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First Edition – 2025

Printed in the United States of America

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Preface

By Scott Gordon

I never set out to write a book. I set out to obey God.

But after 28 years of preaching, leading, counseling, and crying behind closed doors, I realized there was a story that needed to be told—a story not of perfection, but perseverance. A story not of popularity, but purpose. A story not of applause, but of altars.

This is that story.

It's Lonely at the Top was born not from success, but from over 20 years ago at the fellowship table at my good friend church Apostle Layla Caldwell in Tulsa Oklahoma. It was stated it is lonely at the top. That has always stayed with me From the nights I wanted to quit but stayed. From the Sundays I preached while bleeding. From the silent wars I fought in my mind while still showing up for everyone else. Ministry taught me more than any seminary could. It taught me that calling doesn't cancel pain. That obedience doesn't eliminate pressure.

And that faith—*real faith*—isn't always loud. Sometimes, it's just getting up one more day.

This book is not a memoir. It's a mirror.

It reflects the weight we carry in silence, the strength God gives in surrender, and the moments where we questioned everything—yet still chose to believe. These pages are for the pastor who's tired, the leader who's lonely, the servant who wonders if it's still worth it.

Let me say this upfront: you're not crazy, you're just called.

And yes, the call will cost you—but it will also crown you with oil you didn't ask for, strength you didn't know you had, and encounters with God that only broken places can bring.

I wrote this to give language to the leaders who weep in private but still walk in power. To remind you that God still honors faithfulness. That He still sees the tears you've never told anyone about. That He's still the God who meets us not just in platforms—but in the cave, the car, and the quiet.

If you're a leader who's ever felt unseen, unappreciated, or undone, let this book be your sanctuary. Not to escape—but to exhale. To

remember why you said yes. To rediscover that you're not just surviving ministry—you're walking by the God-kind of faith.

This isn't just a book. It's a lifeline for those still climbing.

And even if it's lonely at the top—God is still there.

Let's begin.

**It's Lonely at the Top:
The God-Kind of
Faith After 28 Years
in Ministry**

Chapter 1: The Call That Cost Me Everything

I was standing at the edge of the platform when I first realized this wasn't just a calling—it was a cost. The congregation was shouting, the choir was singing, and the oil of the moment was heavy. People clapped as I accepted the call, but deep in my spirit, I heard something different. I heard the whisper of a cross.

Nobody tells you that the call of God will cost you comfort. That the same people who celebrate you in one season will crucify you in the next. That behind the clapping are expectations, spiritual warfare, and invisible weights that only those called truly understand.

When I started ministry, I thought the hard part would be writing sermons and visiting hospitals. I thought it would be helping couples reconcile or preaching at funerals. And yes, all of that has its challenges. But what nobody prepared me for was the emotional bankruptcy that comes when you're called to pour but rarely filled. When you're called to lead people who sometimes don't even want to be led.

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In the early years, I gave everything. I said yes to every meeting, every phone call, every late-night emergency. I skipped meals. I missed birthdays. I smiled through exhaustion and served through grief. I thought that's what a good pastor did—sacrifice everything for the sake of the call. And while that was noble, I didn't yet understand that the call requires more than sacrifice—it requires boundaries. It requires rest. It requires faith that God can do more with my surrender than I ever could with my striving.

There were seasons I would preach a powerful word and come home to silence. No applause. No affirmation. Just quiet. Sometimes I'd sit on the edge of my bed and ask, "Lord, am I really making a difference?" Because when the lights go off and the robe comes off, the loneliness sets in. The real kind. The kind that doesn't care how anointed you are.

And yet—I kept showing up. Because the call of God won't let you quit, even when you want to.

I've learned that the true evidence of calling isn't how much you preach—it's how much you persevere. Ministry will test everything you believe. It will test your patience, your faith, your marriage, your friendships, and your ability to forgive. You will be misunderstood. You will be misquoted. You will be falsely accused—and sometimes,

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the hardest part is forgiving people who you prayed for while they were plotting against you.

But here's what I've come to understand: the call will cost you everything, but it will also give you something that can't be taken away.

It will give you oil.

It will give you wisdom.

It will give you a closeness with God that only comes through brokenness.

And that's where the God-kind of faith steps in.

This isn't the kind of faith you shout about on Sunday and forget by Monday. This is the kind of faith that keeps you when you want to walk away. The kind that reminds you you're not doing this for applause or recognition—you're doing it because God said, "Go." The kind of faith that doesn't wait for fruit to obey the seed. The kind that says yes in the drought and keeps preaching in the famine.

In one season, I had given my all to a church that later voted against every idea I brought forth. I had loved them, buried their dead, baptized their children—but when it came time to stand with me, they

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folded. That kind of betrayal wounds deep. But it also refines. It teaches you not to place your confidence in people, but in God alone.

Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Ministry is a daily cross—not just a platform. Not just a sermon. Not just a crowd. It’s bleeding and still blessing. It’s being emptied and still encouraging.

I had to learn that my identity wasn’t in the size of the church or the success of a program. My identity was in Christ—and that had to be enough.

The call will strip you of everything that’s not real. It will take your pride, your self-reliance, and your illusion of control. And what’s left is a vessel God can truly use. I’ve seen more power in my weakest moments than I ever did when I felt strong. Because His strength is made perfect in weakness.

There was a Sunday I’ll never forget. I had just preached a message about trusting God in trials. I walked off the pulpit and received a phone call that a family member was rushed to the hospital. I cried on the drive there—not just because of the emergency, but because of the irony. I had just told a crowd that God was able, and now I had to believe it for myself.

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That's the cost of the call. Living the word you preach. Trusting the God you declare. Walking the path you tell others to walk, even when it's hard, even when it's lonely, even when it hurts.

But I'm still here.

And not because I'm strong—but because His faithfulness is.

I've buried members and mentors. I've preached through heartbreak and loss. I've given eulogies I never wanted to write. But in every tear, God was near. In every low moment, His presence held me. And in every pulpit, even when I felt empty, He filled me.

So to every pastor, preacher, teacher, or leader reading this—if you're feeling the weight of the call, know that you're not alone. Your yes still matters. Your faith still works. And even when it feels like you're at the top all by yourself, God is right there with you.

The call cost me everything. But what I gained in Him... is worth more than anything I lost.

Chapter 2: Preaching While Bleeding

I've learned something in 28 years that every seasoned pastor eventually learns—you don't stop preaching just because you're bleeding.

Ministry doesn't pause for your pain. The people don't stop needing a word just because the preacher is wounded. And Sunday morning always shows up—even when Saturday night nearly broke you.

Some of my most anointed sermons were preached with tears still drying behind my eyes. I've stood at the pulpit with a broken heart and a burning word. I've smiled through betrayal. I've led worship after loss. I've buried members on Saturday and preached to their families on Sunday.

This chapter is for the pastor who doesn't have the luxury of quitting. For the leader who wipes their own tears in the office bathroom before stepping into the sanctuary to encourage everybody else. It's for the

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one who's had to shout about joy while battling depression. For the one who leads while limping.

