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CHAPTER — FOUR

“My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”—Ezekiel 27:37

Imagine a goat herder settling down by his evening fire on the mountain slopes of the Sinai desert during the time of the journey of the nation of Israel to the Promised Land. As he stirs the fire he built, he looks up and notices that all the mountainside is glowing—but not from his little fire.

Since the very beginning, God has desired to dwell among us—and thus make himself known to us. So much did he desire this, that he handpicked a group of people, the Israelites, to demonstrate his glory to the rest of the world. After bringing them out of slavery in Egypt by “his mighty hand,” he placed a pillar of cloud over them by day and a pillar of fire by night. When either moved, the camp broke and followed God’s presence wherever it would lead.



God commanded the Israelites to build a temporary residing place for his presence—the tent, or tabernacle—where he met with the Israelites and “ate” with them in symbolic fellowship through the ritual sacrifices. At this “table of the Lord,” life was spilled out by the blood of the sacrifices to provide temporary atonement for sin so that fellowship could ensue with a holy God. It is above this tabernacle that his glory overshadowed his people and within its structure that his actual presence—the Shekinah—dwelt like a footstool for his throne in heaven.

It was here at the tent of his presence that God met with the people and where Moses was given direction. The first result, then, of God’s “indwelling the nation” was that they had a direct and intimate way to communicate with him.

It is one of those moments when all the attention in the world seems fixed on the words to be spoken next. Does this rabbi know when the Messiah will appear? Is the time of deliverance from the Roman oppressors at hand? Is this the year of the Lord’s favor? Why didn’t this rabbi read the portion about the “day of vengeance”?

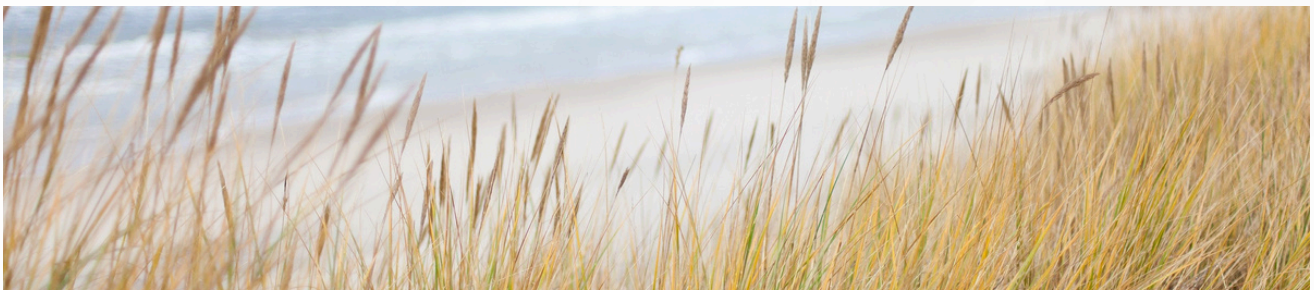
The Bible also shows that, after his resurrection and ascension, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers, making us now—individually and collectively—the temple of God’s presence.

*The light that once
made the mountains glow
now penetrates hearts.*

God had moved into an entirely new level of revelation with his people—indwelling them by the Spirit.

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It follows also that God had made a new way to reveal himself to us. Jesus confirmed this when he said that the Spirit will take from what is his and make it known to us (John 16:13-15). While we often relate this to prayer, we should not overlook the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, the charismata play a vital role in connecting us to Christ's current, active ministry in heaven. And while we often focus on the gifts of the Spirit for supernatural healings and miracles, several of the gifts fit into God's method of communication with us, particularly words of knowledge and wisdom, discerning of spirits, prophecy, and even, with interpretation, speaking in tongues. Of course, all the gifts help in different ways to deepen our revelation, but these five are means of direct revelation and should be welcomed, even desired (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1).





Just as Jesus was “led by the Spirit” (Mt. 4:1; Lk. 2:27) and gave instructions “through the Spirit” (Acts 1:2), that same communication should continue in us as his representatives. We see an example of this during the trance and vision of Peter in Acts 10. In verse 19 of that chapter, the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter: “Simon, three men are looking for you.” This revelation from the Holy Spirit gave specific, supernatural knowledge previously unknown to Peter. The Holy Spirit continued, “So get up and go downstairs. So do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” This continued revelation of the Holy Spirit gave clear direction—or wisdom—on what to do. The first part was a word of knowledge; the second was a word of wisdom. These two gifts often work in tandem for communication from God.

Many years ago, when Christ revealed himself to me (Randy) in a dream, he challenged me about one of my greatest needs. His words were kind, but also full of authority. (I know what the temple guards meant when they said to the religious rulers, “No one ever spoke the way this man does” [John 7:46].) His words struck me to the core of my being. I awoke, trembling uncontrollably.

But revelation had deepened.

Not long ago, my (Randy’s) son (and Cathy’s brother) served in the U.S. infantry in Afghanistan. We often prayed for his safety, but one time our pastor’s wife specifically prayed that he and his men would be invisible to the enemy. Shortly thereafter, my wife had a dream about angels encircling our son’s squad and covering them with their wings. She awoke praying for his safety. Little did she know that these words of wisdom and prayers would be instrumental in protecting him and his men.



In fact, the strangest thing had happened. While on patrol, our son's squad was surrounded by the enemy. They could see the enemy all around, but the enemy did not see them. In a sense, the enemy was blind to their whereabouts. This continued for several days with our son's squad remaining invisible. When they finally radioed for help and gave their position, even the satellite could not locate them.

