

ENCOURAGING THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

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When I entered seminary in 1977 one of my first seminary teachers was the President of Columbia International University, Robertson McQuilkin. A few weeks into the course I was granted a meeting with him that took place in his office with the large wooden carved winged eagle ready to take flight from behind his desk. I brought him an idea for a prayer chapel for the campus. Patterned after one I had used at the Campus Crusade for Christ (now CRU) headquarters in California I encouraged him to have a physical place to reflect the priority of prayer he spoke of in his class. He received my instruction from a brash first term student with grace and openness and the seed was sown for a job offer to work for the school which has grown into a lifelong friendship.

Robertson prays for me and my family each day. What a treasured gift from a mentor and sponsor who has opened doors for me with the school, networking relationships and publishers. My two adult children consider Robertson an adopted grandfather and spiritual leader in their life. I have written my chapter as a letter to my son, recalling many conversations and prayer times I have shared with Robertson in his living room.

Mark,

As a father I enjoy giving you gifts. Remember your first backpack and sleeping bag? Now today I have a gift for you as a young leader in your twenties who has served on staff in an established church and now launching out to work bi-vocationally planting a church. As God works through you to establish this missional community I am so proud of you. I am always learning from you. Thanks for sharing new music, technology and keeping me up to date on Spiderman!

Before I let you open my gift let me remind you of a vision of the church that you gave me on one of our “guy nights”, Sunday, November 13, 2011. Let me paraphrase what you said:

Dad, it seems what we call the “evangelical church” often reminds me of a planned community like the Summit. There are lots of rules including no boats or RVs in the driveway. Everything is groomed and orderly. Most of the landscaping and the houses are all uniform and predictable. A Sunday service with the band, the lighting and the screens feel like going into a Disney World attraction. It is a perfectly crafted, plastic like world.

To me it comes off as too perfect, too groomed, too planned and orchestrated. It lacks authenticity. It subtly encourages me to sit back and let myself be entertained. It is church to be consumed. It feels too tame like visiting animals in the zoo.

The Spirit is described as “wind,” “fire” and “streams of living water” and as I read the book of Acts the image I have of a Spirit birthed church is alive and uncontrollable. I am sure you recall those tall sea oats on the dunes we saw backpacking on Cumberland Island. The ocean breeze catches the seeds and blows them in all directions and too many destinations. And where the seed lands more oats sprout. Church is an alive wildness, and it cannot be tamed, controlled, predicted or manufactured. That is the church I want to join. I am not sure what leadership looks like in this Spirit blown church. But I see the church as clusters of Christ followers in deep community with each other knowing they are being planted by God among people God loves. These clusters provide tastes of the life God gives.

Mark, I have been haunted with your vision ever since that late night pouring out of your heart. So here is my gift to you. First I want to respond to your vision of the church. Then, I would like to describe the contribution of leaders in the wild, sea oat spreading church Christ is building.

Responding to Your Vision of the Spirit Blown Wild Church

Let me assure you. You are not alone. The dream of the church God has placed in your heart echoes in the hearts of other Christ followers. There are seminary students who are in school seeking to retool for the second half of their adult life who want more than to just have their ticket punched so they can ride at the ministry amusement park. The younger adults preparing for a life of ministry are in school to accumulate the biblical understanding, church history and theology they have missed. But I see the spark in their eyes when they see, often for the first time, what God is doing around the world. So I think your vision is an excellent biblical vision of what Christ is building that dismantles the strongholds of Satan. When the wind of the Spirit blows the enemy of God yields to his force and falls.