This is the side of ministry they don't show in conferences or livestreams.

It's the hidden cost.

The secret pain.

The bleeding that never makes it to the altar call.

There was a season early in my ministry when I was going through a private storm. My marriage was strained. My body was tired. The church was struggling financially. And I felt like I was running on empty. I remember one particular Sunday—I had nothing left. Nothing. But I still had to preach. Still had to declare the Word. Still had to pour out what I didn't feel I even had.

I opened my Bible, looked into the eyes of people waiting for a message, and felt God whisper, "I'm your strength. Speak anyway."

So I preached. Not out of overflow—but out of obedience. And something miraculous happened.

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God filled me as I poured.

That's what the God-kind of faith does. It kicks in when your natural strength shuts down. It stands up in you when you want to sit down. It puts oil in your mouth when your heart is still bleeding.

Paul said it like this:

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” — 2 Corinthians 4:7

God doesn't need perfect vessels—He uses broken ones. Vessels with cracks. Vessels with history. Vessels that know what it feels like to be bruised but still bless.

I've preached while grieving.

I've taught Bible study while waiting on biopsy results.

I've baptized others while drowning silently in disappointment.

And I've learned this: bleeding doesn't disqualify you—sometimes, it qualifies you.

Because when you preach while bleeding, you're not preaching theory—you're preaching truth.

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You're not preaching about a healer—you're preaching from the place where healing is needed.

You're not talking about faith—you're holding onto it for dear life.

There's a story in Luke 8 about a woman with an issue of blood. She had been bleeding for 12 years. But her issue didn't stop her from reaching out. And when she touched Jesus, healing flowed—not from a sermon, but from a connection.

That's what happens when we preach while bleeding. We connect.

People don't need perfect—they need real.

They need a pastor who knows how it feels to keep going when everything says stop.

They need a leader who has scars—not just sermons.

Sometimes, your greatest impact isn't in your polished message—it's in your raw moment. When people see that you still showed up—even bleeding—they believe they can too.

But let me be honest: there's a danger in constantly bleeding while leading.

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You can't hemorrhage forever.

You can't keep giving without resting.

You can't keep preaching to everyone else while avoiding your own healing.

I had to learn the hard way. Ministry will take everything you give it—and still ask for more. If you don't find time to bleed in private, you'll eventually bleed out in public.

That's why Jesus withdrew. Not because He didn't love the people—but because He loved the Father more. He knew that intimacy was His power source. And if the Son of God needed quiet time, why do we act like we can survive without it?

I had to create space for rest. Space for therapy. Space for spiritual care.

Because even soldiers get wounded. Even shepherds need tending.

One year, I attended a revival and sat in the back. No title. No robe. Just Scott. And during the altar call, I went forward. I needed to be prayed for—not as a pastor, but as a son. I needed God to remind me that He sees me—not just what I do, but who I am. That night, healing began. Not instantly—but deeply.

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And since then, I've vowed never to confuse preaching with processing.

I now understand that bleeding doesn't make me weak—it makes me human. And healing is not a sign of failure—it's a sign of wisdom.

So to the one reading this—yes, preach while bleeding... but don't bleed alone.

Find a safe place.

Find a spiritual covering.

Find Jesus in the quiet room, not just the sanctuary.

Because the God-kind of faith doesn't just make you powerful in public—it keeps you healed in private.

When you preach while bleeding, you're echoing the cross.

Jesus, the ultimate preacher, was pierced—and still He declared,

“Father, forgive them.”

Still He loved.

Still He finished His assignment—bleeding, broken, but full of purpose.

So go ahead and wipe your tears. Stand tall. Preach the Word.

But after the benediction, give yourself permission to heal.

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Because this calling doesn't require perfection—just obedience and faith.

And even if you're bleeding, if God called you... you're still anointed.

Chapter 3: The Loneliness of Leadership

Leadership will make you loved and hated, celebrated and questioned, followed and abandoned—all in the same season.

But what they don't tell you when you're stepping into leadership is this: the higher you go, the lonelier it gets.

When I first became a pastor, I imagined leadership would come with camaraderie. I thought I'd be surrounded by elders and ministers, board members and brothers who would walk shoulder-to-shoulder with me through every season. And for a while, that was true. But over the years, I began to notice something. With every promotion, every elevation, every answered prayer—I started to lose people.

Not because I mistreated them.

Not because I changed.

But because leadership exposes the insecurities in others.

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Some people are comfortable with you as long as you're on their level.

But once you start walking in the fullness of your calling, jealousy, misunderstanding, and silent resentment can follow you like a shadow.

And that's when loneliness sets in.

You stop getting invitations.

You start hearing whispers.

People begin to assume that because you're strong, you don't need support.

But here's the truth: leaders need love too. We need encouragement. We need safe spaces. We need friends who see the person, not just the position.

I can't count how many times I've counseled broken marriages, prayed over wayward children, and comforted the grieving—only to go home and sit in silence, wondering if anyone would ever check on me.

It's lonely at the top when everyone assumes you're okay.

It's lonely when people are comfortable pulling from your oil but never ask if you've been refilled.

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There was a season when I was preaching multiple times a week, managing church operations, overseeing housing projects, and still working my hospice chaplaincy—all while dealing with personal storms at home. But because I smiled through it all, no one knew I was dying inside. They saw strength, but didn't see struggle. They heard sermons, but missed the silent cries between Sundays.

That's the thing about leadership. You become a lifeline for others, but very few become one for you.

Even Jesus knew the sting of leadership loneliness. In His darkest hour, He went to Gethsemane and asked His closest disciples to pray with Him. "Stay here and watch with me," He pleaded. And yet, they fell asleep.

The Savior of the world was lonely—and surrounded by people who didn't understand the weight He carried.

That moment speaks volumes to every leader.

Sometimes your greatest burden will be carried in the presence of people who love you but can't carry it with you.

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And that's where the God-kind of faith must take root.

Faith that says, "Even when I'm alone, I'm not abandoned."

Faith that trusts God when people fall short.

Faith that believes your assignment is still worth it—even when no one claps for it.

Leadership will test your identity.

It will strip away ego and reveal what you truly stand on.

If you crave applause, you'll quit.

If you lead for affirmation, you'll break.

But if you're anchored in purpose, nothing can move you.

I've sat in board rooms where my ideas were dismissed, only to watch them resurface later through another voice. I've led prayer meetings where only two people showed up. I've poured into people who later walked away without a thank you. And still—I stayed.

Not because it felt good. But because I was called.

Leadership has taught me that God will often allow you to feel alone so that you can rely more on Him. When people stop clapping, He still

[It's Lonely at the Top: The God-Kind of Faith After 28 Years in Ministry](#) confirms. When doors close, He still opens new ones. When friends leave, He still surrounds you with grace.

You don't need a crowd to be called.

You don't need a committee to confirm your anointing.

You just need faith.

Real leadership isn't about how many follow you—it's about how many you lift.

It's about walking the path even when it's quiet.