Do you remember the story of Elisha the prophet surrounded by the enemy at Dothan (2 Kings 6)? Elisha's servant looked out in the morning and saw an army of horses and chariots surrounding the city. His voice rang out in fear, "What shall we do?" But the prophet asked God to open the eyes of his servant to see the angelic forces around them, and he saw that the hills were full of angels. Then God struck the enemy with blindness so that they could not attack Elisha and his servant. Just as those angelic forces had protected Elisha, angelic forces had also protected my son and his men on patrol.

Sometimes God reveals himself through the ways he protects us, as with Elisha, but at other times revelation comes through the ways he sustains us in difficult times. As a Christian woman, I (Cathy) thought that if I followed the prescribed formula for marrying a "good Christian" man who was disciplined and respected by the leaders of my church—as well as one who would put in the requisite hard work—I would have the family and marriage I longed for.

Unfortunately, after four years of marriage, I found myself abandoned, divorced, childless, wounded, and in debt. I felt desperate. I did everything "right" but still ended up with a failed marriage. In response to my desperation, God called me aside to a cabin in the mountains where he spoke clearly to my heart. He gave me Isaiah 54, which promises children to the woman abandoned in her young marriage.



I held on to that through several years of an on-again-off-again relationship with the man who is now my second husband. He did not want children at the time, but even so, for my sake, he promised that one day we would have them.

I determined to wait patiently for God to fulfill Isaiah 54 for me rather than harangue my new husband into having them sooner rather than later. Not long after we married, God gave me a vision of two children—a boy and a girl, each holding one of my hands. Then the Holy Spirit placed his hands on my son's head, declaring his name to be Josiah and that he'd be the "last good thing to happen to Judah." I held on to that vision for many, many years.

Then, one day, my husband declared he was ready to have children. Eleven months and a miscarriage later, my son, Josiah, was born. Three years after that, my daughter, Cassia, was born. In my case, the promise from the Lord was the revelation I needed to sustain me through the long, childless years.

Revelation sustains us.

As God dwells among us through his Spirit, he also brings precious ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11, 1 Cor. 12:29), including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Revelation can occur when we recognize and make room for these gifts in others to operate within the Church. And we should not leave our discussion of the God who dwells among us without reviewing this aspect.

When the members of a local church recognize the passion and maturity within an individual for a given ministry—say pastoring, for example—and blesses and promotes the person in his or her service, conditions develop for revelation to occur in new and deeper ways. This happened in our local church when we released a husband and wife to launch a new church.



Here's how it happened. On the surface, this couple appeared content with their present, busy life, but they knew they were not being challenged to go deeper in their commitment and service to God. To some degree, they languished in their spiritual growth because of it.

God spoke to me clearly in a service one day that we had not implemented a process to raise up pastors and plant churches. He let me know that we could do this even though we weren't a large church or part of a large denomination with a mature church planting program. He reminded me that part of our church heritage included planting churches organically—by building small groups and then sending them out as teams to start new churches. In fact, hundreds of churches had been started this way.

As I looked at this young man in that service, all these thoughts came back to me under the prompting of the Lord, and I knew that God was setting his hand on this couple and was asking me to call out the gifts within them. After meeting with them over the next few weeks, God spoke to them as well—as though “deep calls to deep”—and through many tears, the revelation of God's calling awakened in them.

Over the next four years, as training and preparation took place, their growth accelerated and relationship with God deepened. All of this resulted from a demand placed on the anointing, a response to leadership responsibility and a desperate need for God's help.

This resulted in revelation. When God calls us and sets us apart to his work, he reveals himself in greater ways—each to meet the tasks ahead. Pastoral work uniquely requires revelation. No pastor can succeed long without it.

God's grace comes
at the perfected moment of our need and not a
single moment before.



This is the work of his grace—to meet our needs, whatever they may be—with whatever can be found in God’s nature. He thus makes up for our lack. And he supplies that grace at the point of need. But each moment he reveals his grace, revelation occurs.

And at each moment
that God
supernaturally meets
our needs, our faith
increases for the next
task at hand,
especially those tasks
that lie beyond our
own abilities.

*The greater the need, the greater
the revelation of his presence.*

Interestingly, even though sending a team immediately reduced church membership, the church experienced growth in the long term as a result. Casting bread upon the waters always has a way of coming back home.

Finally, we should be aware that God's grace comes at the perfected moment of our need and not a single moment before.

"From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another" (John 1:16 NLT)—grace upon grace. Everything is provided for the journey but comes at the point of need so that we have continuous revelation. This is how God dwells among us.

“My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

—Ezekiel 27:37



For Review

Why does sin separate us from God? How did God provide a way to have relationship with him?

How does the Holy Spirit play a role in our relationship with the Father? How do the gifts of the Spirit help us communicate with God?

Has God revealed himself to you in a way that protected you?

For Review

How do we benefit from dwelling with God?

We are transformed when we are brought into God's presence by the power of the Holy Spirit. How do you make room for God's presence in your life?

How does God's grace bring revelation?

Journal

...grace upon grace...

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."- John 16:12-15 (NIV)

How does the Holy Spirit speak to us? How is he the Spirit of Truth and how does he guide us into all truth? What does it mean that he speaks to us of things to come? What is he saying now?