This disappointment with the church as it is and longing for it to be more is not a new thing with your generation. For example,

Alfred Loisy, the nineteenth century historian, was right in saying that Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God but what appeared was the Church. The disappointment was, and continues to be, severe. But the great irony is that today we alleviate our disappointment with the contemporary Church by pointing back to the New Testament Church which was the great disappointment to begin with! Our restless discontent should not be over the distance between ourselves and the first-century Church but over the distance between ourselves and the Kingdom of God, to which the Church, then and now, is the witness.¹

I believe every generation of Christ followers should be aspiring to see the church serve as a better apologetic for the kingdom. Elements of your dream reflect some of the values Neil Cole sees as the changing of price tags in what is longed for by those leading twenty-first century churches. He sees it as a shift from a “modern” to “postmodern” worldview. I am not so confident in our breaking worldviews into historical chapters. I think people are always shaping and being shaped by the environment in which we view life. But I do believe these contrasts show up in your longing for the “wild church.” They are: “Relationship over Mission”; “Authenticity over Excellence”; “Experience over Proposition”; “Mystery over Solution”; “Diversity over Uniformity”; and “Journey over Destination.”²

Perhaps in your desire for the church there is a correcting of assumptions about how to **be** the church. Margaret Wheatley is talking about businesses but her critique fits many congregations of the twentieth century:

We believe that people, organizations and the world are machines, and we can organize massive systems to run like clockwork in a steady-state world. The leader’s job is to create stability and control, because without human intervention, there is no hope for order. It is assumed that most people are dull, not creative, that people need to be bossed around, that new skills only develop through training. People are motivated using fear and rewards; internal motivators such as compassion and generosity are discounted.

This is not the real world. The *real* real world demands that we learn to cope with chaos, that we understand what motivates humans, that we adopt strategies and behaviors that lead to order, not more chaos. . . .

. . . Everywhere, life self-organizes as networks of relationships. When individuals discover a common interest or passion, they organize themselves and figure out how to make things happen. Self-organizing evokes creativity and leads to results, creating strong, adaptive systems. Surprising new strengths and capacities emerge.

In this world, the “basic building blocks” of life are relationships, not individuals.³

The twenty-first century church will continue to wrestle with how to live in a tension of chaos and order that encourages life without imploding. Alan Hirsch borrows from the former Visa Credit Card President Dee Hock: “Hock calls this the “chaordic” principle: enough *order* at the center to give common identity and purpose, enough *chaos* to give permission to creativity and innovation. When you think of it, that is exactly how the first century Jesus movement was organized.”⁴

I wonder if church history is God’s wild working coupled with a thirst for Him in the heart of some people exploding on the scene. Over a period of time a trap is built to contain the church. But the God who cannot be tamed keeps stirring up the dream in a fresh generation of people and the church escapes its nice containment. As Reggie McNeal observes,

The movement founded by Jesus was largely a marketplace phenomenon, an organic connection among people who were experiencing life together. The early days of the movement focused on simple teachings of Jesus, with particular attention to living lives of sacrifice and service to one another and to one’s neighbor. Even though the movement spread very rapidly among the slave populations and common people, its appeal transcended all cultural lines. The spiritual expression of Jesus followers was not characterized by a set of religious activities layered on top of other interests. Jesus invaded all areas of life. Church was not an event or a place; it was a way of life.⁵

There is great diversity in our culture and the attractional church is being used by the Spirit to reach some people. The Sunday morning “show” does attract hurting and hunting people. I hear the stories of their journeys and I am encouraged that God is transforming lives. I am sure that in your lifetime there will be a greater diversity of models of how churches spread the Gospel. I am also confident that the missional model of putting the majority of energy and resources into “going to” will touch people not attracted to the polished energy of the modern attractional churches. And even when one looks beneath the corporate services of the attractional church effective in making disciples you will unearth the biblical elements I present in my gift to you.

So, let’s focus on the “gift” and not the “wrapping paper” of the church Jesus is building and has been building for 2,000 years. I would say that when the hearts of leaders contain a commitment to the following three realities I will describe in this gift to you—the wildness of God is often just below the surface. Leaders can be filled with joy as they contribute to “chaordic” churches!

First Reality: The Wild Spirit of God!

Frame your acts of leading every day with the reality, by faith, that the Spirit is growing and spreading the church. He was the creative agent in the physical creation of this world and He is the agent of this new creation that is the foundation for the coming kingdom arriving with the new heavens and the new earth.

Contribute by being in a creative collaboration with the Spirit. He gives assignments and provides resources. He unsettles hearts in conviction and then quenches the thirsty heart and fills

it with peace. He grows faith, hope and love in Christ followers taking step after step of trusting obedience.