It's about carrying the vision when nobody else sees it yet.

It's about doing what's right even when it's not popular.

And yes, it's about learning to live with the loneliness.

But here's the grace: loneliness doesn't have to become your identity.

You can learn how to lead with it—but not from it.

You learn how to build real relationships—not ones built on position, but on truth.

You learn to discern who's called to your circle and who's called to your season.

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You learn that proximity doesn't equal loyalty—and silence doesn't always mean rejection.

I've come to appreciate the gift of loneliness.

It taught me to pray deeper.

It drove me to listen for God's voice above the noise.

It reminded me that if God is with me, I have more than enough.

So if you're reading this and feel like you're leading alone—
don't give up.

God sees the weight you carry.

He honors the sacrifices no one claps for.

He's with you in the quiet office.

With you in the late-night prayer.

With you when you're questioning your capacity.

And He will sustain you.

Because the God-kind of faith thrives in the lonely places.

It believes when no one else does.

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It endures when others fall away.

It holds on to God—not the crowd, not the compliments, not the comfort.

You were never meant to be understood by everyone.

You were meant to be faithful.

And faithfulness doesn't need a fanbase—it just needs a “yes.”

So keep going, leader.

Yes, it's lonely at the top.

But God is there.

And He's more than enough.

Chapter 4: When You Can't Quit but Don't Want to Stay

No one talks about the days when you want to walk away.

You don't hate God. You don't hate the people. You just don't have it in you anymore. The weight of leadership, the drain of responsibility, the constant pull to be “on” when you feel empty—it adds up. And one day, you sit on the edge of your bed, look at the ceiling, and whisper, “Lord, I don't know how much longer I can do this.”

You feel stuck between obligation and burnout, between vision and reality, between your calling and your capacity.

You don't want to quit—because deep down, you know this is your purpose.

But you also don't want to stay—because it feels like the purpose is costing you your peace.

This is the chapter for the leader in limbo.

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The pastor who's tired.

The visionary who's weary.

The servant who's silently suffocating beneath the pressure.

I've been there.

There was a stretch in my ministry where I showed up every Sunday, but my heart had checked out. I went through the motions. I smiled. I prayed. I preached. But behind the robe, I was crumbling. I started questioning everything.

Was I really called?

Did it even matter?

Would anyone notice if I stopped?

I didn't need a sabbatical. I needed a resurrection.

Because when you serve for years without replenishment, your soul becomes dehydrated. You can survive off discipline for a while, but eventually your passion needs fuel. Eventually, your "yes" needs reminding. Eventually, your faith needs refreshing.

That's where the God-kind of faith saved me.

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Not the kind that shouts.

The kind that endures.

The kind that whispers, "Stay."

Not because you feel like it—but because God isn't done yet.

The God-kind of faith holds you when your flesh wants to flee. It anchors you when your emotions try to drift. It keeps showing up—not out of habit, but out of hope.

Because somewhere deep inside, you still believe that God is doing something—even if you can't see it.

I think about the prophet Elijah. After calling down fire from heaven and slaying the prophets of Baal, you'd think he'd be on a spiritual high. But the next thing we read is Elijah, running to a cave, asking God to let him die.

That's leadership fatigue.

That's what happens when the outpour doesn't match the outcome.

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You give everything, and it feels like nothing changes. You sow in tears, but the harvest doesn't come quick enough. And your humanity collides with your calling—and suddenly, quitting sounds like a relief.

But God met Elijah in that cave. Not in the wind. Not in the fire. Not in the earthquake. But in a whisper.

Because sometimes, when you're ready to quit, God doesn't send a sign—He sends a whisper.

A gentle reminder: "You're not alone."

A quiet nudge: "There's still work to do."

A subtle promise: "I still have purpose for you."

In my cave moments, God whispered to me, too.

Not audibly—but in unexpected ways.

In the hug from a child who called me "pastor" with innocent reverence.

In the note from a former member who said my ministry saved their life.

In the stillness of my office, where tears turned into worship.

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He reminded me that my calling wasn't built on applause—it was built on obedience.

And obedience doesn't expire when motivation runs dry.

Obedience doesn't wait for validation.

Obedience stays—until God says move.

Here's the truth: even Jesus had a moment where He wanted to quit.

In Gethsemane, He cried out, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..."

But He didn't stop there. He said, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done."

That's the God-kind of faith.

Faith that stays—even when it hurts.

Faith that keeps loving—even when it's not reciprocated.

Faith that keeps building—even when it feels like no one notices.

I won't lie and say I've never thought about walking away.

There have been seasons where everything in me screamed, "It's time to let go."

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But every time I tried, something deeper held me. Not guilt. Not fear. But grace.

Grace that whispered, "There's more in you than you think."

Grace that said, "If you stay a little longer, you'll see what I've been working on."

Grace that reminded me—this isn't just ministry. It's legacy.

Because staying power isn't about stubbornness—it's about purpose.

And purpose doesn't quit when it's tired. It rests, then rises.

So if you're reading this and you feel stuck—torn between staying and walking away—I want you to hear me:

You are not weak for feeling weary.

You are not faithless for needing rest.

You are not less anointed because you thought about quitting.

You are human.

And you are still called.

But maybe this isn't your exit. Maybe it's your reset.

Maybe this is the moment God refuels what life tried to drain.

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So pause. Breathe. Cry if you need to.

But don't make permanent decisions in temporary valleys.

Go back to your why.

Go back to the moment God first called your name.

Go back to the vision He gave you before the burden blurred it.

And then—when you're ready—stand up.

Wipe your face.

And move forward.

You may not want to stay.

But if God hasn't released you—then staying is your victory.

That's the God-kind of faith.

It doesn't always shout.

Sometimes, it just holds on.

Chapter 5: The God-Kind of Faith That Sustains You

There's a kind of faith that gets you started—and there's a kind of faith that keeps you going.

It's one thing to have faith for the dream. It's another to have faith in the drought. To trust God not just when doors open, but when they slam shut. To believe—not just in the beginning, but through the middle, where most people give up.

That's the God-kind of faith.

The faith that sustained me through every storm.

The faith that carried me when I didn't know how I'd make it.

The faith that showed up stronger when I felt weakest.

Because the truth is, after nearly three decades of ministry, I've learned: you can't survive on emotions. You can't live off the high of a good Sunday. You can't build longevity off applause or attendance.

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You need a deeper source.

You need sustaining faith.

The God-kind of faith is not a feeling—it's a conviction.

It's rooted in who God is, not what you see.

It holds on through silence.

It believes in valleys.

It doesn't flinch when the forecast looks bleak.

Hebrews 11:27 says Moses "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

That's sustaining faith.

Faith that looks past the moment.

Faith that keeps building even when there's no blueprint.

Faith that leads people to a promised land while walking through wilderness.

This chapter is personal. Because what has kept me in ministry all these years hasn't been talent, strategy, or even my own strength.

It's been faith.

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Not just faith in God—but the God-kind of faith.

The kind that believes against the odds.

