

# THE SOUL CARE LEADER

*Healthy Living and Leading*

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EXCERPT

## Chapter 3

### CREATING A SOUL CARE CULTURE

One time I was in Ocean City, Maryland and I went for a bike ride. I had been riding my bike 15 to 20 miles most days for many years, so I was in pretty good shape. Sometimes when I go for a bike ride I feel exceptionally strong that day and make really good time. I'm not sure why that is. At any rate, on this day I felt really strong. I rode in one direction for about 10 miles and then turned around to head back to our rental house. I suddenly realized why I felt so strong that morning. I was riding the entire time with the wind at my back! I hadn't realized it. I now had to ride back 10 miles against a strong wind. The way home was exhausting.

When we get the culture of our organization in alignment with our vision, we feel like we are leading with the wind at our back. It feels much easier to lead and accomplish our goals, and we feel empowered. If you are a pastor or a small group leader and are trying to implement Soul Care into your local context, you have to understand how to create a Soul Care culture. What are the cultural components that produce an atmosphere where we feel like we are leading a Soul Care environment with the wind of God at our backs?

## Deep Life Change Culture

To create a culture that is hospitable to Soul Care, we have to create a deep life change culture. There are three aspects of a deep life change culture we need to explore: anointed teaching, true community, and the presence and power of God.

First, to create a deep life change culture there must be **anointed teaching**. When I say anointed teaching, I probably don't mean what most people think I mean. Most people think about a gifted teacher; I will assume the communicator is a gifted teacher. By anointed teaching, I mean the teacher has *lived into the teaching*. They lead people down paths of wisdom they have traveled. They have integrated this truth into their lives, and they embody the concept. When you live into a teaching you have authority over that area, and you create an atmosphere of breakthrough for other people. A gifted teacher can communicate concepts, but without the anointing of the Spirit the teaching will be interesting, but the life change factor will be low. However, when the teacher lives out the truth they communicate, and they communicate it even more effectively because of the wisdom they have developed while living it out, there is a Spirit-saturated atmosphere that is conducive to life change. There is a weightiness to the words they convey because they have been marked by the presence of the Spirit in their lives.

In Matthew 10 Jesus sent out the twelve and gave them authority to drive out demons, heal the sick, and preach the gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus said to them, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). You cannot give what you do not have. But what you have deeply assimilated into your life, you can impart to others who are earnestly seeking freedom.

As I mentioned, I never expected to do this kind of ministry. I started my ministry focused on growing as a leader, reproducing leaders, and creating a leadership environment. The church was growing and people were coming to Christ, but when Jen and I hit a marriage snag, I was forced to deal with my brokenness. As the Lord taught me these principles of life change and I started implementing them, I began to develop spiritual authority in these areas. I found I had the wind at my back when it came to helping people gain freedom in Christ. Leadership is necessary. Good leadership can gather a crowd and mobilize them on mission. But authority creates breakthrough atmospheres. I started teaching Soul Care, and people started having breakthroughs. Life change was happening everywhere I taught these things—at seminary, in my local church, in conferences. And it became very apparent that God had anointed me to communicate these principles of freedom in such a way that people experienced deep life change. That's what happens with anointed teaching. You only have authority over that which you walk in victory.

The second key component of a deep life change culture is **true community**. You were created in the image of God. God is community: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They have lived in perfect community for all eternity. There has never been any darkness or division between them; there has never been any deception, hiding, tension, animosity, or dissension. They have lived in perfect harmony for all eternity. Since you were created in

God's image, you were created for true community. But sin has disrupted community and causes darkness, rifts, and divisions between us. Sin makes us want to hide.

Think about Adam and Eve. They were regularly walking in the garden with God, naked and unashamed. But as soon as they sinned, they felt shame and covered their nakedness. They weren't just covering up physically, they were covering their sin. They blame, excuse, justify, rationalize, and deny their sin. They start moving toward the darkness for cover. But there is no freedom in the darkness.

If we are going to experience the freedom Jesus has purchased for us with His blood, we are going to have to move into the light. We must walk in the light as He is in the light. In 1 John 1:5-7, John says, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." If you follow John's logic in the passage, you realize that John made an illogical statement. He said *God* is light. In *Him* there is no darkness. And if we walk in the light as *He* is in the light, we will have fellowship with . . . one another. He should have said we will have fellowship with *Him*. That would have made logical sense. Whenever someone in the Bible seems to jump logic tracks, you have to realize they have a presupposition we don't yet understand that allows them to leap to that conclusion. So the question is: what is the presupposition John holds as he makes this statement?

John understands the biblical truth that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. If we are truly walking in humility, we will be honest with others; we won't try to manage our image or attempt to look better than we are. If I am trying to look better in your eyes than I really am, that's pride. If I walk in pride with you, I am not really walking in the light with God, because God opposes the proud. So, John concludes, if we are really in the light with God, because we are walking in humility, we will be in the light with others. Humble people won't have any secrets and won't pretend to be something they are not. Light is the way of God's Kingdom. Darkness is the way of Satan's kingdom.

You are a spiritual being in a spiritual world; you are always giving away spiritual access. You do not get to choose *if* you give away access; you only get to choose *to whom* you give away access. When you pick up the tools of the kingdom of darkness, you give access to the evil one. When you pick up the tools of the kingdom of light, you give access to God. If we pick up secrecy to cover our sinfulness, we are giving Satan access. We cannot walk in freedom in the kingdom of light by using the tools of the kingdom of darkness. We must walk in the light as He is in the light. We must walk in the light with God and others. This is the only path to victory.