The Spirit of God is the only One capable of taking people of all ethnicities on the planet, all levels of education and economic resource, all ages, a catalog of interests, and all sorts of physical and mental capacities and weave them into one family. He is the God of reconciliation across theological lines and historical, racial and gender barriers.

Those blown by Him bend to His activity. They are humbly offering grace mixed with truth as seen in Jesus' redeeming embrace. These wild seeds, God's people, are always learning, and always willing to hold their inadequate resources and incomplete agendas up in open hands catching the Spirit's wind and being directed by Him.

Since the Spirit has been at work for over 2,000 years do not be surprised that the very new is often colored and mixed in with the rich heritage of the past. The hearts of God's people will always shed tears and celebrate like the songs of the Psalms. The prophets will still warn, the evangelist cannot be silent from proclaiming, the teacher will unpack that old truth, the shepherd will respond in compassion, and the apostle will always sacrifice the known to go to the unknown.

There will always be music when Christ followers gather (cf. Eph 5:19). Disciples will always wrestle and be the first ones quickest to see the flaws and failures of family members. The church will always need correction, comfort and celebration. The church will be like a fire about to go out and require a fresh Spirit breath of reviving. But know, really know—greater is the One in you than the one in the world (cf. 1 John 4:4).

The Spirit raised Christ from the dead. He is up to the task of using imperfect vessels and filling them with the lightening of God.⁶

Second Reality: Prayer as Intimate Wild Conversation

The primary way church leaders contribute to the Spirit's building the church is through prayer in the Spirit.). "Biblical teaching on the church sees the church as the ongoing incarnation of Jesus in the world, an organic life form vitally connected to Him, even married to Him."⁷ Seeing the church as people living out a marriage with Christ is a life giving image. For the present there is a physical separation that we long to see end. This makes our conversation even more of a life line.

As you are learning in your marriage there is talking and then there is intimate conversation. There is comparing calendars or choosing a restaurant and there is a becoming one through opening and receiving in the heart (cf. 2 Cor. 6:11–13). In prayer we begin to see as God sees. Perspective in leadership is everything. What and how one sees determines the destination you pursue and how you spend your time and money to make the journey. Prayer is listening, brooding over Scripture, seasons of fasting and uncertainty, and yet also unquenchable joy, gratitude and praise. Prayer as intimate conversation is the anchor and also the sail as a leader navigates.

Prayer sustains a rhythm of life for the long journey. An adult in their twenties today may well have over 65 years of fruitful seed sowing service. In 1900 that adult life span was only about 25 years. How will you determine where and when to invest what the Spirit entrusts to you over this span of what used to be the equivalent of two adult lives? The answers become clear as you live each moment receiving from God and thanking Him and then turning and offering to give what has been given to another. Each day offers hundreds of moments of receiving God's

gifts of grace and truth and then freely giving them away. And both are orchestrated in prayerfulness. Robertson McQuilkin once said: “At age twenty I discovered the motto of Frederic Franson, the pioneer who founded five Scandinavian mission agencies at the close of the nineteenth century. Franson’s life theme was CCCC: Constant Conscious Communion with Christ. The moment I heard it my heart leaped. ‘That’s what I want, Lord!’”⁸

God’s wild seeds also break the rules of a 24/7 working world by faithfully working six days and resting one. If Solomon was writing Ecclesiastes today he would include, “There is a time to be online and a time to be offline.” There are rare appropriate times for multi-tasking but live most of life by mono-tasking—being fully present in each moment and wisely engaging in productive labor or renewing Sabbath. All of the spiritual disciplines in which you are investing are the means to living well and revolve around connecting with God in the time He gives you. And to the world, even the twenty-first century church world, you will look “wild” in your work and “wasting” Sabbath time. Wheatley has some good advice on this:

The only antidote to this culture of interruption technologies is for us to take back control of ourselves. We cannot stop the proliferation of seductive technologies or the capacity-destroying dynamics of distraction or the techno-speed of life. But we can change our own behavior. In the eighth century, the Buddhist teacher Shantideva admonished, “The affairs of the world are endless. They only end when we stop them.” Goodness knows what was so distracting in the eighth century, but he speaks well for our time. To restore good human capacities—thinking, meaning-making, discerning—we need to develop discipline. We need to be mindful of distraction, and disciplined enough to shut off the computer, put the phone down, make time for casual conversations, sit patiently, and listen—all without getting anxious that we’re wasting time, that we won’t get through our to-do list, that we’re missing out on something.⁹

Remember that prayer is always the primary means of grace for aligning your leadership contribution with God’s wild leading.