The kind that speaks life while walking through loss.

The kind that refuses to die—even in dry places.

I remember a season where everything I touched seemed to break.

I was losing people, losing finances, losing momentum.

And worst of all, I was starting to lose confidence in myself.

But then I remembered someone used to say when I was a boy:

“Faith is not about escaping the fire, baby—it’s about knowing who walks in it with you.”

Those words never left me.

The God-kind of faith doesn’t promise exemption from the fire—it promises presence in it.

That’s what sustained the three Hebrew boys in Daniel 3.

They weren’t saved before the furnace.

God joined them in it.

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And not a hair on their heads was singed.

That's the kind of faith I've had to walk in.

Not deliverance from the problem, but strength in the problem.

Faith that says:

- "Even if I don't see it, I'll still preach it."
- "Even if I don't feel it, I'll still believe it."
- "Even if nobody supports me, I'll still obey."

I had to learn how to lead without visible signs.

How to sow when the soil looked barren.

How to build when the bank account was low and the critics were loud.

And yet, every time I wanted to give up, the Word pulled me back.

Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

That means if I want to keep my faith, I have to keep my ears open.

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So I started preaching to myself.

I'd walk the floor of my home and speak life.

Declare scriptures.

Prophecy over my own calling.

Because sometimes the only voice of encouragement you'll hear
is your own.

I stopped waiting for validation from others and started trusting the
voice of God.

And little by little, I saw it:

- Strength rising where there was weakness
- Peace showing up in the middle of chaos
- Provision arriving right on time

That's sustaining faith.

It doesn't shout loud.

It doesn't always come with fireworks.

But it stays.

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It anchors you.

It matures you.

It gives you eyes to see what hasn't happened—yet.

That's the kind of faith that has walked with me through 28 years of ministry.

The kind that has carried me through church conflict, leadership betrayal, late-night hospital visits, moral failures of people I mentored, and the crushing weight of responsibility when you're the one everyone expects to have the answer.

Faith sustained me when people left.

When funds dried up.

When vision felt blurry.

When sermons didn't feel powerful.

When I was just tired.

And it can sustain you too.

But you've got to protect it.

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You protect your faith by feeding it.

You protect it by surrounding yourself with faith-filled people.

You protect it by tuning out the noise of negativity and locking in on the Word.

You protect it by remembering what God said—especially when it doesn't look like it's coming to pass.

The God-kind of faith says:

- "God is still working."

- "I'm still called."

- "This season doesn't cancel my assignment."

I've learned not to let temporary battles make permanent decisions.

When I look back over my life and ministry, I see that God never failed me.

He stretched me.

He tested me.

He allowed wilderness—but He never abandoned me in it.

And that gives me fuel for the future.

That's what sustaining faith does.

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It draws from history to empower destiny.

So if you're reading this and you feel tired—don't stop.

If you feel dry—don't give up.

If the vision feels far off—look again.

Faith isn't fantasy.

Faith is your firm foundation.

It's not built on hype.

It's built on hope.

Hope in a God who never sleeps.

Hope in a God who finishes what He starts.

Hope in a God who sustains what He assigns.

You don't need more money, more members, or more affirmation.

You need more faith.

Not faith in yourself. Not faith in outcomes.

But faith in the One who called you in the first place.

That's the God-kind of faith.

And it's what will carry you the rest of the way.

Chapter 6: From Isolation to Intimacy – What Loneliness Taught Me About God

There is a level of intimacy with God that only comes through isolation.

I didn't always know that. I used to see loneliness as punishment—a byproduct of leadership or the result of others walking away. But now, after 28 years in ministry, I see it differently.

Loneliness is a classroom.

And God is the teacher.

In that silence, God teaches you how to listen.

In the absence of people, He teaches you how to trust.

In the quiet of the soul, He speaks with clarity.

It took years for me to stop resenting the empty spaces and start embracing them.

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Because the truth is—some of the deepest revelations I've received didn't come in crowded sanctuaries, revival services, or staff retreats.

They came in the still places.

The lonely places.

The places where no one else could go with me.

When you've been in ministry long enough, you start to recognize that not all separation is rejection. Some of it is divine selection.

God calls you out—not to abandon you, but to build you.

Think about Moses.

Before he led the Israelites out of Egypt, he spent 40 years in the wilderness. Alone.

He met God not in Pharaoh's court, but on the backside of a desert—in isolation.

Think about Elijah.

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After confronting Jezebel and falling into despair, he fled into the wilderness. Alone.

And God didn't scold him. He fed him. Comforted him.

Whispered to him.

Think about Jesus.

Before He launched His public ministry, He spent 40 days in the wilderness. Alone.

And it was there that He confronted temptation, clarified His identity, and came out in power.

I've come to understand that loneliness is sometimes God's way of removing the noise, so you can hear Him clearly.

Because when people walk away, when the phone stops ringing, when your schedule clears, and the spotlight fades—you discover who God really is to you.

I had to learn that.

There was a season when I felt invisible. Forgotten. Overlooked.

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I was still preaching. Still pastoring. Still faithful.

But emotionally—I was empty.

Relationally—I was distant.

Spiritually—I was surviving, not thriving.

And in that season, I expected God to send people. To restore what I'd lost. To fill the room again.

But He didn't.

Instead, He filled me.

He didn't restore the crowd—He restored communion.

He didn't bring back applause—He brought back assurance.

He didn't send people to sit beside me—He sat with me Himself.

That's what I mean by intimacy.

In the lonely places, God strips you of performance and pretenses.

He exposes the places where you've substituted activity for relationship.

He lovingly pulls you back to the center of your calling—not to produce, but to abide.

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Jesus said in John 15, “Abide in Me, and I in you... for without Me, you can do nothing.”

Loneliness taught me to abide.

Not to perform.

Not to impress.

Not to maintain an image.

But to dwell.

To sit in the presence of God without needing a title, a microphone, or an audience.

To rediscover the joy of being His—not just His servant, but His son.

Ministry can subtly shift your identity if you're not careful.

You start to think of yourself based on what you do: pastor, preacher, counselor, leader.

But God sees beyond your role—He sees your heart.

And sometimes, He allows the stripping away of the stage so you can rediscover your seat at His feet.

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In the isolation, I learned how to hear His voice again.

Not the one I thought I needed.

Not the voice for others.

But the voice for me.

I learned that He calls me by name.

That He loves me apart from what I produce.

That I don't have to preach to be approved.

That I don't have to lead to be loved.

That revelation changed everything.

Because once you know who you are in Him, you no longer panic
when others leave.

You no longer fear silence.

You no longer need constant validation.

You walk in intimacy.

And intimacy becomes your insulation.

Now, when I feel lonely, I don't rush to fill the void with noise.

I lean into it.

I ask God what He wants to say.

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What He wants to show me.

What part of me needs pruning or refreshing.

Because isolation can become holy ground—if you let it.

God doesn't waste lonely seasons.

He uses them.

To sharpen you.

To heal you.

To transform your dependency.

To refill what ministry tried to drain.