This is why I always do small groups as part of Soul Care. Sadly, people are often tempted to skip the small groups. They just want to experience the teaching—they do this because we have a Western, knowledge-based approach to discipleship. People come to the conference for the information, and they mistakenly assume the information will lead to

transformation. But the Pharisees knew the truth. They read their Bible and memorized large portions of it, but they killed Jesus. All their knowledge didn't help them. They were still living in pride and walking in darkness.

Everybody needs a few people in their life with whom they walk in the light. You don't need to wear your heart on your sleeve and tell everybody everything. But you should have a few people with whom you are living in open, honest, confessional community. I have a few people in my life who know everything about me. No one can ever come to me and say, "You did such and such" except that I would be able to say, "Yes, but Jen knows that. Martin knows that. Heck, I wrote that one in a book!" It is incredibly freeing to live without secrets. Every day when I get up, the guy I look at in the mirror is the person I am presenting to those closest to me. That light-living lifestyle causes us to feel loved and free; it breaks the enemy's grip of shame and condemnation over our souls.

Some of you—and many of the people we minister to— have been deeply wounded in community, and thus many people are reluctant to be vulnerable. But if you have been wounded in community, you can only be healed by community. God will only take you so far on your healing journey before He calls you back into community to finalize the healing process. You have to choose to slowly make your way back to community. Don't grab the first person you meet off the street and say, "Let me tell you everything I ever did." You'll likely get burned again. Instead, find someone to open up to bit by bit. If they are faithful to your sacred trust, open up a little more. If they are faithful again, open up still more. As you build trust, it heals your wounds, you trust more and share more, and you find more freedom.

I have been doing Soul Care conferences around the world for a long time. People join triads and often end up with people they do not know. At first, often, they are reluctant to open up and share. But as they start to become vulnerable and receive compassion, they open up more, and I have seen many deep friendships established in a three-day conference. Many times relationships are established in a conference that last for years, and sometimes they continue to meet together once a month and stay in the light with each other because they found so much freedom and healing from the triad experience.

Third, if we are going to create a deep life change culture, we need to **access the presence and power of God**. Only God can change the heart. We don't just need a theology about God's presence and power, we need an authentic experiential knowledge of His presence and power.

There is no authentic proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom in the New Testament without a demonstration of power. The central message of Jesus is about the Good News (gospel) of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the reversal of everything that went wrong with the world when sin entered the world. Sadly, too often, we have reduced it to this: you're a sinner; Jesus came to earth and lived a sinless life; He died and rose again; when you put your faith in Jesus your sins are forgiven; and when you die you go to Heaven. That is one part of the gospel of the Kingdom, but only one part. But there is more

to the Kingdom than that: it is the reversal of everything that went wrong when sin entered the world. It is the restoration of the way things were intended to be. So when Jesus comes and preaches the gospel of the Kingdom, He casts out demons. He heals the sick. He feeds the hungry. He reverses all the effects of sin. Jesus' victory over sin gives Him power over the effects of sin.

The proof that Jesus has overcome sin is the fact that Jesus has the power to dismantle the effects of sin. When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples, He gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and heal sickness (Matthew 10:1). He did the same thing with the seventy-two whom He sent out in Luke 10. They come back and declared, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!" (Luke 10:17). They have success, but in Matthew 17 they run into a problem. They can't cast out a demon from a young boy. Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, and when He arrives on the scene He says to His disciples, "You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (Matthew 17:17). The word in Greek translated *perverse* is a word that means to distort the truth. They were proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, but they were perverting the message they proclaimed by not being able to demonstrate the message by casting out demons. If Jesus has overcome sin, then, by necessary implication Jesus can overcome the effects of sin. There is no authentic proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom in the New Testament without a demonstration of power.

Paul said to the church at Corinth, "When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Paul came in weakness; it wasn't about his power. But Paul also came proclaiming the message of the Kingdom, and he demonstrated that with power. The power of God proved the message that Jesus was King and had conquered sin, the devil, and all the effects of evil.

Jesus didn't just come to save us from sin. He came to save us from all of the effects of sin. 1 John 3:8 says, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's works." Gary Thomas writes, "Jesus chased out ignorance, defeated the demonic, and released the ill and oppressed. In other words, as Jesus walked, hell broke apart at his feet. Jesus and hell could not occupy the same spot, so wherever Jesus went, hell was dismantled. Together, His life and teaching provide a clear goal—seeing hell break apart at our feet and the coming forth of the kingdom of God" (Gary Thomas, *Seeking the Face of God: Strengthen Your Walk with God By Exploring the Faith of Our Spiritual Ancestors*, p. 19). Exactly. If we carry the presence of God, we should see the things Jesus saw.

I know many of you are not seeing the level of God's power you would like to see. Neither am I, but I am experiencing much more than before. Let me give just a few thoughts about increasing God's presence and power in your life and ministry. First, faith really matters; we have to develop our faith. I wrote the book *Deep Faith* because the development of my

faith was so critical to the release of more Kingdom activity in my life and ministry. It is important to understand the message of the Kingdom and know that the demonstration of power is normal in the Kingdom. Second, perseverance is crucial to experiencing Kingdom power. At first, I read my Bible, and I believed Jesus was the same today as He was when He walked the earth, but I wasn't seeing the things I read about in the Bible. However, I would not allow my lack of experience to define my ministry. I persevered in pursuing God, preaching the truth of the gospel of the Kingdom, and praying for the Kingdom to come on earth as it does in Heaven. And over time, with perseverance and much suffering, there were more demonstrations of power. Third, prophecy is often the gate- way gift to the acts of the Kingdom, so we need to learn how to hear God's voice. I cannot tell you how many times in my ministry a supernatural act of God was preceded by a prompting of the Spirit; this is the reason I will spend an entire chapter on the prophetic. And fourth, if we are going to experience more of God's power, we need to carry a greater sensitivity to God's presence in our lives. I'll talk more about that below.