Third Reality: Transformation as God’s Wildness in the Human Heart

The two “hot” words among Western Christians are “missional” and “radical”. Both offer a correcting balance to the church. They call for clarity on God’s goal and recalibrating to the reason the Spirit is building the church. Worship is not an end in itself. Community, what my generation called fellowship, is not the goal. Teaching for understanding instead of active obedience does not accomplish the purpose. Those are all good components or the means but none are the end. Christ’s goal has never changed. He did not come to be served but to serve. His service was to provide a home with the Father for the lost. He brings light to the darkness. He brings life out of death. God comes with good news for all people because the world is choking on bad news (cf. Luke 2:10). Christ offers *transformation*. Notice I did not write, “formation.” Every person is spiritually forming. Some are forming into the likeness of the devil, an idol, or some vision of the perfect self. But Christ followers are being transformed into His likeness. God defined transformation can be found in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which happens to be McQuilkin’s life verse: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being *transformed* into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (emphasis added, ESV).

Make no mistake this transforming work of the heart is surely a wild wind work of the Spirit as much as the seeds of sea oats blown by the wind. Frances Chan writes, “I don’t have a four-step guide to connecting with the Holy Spirit. I would however, like to suggest two potential obstacles for you to consider: comfort and volume.”¹⁰ He then goes on to describe how the Spirit

frequently invites us into situations where His calling is to go from a place of comfort to where we would be afraid without His hand. Chan then reminds us that Jesus' wildness will push against a lifestyle of constant noise and multitasking. Noise hinders us hearing the Spirit's navigation. For a committed lover danger and risk are acceptable costs in loving and surely the beloved gets the full attention from the moment they come in contact.¹¹

When the Spirit transforms, the heart is set free from bondage. The Spirit creates a heart motivated to pay a sacrificial price to love deeply. The Spirit knows that living out of fragmented commitments leaves one starving and thirsty. The Spirit is big enough to even use life's losses that bring us to grieving to transform our heart.

Most deep-level transformation occurs within three feet of another person. Surely God does do surgery one on one. Times of being alone with God are essential. But just as essential is how the New Testament envisions the role of community.¹² Read John 10:1–18 often and meditate on the shepherd side of leading. Those who know and trust the shepherd have a different reaction than those not in the flock. His sheep may not fully understand the Shepherd's mission but they place high trust in the heart of the Shepherd. Openness to being influenced by those leading during change is much like choosing to open a locked door to someone on the outside. When the leader knocks the person inside inquires, "Who is there?" If they do not recognize the voice they may only open the door a few inches and carefully inspect the visitor before opening further. But if they see a longtime friend or a loved family member they throw the door wide open or just shout out, "It is open! Come on in."

Leaders become known and trusted through their listening and caring investments over time. There is no way to short cut this costly investment in growing trust. Simply flashing a badge of authority and crashing in will seldom produce a welcoming response. For leaders to simply say, "You should trust me!" does not work. Trusting is not a switch we simply flip off or on. Just ask a parent who has a rebellious teenager shouting a demand to be trusted. Trust is a safe place between two people built one brick of loving faithfulness at a time. Trust is an essential ingredient in wild transformation of the individual heart and the path a group of Christ followers must make.