And on the other side of that intimacy is a greater anointing.

When Moses came down from the mountain, His face shined.

When Elijah left the cave, he anointed kings and prophets.

When Jesus returned from the wilderness, He walked in power and authority.

There's always glory on the other side of intimacy.

But you have to endure the quiet to experience it.

So, to the leader who feels alone:

Don't despise this season.

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Don't rush out of it.

Let it do its work.

Because loneliness isn't always a sign that something's wrong.

Sometimes, it's proof that God wants to do something right.

Let Him meet you there.

Let Him fill you again.

Let Him remind you who you are.

You may feel isolated...

But what if it's really an invitation?

An invitation into deeper prayer.

Deeper worship.

Deeper knowing.

Let the crowd go.

Let the noise settle.

And step into the stillness.

God is there.

Chapter 7: They Didn't See My Tears – Private Pain and Public Pressure

Some of the deepest pain I've ever carried was invisible to everyone else.

That's the reality of ministry leadership no one prepares you for: you learn how to hide your tears. You master the art of smiling through grief, preaching through personal pain, and showing up for everyone else while silently praying someone would show up for you.

I've stood at the altar with people crying in my arms while my own heart was breaking.

I've led worship after sleepless nights filled with anxiety.

I've conducted funerals while feeling like I was dying inside.

And every time, I told myself the same thing: "They don't need to see your tears."

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Because somewhere along the way, I believed that being strong meant being silent. That vulnerability was a liability. That I had to carry the pain without letting it show—because people expected me to be okay.

But can I be real?

I wasn't always okay.

There were days I got in the truck after church and wept behind the steering wheel.

There were nights I lay awake asking God why the weight felt so heavy.

There were seasons when the pressure almost crushed me—and still

I showed up.

Because ministry doesn't stop for personal battles.

People still need prayer.

Still need counseling.

Still need Sunday morning worship.

Still need the Word.

And so you bleed in private.

You break in silence.

And you wonder if anyone would still follow you if they saw the truth behind your robe.

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But here's what I've learned through it all: God sees the tears
they never saw.

He collects them.

He honors them.

And He strengthens you in ways that no applause ever could.

Psalm 56:8 says, "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected
all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book."

That verse became a lifeline for me. Because it reminded me that even
when no one else noticed, God did.

And I needed to believe that.

Because the pressure of being "the one everyone counts on" can feel like
a slow erosion.

You lose parts of yourself trying to be everything for everyone.

You become a role—more than a person.

And in the process, your soul starts to shrink.

There was a season when I didn't recognize myself anymore.

I was exhausted.

Short-tempered.

Spiritually numb.

Emotionally unavailable.

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And yet, the church was growing.

The ministry looked healthy on the outside.

People were coming, giving, clapping.

But inside, I was bleeding.

I remember preaching a powerful message one Sunday morning. The altar was full. People were crying out to God. The service was electric.

But the moment I got to my office and closed the door, I collapsed into the chair—and wept like a child.

It wasn't just physical tiredness. It was soul tired.

That day, I asked God something I had never said aloud: “Why does this hurt so much?”

And His answer was gentle, but clear:

“Because you're carrying more than you were meant to.”

That moment changed me.

I realized I had taken on weight that didn't belong to me.

I was trying to be everyone's savior, instead of pointing them back to the real one.

I was absorbing burdens without boundaries.

And in doing so, I was breaking down—quietly.

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The God-kind of faith doesn't ignore pain—it learns how to carry it with wisdom.

It knows when to speak up.

It knows when to say, "I'm not okay."

It knows when to rest.

Jesus, in all His divinity, wept.

He cried at Lazarus' tomb.

He agonized in Gethsemane.

He even cried out on the cross, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

If the Son of God could express pain—why do we think we have to hide ours?

One of the most freeing decisions I ever made was to let someone see my tears.

Not the congregation.

Not the crowd.

But a trusted voice. A counselor. A spiritual father. Someone who could hold space for my humanity without questioning my calling.

We need those people.

We need safe spaces where the title doesn't matter, where we can take

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off the armor and say, "I'm hurting."

Because pressure without outlet creates explosions.

And too many pastors are imploding in silence.

Too many leaders are quitting not because they're uncalled—but
because they're unhealed.

We have to normalize healing in ministry.

We have to model what it means to lead with faith and honesty.

We have to break the culture of silence and shame that keeps
so many bound.

I've learned that when you bring your pain into the light, it loses its
power to control you.

When you name the weight, God starts to lift it.

When you weep before Him, He wipes your tears—and sometimes, He
sends people to help.

So now, I still cry.

But I cry with purpose.

I cry in worship.

I cry in prayer.

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I cry with friends who don't judge the tears, but pray through them with me.

And every tear reminds me—I'm still human.

I'm still here.

I'm still called.

And God is still good.

So to the one reading this who feels unseen...

To the leader carrying quiet pain...

To the pastor wiping tears on the way home...

You are not weak.

You are not alone.

And you don't have to suffer in silence.

Let God hold what others don't see.

Let trusted people in.

Let the tears fall.

Because even when they didn't see your tears, God did.

And He's never wasted one.

Chapter 8: I Stayed – When Walking Away Would Have Been Easier

There were moments—many moments—when I could have walked away.

Moments when the weight was too much. When betrayal cut too deep. When the calling felt more like a cage than a commission. When I looked at the mountain in front of me and whispered to God, “I didn’t sign up for this.”

But I stayed.

Not because I had all the answers.

Not because the pain disappeared.

Not because the people changed.

I stayed because something in me wouldn’t let me quit.

And now, looking back over 28 years of ministry, I can say this with full conviction: staying power is a gift from God.

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It's not just about perseverance—it's about obedience.

It's about trusting that the God who called you still has a purpose for your presence, even when your flesh wants an exit.

There were easier options.

Quieter lives.

Less painful paths.

I could've gone into business.

I could've taken another secular route and never looked back.

I could've handed over the keys and said, "Let someone else carry this cross."

Even when I went and found someone to take my place.

But every time I got close to leaving, the Holy Spirit would whisper: "Stay. Not because it's easy—but because it's ordained."

There's something sacred about staying.

There's something powerful about not running when it gets hard.

About standing when others scatter.

About holding your post when the enemy thought you'd collapse.

Staying doesn't mean you're emotionless.

It doesn't mean you're invincible.

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It just means you're faithful.

And faithfulness still matters to God.

In John 6, when many disciples walked away from Jesus, He turned to the Twelve and asked, "Will you also go away?"

Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

That's it right there.

That's the heart of a servant who stays—not because it's comfortable, but because they know there's nowhere else they're called to be.

I stayed, not because the people always understood me.

Not because I was treated fairly.

But because God hadn't released me.

And I've learned—you don't leave your post just because it gets painful.

You wait for the release.

You stay until the oil finishes its work.

You stay until the assignment is complete.

Sometimes, we confuse pain with permission.

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Just because it hurts doesn't mean it's time to leave.

Just because it's lonely doesn't mean it's no longer your lane.

