of being liberated you could ever want "physically, emotionally, spiritually ..." is in the GOSPEL!

To whatever extent I do not yet look completely like Jesus, there is more of the gospel of grace for me to receive! If I have the full revelation of my identity in God because of Christ's finished work then I will look just like Him. I'm 2% there! Being that I have 98% more to go, then there is lots more I can get from the revelation of who I am in God and who He is for me - what He's done for me on the Cross.

### *Ministry Time*

There was another word of knowledge: this time for a right knee under the patella. In terms of words of knowledge, if it's a pain that you don't normally have it's probably not yours! Similarly if it's a thought you don't normally have it's might not be yours! Remember Jesus perceived in Himself their thoughts!

Make us child-like Lord! Father that we would have that beautiful humility! We pray for a hunger and hope for what the gospel of grace can and will do for us - that the floodgates of hope would come in. The hope for the gospel would come into our hearts that we had have an expectancy for the message of the gospel!