God often grows us in the fields we tried to flee.

I wanted to quit during a season when I felt like I was pouring and nothing was growing.

The giving dropped.

The pews felt empty.

My sermons felt flat.

And the vision felt like a fading photograph of what could've been.

But God spoke one word to me: "Dig."

Not "leave."

Not "run."

Not "blame."

Just dig.

So I did.

I dug deeper in prayer.

I dug deeper in study.

I dug deeper in personal growth.

I dug through the rocky places of leadership and disappointment.

And then—something shifted.

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Not overnight.

Not all at once.

But I started to see it: roots growing under the surface.

Faith strengthening.

Maturity deepening.

And fruit slowly emerging from what once looked like failure.

That's the reward of staying.

It's what Paul meant when he said, "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for your labor is not in vain." (1

Corinthians 15:58)

Your labor is not in vain.

Your tears are not in vain.

Your loyalty is not in vain.

Your staying is not in vain.

I stayed—and I saw healing.

I stayed—and I saw restoration.

I stayed—and I saw growth I would've missed if I had walked away too soon.

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So hear me: if you're standing at the edge, weighing your options,
wondering if it's time to leave...

Check with heaven before you check out.

God honors the leader who stays when quitting is more convenient.

He empowers the servant who shows up tired but still shows up.

He blesses the one who stays not for recognition, but out of conviction.

Staying is not weakness—it's worship.

Every time you show up to that pulpit, that meeting, that assignment...

You're telling God, "You can still trust me."

And He will reward that.

Not just with fruit—but with fresh oil.

Not just with outcomes—but with greater intimacy.

Not just with applause—but with anointing.

Because the God-kind of faith doesn't just launch you into ministry—it
keeps you there when everything says leave.

It whispers, "There's more on the other side of this season."

It declares, "If God brought me here, He'll keep me here."

It trusts, "My steps are ordered—even when they're painful."

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So I stayed.

And I'll keep staying until He says otherwise.

Not because I'm strong.

But because He is.

Not because I never wavered.

But because He never let me fall.

Not because it was easy.

But because it was worth it.

And I believe—when you stay in your assignment long enough, you'll see fruit you never imagined.

The late nights.

The long prayers.

The silent tears.

The faithful “yes.” It will all be worth it.

So to the leader on the verge...

The pastor in the middle of fatigue...

The servant who's tired of serving...

Let this be your reminder:

Stay.

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Stay until you see what God showed you in the beginning.

Stay until the breakthrough comes.

Stay until your heart is healed.

Stay until your yes becomes someone else's testimony.

Because staying doesn't just change you—it changes everything.

Chapter 9: The Power of One More Day – Winning the War Within

Some battles aren't waged in pulpits or boardrooms.

Some battles are fought in the quiet corners of your mind—in hotel rooms, church offices, late-night drives, and the silence of your own soul.

This chapter isn't about the enemy outside of you.

It's about the war within you.

Because as a leader, I've learned the hardest person to lead is... me.

I've had to wrestle with doubts no one heard.

Silence voices that no one else saw.

Battle thoughts that tried to convince me that one more day wasn't worth it.

But here I am.

Still standing.

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Still serving.

Still believing.

Because of the power of one more day.

One more day of believing.

One more day of trusting.

One more day of getting out of bed, brushing off discouragement, and walking by faith—not by feelings.

There were mornings I stared at the ceiling and thought, “I can’t do this anymore.”

But then I whispered, “Just one more day, God.”

Give me strength for one more day.

And He did.

That’s how I won the war within—not by pretending I wasn’t in a fight, but by choosing to stay in it long enough to see the victory.

See, the devil isn’t always after your entire future—sometimes he’s just trying to rob you of today.

Because if he can convince you to give up now, you’ll never see what God had waiting next.

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That's why the Bible says in Lamentations 3:23, "His mercies are new every morning."

Every morning.

Not yearly. Not monthly. Daily.

Because God knows that every new day brings new battles.

And with those battles come new mercy, new strength, new grace to endure.

There was a season in my life when depression hit so hard, I didn't even recognize myself.

I still functioned.

I still preached.

But something inside me was fading.

It wasn't sin.

It wasn't laziness.

It was the accumulation of spiritual fatigue.

The kind of exhaustion that sleep couldn't fix.

The kind that came from caring deeply, loving hard, leading long—and never letting myself breathe.

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I felt like I was falling apart in slow motion.

And worse—I was ashamed of it.

“How can you feel this way and still be anointed?”

That’s what the enemy whispered.

But God had another voice.

He didn’t condemn me—He comforted me.

He said, “Even Jesus was weary. Even Jesus needed to withdraw.”

And I realized—I wasn’t failing.

I was human.

And I needed to give myself the same grace I so freely gave to others.

That’s when “one more day” became my mantra.

Not “one more month.”

Not “one more year.”

Just today.

Just this next 24 hours.

Sometimes faith is big enough to move mountains.

And other times, it’s quiet enough to just get out of bed.

That’s the God-kind of faith:

Not always loud. Not always triumphant.

But always present.

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It shows up in the decision to keep going when quitting feels easier.

It lives in the leader who preaches to others while barely holding on himself.

It breathes in the single mother who still sings worship through her tears.

It survives in the widow who still raises her hands in praise on Sunday morning.

It's the kind of faith that doesn't always roar—but refuses to die.

And I want you to know this:

Sometimes winning doesn't look like victory.

Sometimes winning just looks like not giving up.

So if today is hard—don't try to fix the whole year.

Just make it through today.

One more prayer.

One more worship song.

One more phone call to check on someone else—because serving helps lift you, too.

And when tomorrow comes, God will meet you there.

With fresh mercy.

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Fresh strength.

Fresh breath.

I look back on all the days I almost quit—and I thank God I didn't.

Because the next day held things I couldn't see.

The next day brought the clarity I didn't have before.

The next day carried the breakthrough I'd prayed for.

But I would've missed it—if I had stopped today.

So I've learned to respect the power of one more day.

One more day can change everything.

One more day of walking by faith can shift your entire trajectory.

One more day of holding on can be the difference between burnout and breakthrough.

In 2 Corinthians 4:16, Paul writes,

“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

Day by day.

That's how we're renewed.

That's how we win.

Not in giant leaps—but in faithful steps.

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So to the leader reading this who feels the heaviness of today—hear me:

You're not weak.

You're not crazy.

You're not less spiritual.

You're just human.

And this is a battle God has already equipped you to win.

So don't run.

Don't retreat.

Don't surrender to the darkness.

Just stay one more day.

Then tomorrow—do it again.

And again.

Until the valley becomes a victory.

Until the tears turn into testimony.

Until the weight gives way to worship.

Because on the other side of “one more day” is destiny.

And all of heaven is cheering you on.

Keep walking.

Keep breathing.

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Keep believing.

Because you're closer than you think.

Chapter 10: When Ministry Feels Thankless – Leading Without Applause

Ministry is not for the faint of heart.

You don't survive nearly three decades in ministry without bruises. And some of the deepest ones come not from battles—but from silence. From pouring your heart into people who never say thank you. From preaching to those who leave without a word. From loving sheep who bite back.

There's a hidden cost to leading when no one is clapping.

I've had moments where I stood in the pulpit, exhausted from the week's battles, only to see blank stares looking back at me. No amens. No nods. Just silence. I've walked off platforms wondering if what I said mattered. I've sacrificed family time, sleep, and my own well-being for people who would leave at the first disagreement. And still, I stayed.

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Not because they clapped—but because God called.

I've learned that if your reward is the applause of people, you'll burn out fast. Because applause is seasonal. Sometimes they cheer. Other times they critique. Some weeks you're their favorite. The next, you're forgotten. You can't build a ministry on the shifting winds of people's opinions.

The call is higher than the crowd.

Jesus knew it. In Luke 17, He heals ten lepers—and only one comes back to thank Him. One. The Son of God performs a miracle—and 90% walk away without even saying thank you.

If Jesus faced it, we will too.

But here's the lesson: He healed them anyway.

Because obedience isn't based on who claps—it's based on who called.

I've had to minister to people who never acknowledged the sacrifice.

Counsel couples who never returned. Bury loved ones without a single thank you from the family. And each time, I had to ask myself: "Scott, who are you doing this for?"

And the answer had to be Jesus.

If not, I'd quit. If not, I'd become bitter. If not, I'd stop pouring.

But when your eyes are on Him, you realize—your reward doesn't

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come from their hands. It comes from His heart.

Hebrews 6:10 says, "God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them."

God doesn't forget.

People might.

The church might.

Even your closest friends might.

But God sees. And He rewards. In His time. In His way.

There's a sacred beauty in leading without applause. It strips you of pride. It purifies your motives. It makes you ask the hard questions:

Would you still preach if no one shouted?

Would you still lead if no one followed?

Would you still serve if no one noticed?

That's where real ministry begins. Not in the spotlight—but in the shadows.

That's where God does His best work—when it's just you and Him.

When the crowd is gone, and your "yes" still stands.

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I've come to cherish those moments now. The quiet drives home. The after-service prayers where no one's watching. The handwritten notes that never go public. Because they remind me—it's not about being seen. It's about being *sent.*

Some of the most powerful moments in my life weren't met with claps—but with tears. With hugs. With silent nods from people who didn't have the words—but felt the impact.

And sometimes, the greatest applause comes from heaven.

When you show up tired. When you preach from a place of pain. When you love those who don't love you back. That's when heaven stands. That's when God says, "Well done."

So if you're in a season where it feels thankless—don't stop. If your efforts feel unnoticed—keep going. If no one's cheering—remember, the crowd isn't your confirmation.

The cross is.

And Jesus didn't wait for applause to carry His. He carried it through betrayal, silence, and suffering—because of love.

Let that be your reason too.

Ministry isn't glamorous. It's gritty. It's lonely. It's sacrificial.

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But it's holy.

And every quiet sacrifice you make is recorded in heaven. Every unnoticed prayer. Every unpaid hour. Every unseen act of kindness.

God saw it. God sees you.

And one day, He'll reward you publicly for what you did privately.

So keep leading.

Keep serving.

Keep showing up.

Even when no one claps.

Because the applause of man fades. But the approval of God echoes through eternity.

Chapter 11: The Power of Finishing Well

Finishing is harder than starting.

Starting is exciting—vision is fresh, passion is high, support is strong. But as the years roll on, you realize that the real test isn't how well you begin. It's whether you're still standing when others have walked away. Finishing well is about endurance. It's about staying faithful in seasons where quitting would be easier, where applause has faded, and when your body, mind, and spirit are tired.

I didn't make it through 28 years in ministry by chance—I made it through by choice.

The choice to pray when I didn't feel like it.

The choice to show up when I wanted to hide.

The choice to believe when everything said it wasn't worth it.

Anyone can start. Few finish.

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Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."**

That's the goal—not just to be known for ministry, but to be faithful until the end.

There were moments I wanted to resign silently. Walk away without a farewell service. Slip into obscurity and say, "Let someone else carry the weight now."

But the God-kind of faith kept whispering, **"You're not done yet."**

You don't finish well by being perfect—you finish well by being faithful.

Faithful to the call.

Faithful to the Word.

Faithful to the people—even when they hurt you.

Faithful to God—even when you feel forgotten.

There's something sacred about a servant who lasts.

I've buried too many preachers who died with regret. Men who were gifted but bitter. Called but compromised. Passionate but prideful.

Finishing well means guarding your heart when it's easier to get hardened. It means forgiving quickly. Repenting often. Loving deeply.

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It means knowing when to say no. Knowing when to step back.

Knowing when your soul needs rest.

In my 28 years, I've seen leaders rise and fall. I've seen overnight platforms crumble under pressure. But I've also seen quiet saints who nobody knew—finish strong.

They didn't chase the spotlight. They chased Jesus. And in the end, their legacy wasn't their platform—it was their integrity.

That's what I want.

I want to finish with joy. With peace. With stories of grace, not grudges.

I want my children and grandchildren to say, "He stayed faithful."

Not famous. Faithful.

Because finishing well is the greatest sermon your life will ever preach. Ministry has a way of exposing what's in you. The longer you lead, the more pressure you'll face. And that pressure will either polish you—or crush you.

That's why you must stay rooted. In the Word. In worship. In wise counsel.

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You can't finish well by coasting. You must be intentional.

You must decide daily:

To stay humble.

To stay teachable.

To stay in love with Jesus—not just His work.

Finishing well doesn't mean you never fall—it means you get back up.

It means you keep showing up. You keep forgiving. You keep giving your best even when it feels like no one notices.

And you do it not for applause. Not for recognition. But because you remember who called you.

God called you.

And He doesn't call quitters. He calls finishers.

There's a crown reserved for those who endure. There's a reward for those who don't just speak about faith—but walk it out until the very end.

If you're weary today—hear this: Your finish matters more than your start.

You may feel like you've lost years. Like you've made too many mistakes. Like your ministry is on life support.

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But if you're still breathing, God's not done.

Finish your race. Run it with all you have left. Crawl if you must—
but don't stop.

Because there are people watching. There are sons and daughters in the
faith who need to see what finishing well looks like.

Let your life be a blueprint. Let your scars be testimonies. Let your
endurance be an example.

And when the day comes, may heaven say what Paul said—*You
finished. You kept the faith. You didn't give up.*

That's the power of finishing well.

It's not about how loud you were.

It's about how long you lasted.

So I say to every pastor, leader, servant, and saint reading this:

Don't quit.

Don't coast.

Don't grow cold.

Finish.

Finish with fire.

Finish with faith.

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Finish with your eyes on Jesus—because He's the Author *and*
the Finisher.

And the same God who called you is the same God who will carry you
across the finish line.

Chapter 12: The Altar Still Works – What 28 Years Have Taught Me About the Presence of God

There's something sacred about the altar.

Not the wood and nails. Not the steps at the front of the church. But what happens when you *bring yourself there.*

After 28 years in ministry, I've learned this: The altar still works.

It's where pride is broken.

It's where tears are welcome.

It's where burdens are laid down and strength is picked up.

I've stood at hundreds of altars. Some as a preacher. Some as a mourner. Some as a father. Some as a son.

And every time—I've encountered God.

Not always in lightning and thunder. Sometimes just in quiet reassurance. A whisper of grace. A nudge of strength. A peace that defied the storm I was facing.

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The altar isn't outdated. It's not a relic of the old church.

It's a *necessity* in today's church.

Because in a world that teaches us to perform, to impress, to protect our image—the altar invites us to be undone.

To weep. To repent. To surrender. To be *human.*

I've seen hardened men melt at an altar. I've seen marriages restored at an altar. I've seen teenagers collapse under the weight of conviction and rise with the power of a calling—all at the altar.

And yet, we've seen the modern church grow more allergic to it. We've traded altar calls for announcements. Traded tears for tight schedules. Traded Holy Spirit moments for smooth transitions. But let me remind you—no program can do what the presence of God can.

You can't manufacture conviction. You can't script breakthrough. You can't automate deliverance.

Those things are birthed at the altar.

There have been times in ministry when I was running on empty. I wasn't sure I could preach again. Wasn't sure I could pastor

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another week.

And God would whisper: "Come back to the altar."

Not the pulpit. Not the platform. The *altar.*

Where it wasn't about titles or followers or sermons—it was about
being a *son* again. Just Scott. Just the one who still needed mercy.

And in those moments—He met me. He filled me again.

Not with pride, but with presence.

We don't just need more strategy. We need more surrender.

We don't just need better lights. We need deeper light.

We don't just need stronger branding. We need stronger brokenness.

The altar is where heaven touches earth. Where shame is lifted. Where
healing begins.

It's where I learned how to pastor—not just from books or seminary,
but from *knees on carpet*, crying out for help.

It's where I learned to forgive those who hurt me.

Where I laid down bitterness I didn't even know I was carrying.

Where I received the courage to keep going when I didn't think I could.

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The altar taught me that I don't have to have it all together to be used by God—I just have to *lay it all down.*

And when I did, He picked me up stronger every time.

I want to speak to every pastor, leader, or saint who feels burned out:

Get back to the altar.

Not just for your people. For *you.*

Let the altar remind you that you're still God's. That He sees you. That His presence is still enough.

Let your tears be your prayer. Let your surrender be your sermon. Let your brokenness be your offering.

Because He still meets us there.

One of the most beautiful scriptures says, **"A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."*

(Psalm 51:17)

That's altar talk.

Not just for sinners. For leaders. For preachers. For servants who've gotten weary trying to carry what only God can hold.

If I've learned anything in these 28 years, it's that everything else may change—but the altar still works.

It still saves.

Still heals.

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Still delivers.

Still empowers.

So build altars again. In your church. In your home. In your heart.

Make space for God to be God.

For His presence to interrupt your plan.

For His Spirit to take over your service.

Let your legacy not just be sermons preached or buildings built—but

altars restored.

Because one encounter with God at the altar can do more than a
hundred sermons.

And when it's all said and done, I want it said of me—not just that I
preached well, but that I knelt often.

That I never lost my altar. That I never lost my tears. That I never
lost my wonder.

Because in the end, it's not the crowd that changes you. It's the altar.

And it still works.

Final Charge

To every pastor, leader, servant, or silent warrior in the trenches of ministry—this is your charge.

You were not called by man. You were called by God.

And the God who called you is still with you. Still backing you. Still equipping you.

You may not always hear applause. You may not always feel appreciated. You may not always understand why the road is so lonely. But know this—your assignment is sacred.

You are not invisible. You are not forgotten. You are not replaceable. You are chosen.

The weight you carry is heavy because what you carry is holy. The burden is great because the calling is great. And even when you question your own strength—God never questions His choice.

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So keep standing.

Keep serving.

Keep believing.

You don't need the crowd to stay faithful. You don't need the validation of man to know your worth. You don't need perfect conditions to walk in power.

You just need to stay connected—to the Vine. To the Source. To the God who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

This journey won't always make sense. It will cost you. Stretch you. Break you.

But it will also bless you.

You'll see lives changed. Families restored. Addictions broken. Dreams revived. Souls saved.

And those moments—those altar moments—will remind you why you stayed.

So to the one who's tired: breathe again.

To the one who's wounded: heal again.

To the one who's questioning: believe again.

There's more in you. More ahead of you. More that God wants to do through you.

Don't quit now.

Because when it's all said and done, it won't be the size of your church, the sound of your choir, or the shout of your sermons that heaven applauds.

It'll be your faithfulness.

Your obedience.

Your surrender.

Your "yes."

So rise, servant of God. Wipe your tears. Lift your head. Square your shoulders.

And walk forward—not in fear, but in faith.

Because it's lonely at the top—but you're not alone.

God is with you.

And He still rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Now go finish your race.

Go change lives.

Go walk in the God-kind of faith.

You were born for this.

Acknowledgments

After 28 years in ministry, I have learned that no one finishes strong alone. Every chapter of this journey was touched by the grace of God and the support of people who believed in me when I didn't have the strength to believe in myself.

To my wife, Kristi — you have stood beside me in sunshine and storms. You've carried the weight of ministry with grace and faith, and your love has been my anchor. Thank you for your prayers, your patience, and your unwavering presence. This book, and this journey, would not have been possible without you.

To my children, your strength, your words, and your lives inspire me daily. You've given me reason to keep going when I felt like quitting. You've shown me what legacy really means.

To the Calvary Baptist Church family — thank you for trusting me, challenging me, and allowing me to serve as your pastor. You've been my classroom, my calling, and my community. Every sermon preached and every soul served was a labor of love.

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To my fellow pastors and leaders — those I've met across pulpits, conferences, and late-night phone calls — thank you for your honesty, your tears, your wisdom, and your friendship. We may be in different churches, but we are in the same fight. Your encouragement helped me carry on.

To the hospice families and patients I've walked with through the valley of the shadow of death — thank you for reminding me what truly matters. Ministry isn't just in the pulpit; it's in the hospital room, the bedside prayer, the whispered scripture. You taught me the value of presence over performance.

To my spiritual mentors — those who poured into me when I was just getting started, and those who continue to pour into me today — your words shaped my theology, your prayers fueled my faith, and your example taught me what it means to finish well.

To every reader who has picked up this book — thank you. Thank you for trusting me with your time, your pain, your questions, and your hunger for more. I pray these words don't just inspire you but ignite something eternal in you.

And most of all — to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You are my source. My strength. My song. When I felt invisible, You saw me. When

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I felt broken, You carried me. When I wanted to walk away, You held me together. Everything I am, everything I've done, and everything I will ever become is because of You.

Thank you for never letting go.

To everyone who has walked with me, prayed for me, challenged me, supported me, and loved me — this book is for you.

We made it this far because God is faithful.

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