So when someone asks, "How's it going?" the great temptation is to put on a mask with a fabricated smile and answer with a counterfeit confidence: "Fine, just fine. Everything's under control." While beneath the mask may lay unrelenting hurt and need. Don't get me wrong. I support your right to wear a mask. Masks have real social value in that they allow you privacy and space in an often brutal world. But there is a price you pay for wearing a mask. Masks cause little deaths—little soul deaths. When you wear a mask nobody (not even you) gets to find out who you really are. When you wear a mask, nobody (not even you) gets to find out what you really need. And when you wear a mask, nobody (not even you) gets to find out what you really have to offer.¹³

God's transformation begins with Jesus showing us unconditional trust and love which moves us toward a safe place where we can remove our masks (cf. Rom. 5:8). It is okay that transformation—which is radical change—will generate the heat of friction and resistance. Conflict and resistance is a necessary occurrence when we walk with the Spirit in change. People responded to Jesus by moving through seasons of resisting, questioning, and challenging before finally embracing the transformation He was calling them to taste as new life. Effective leaders honestly communicate that wild changes will produce some level of conflict. Count on it. All change is movement. All movement produces friction and this generates dangerous heat.

Transformational change will always include what the Bible calls repentance. Repentance often feels like going from 60 miles per hour to a sliding grinding halt. Brakes lock up, wheels

slide, and just like a special effect in the movies the driver spins the sliding car 180 degrees and goes in the opposite direction. Repentance begins with humbly admitting God's way is best. Pride stiff arms the challenge of a wild God. Remember the young man who chose not to follow the way of Jesus (cf. Matt. 19:16–22)? Repentance gives life but only after a death to the way one was going in life.

Conclusion: Playing Your Contribution to Honor the Master

Mark you are a pianist and you understand jazz. Jazz is free flowing creative expression woven into the melody of the piece. Every performance of the song is unique. Musicians are given freedom within the song to depart from the melody and extemporaneously create a solo insert. A jazz educated audience not only claps at the conclusion but during the piece when the musician returns to the melody line following the creative insert. When jazz musicians play together they sense when a player is feeling the music carry him/her from and then flowing back to the basic melody. It is beautiful to sit in the audience as creation takes place in your hearing. In the middle of a very challenging day of ministry leadership you shared with me what Aletha, your former jazz teacher, taught you. Let me paraphrase your lesson.

Althea Jacobs taught me that a solo should say something beautiful or dark or exciting. It is a conversation between the musician and the melody. I was often told by her, "Mark, you are playing a lot of notes but not saying a whole lot." The tendency with jazz musicians is to use the "solo" as a way to showcase one's technical ability, prove they are a star, or blow people away with quickness. No one listens or remembers those musicians. The great jazz solo pays homage to the master who crafted the piece. It reminds listeners of something they already know and love but shows it to them from a different perspective. I think today I forgot the melody I was supposed to be playing around. It was good to get back in the right jam again.¹⁴

I am convinced jazz was the soundtrack for God's creation of the heavens and the earth. What I love about leading people in the church is God composing the jazz. Right in the middle of the challenging interaction of questions and answers, God will give an idea that brings understanding and makes it possible to move forward with change.

(First Reality) You may need to pull away from a contentious change process for a long walk with God asking His Spirit to give you creative ways to move through change constructively instead of destructively.

(Second Reality) When you are coming into an awareness of God's presence, picture entering a room where three people are already engaged in conversation about you and are eager to include you in the discussion when you show up. In Romans 8 we see all three Persons of the Trinity involved in prayer:

- v. 27: the Father searches the heart and knows the mind of the Spirit.
- v. 28: the Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us.
- v. 34: the Son dies for us and now is at the throne interceding for us.

They are a jazz trio inviting you to make it a quartet and join in the tune.

(Third Reality) Often as a group wrestles (hopefully not physically) with change do not be surprised to see the change itself *being changed*. The wild One may prompt the person who introduced a change to let it be reshaped by the contribution of others. What is ultimately accomplished looks very different from the initial thinking but the final edition actually fulfills

the mission better and lets creative glory shine. The modified change may even capitalize on resources not seen when the journey toward change began.

When a group of Jesus followers is clear on the Spirit's purpose they are seeking to accomplish, relate with high trust and love for one another, and enjoy a freedom to learn from experiments and even failures, I am sometimes stunned by what the Holy Spirit can inspire in weak human flesh.

Earlier I compared change to "movement" and conflict to the heat of "friction." Oil helps reduce the damage of the friction to moving parts and oil is also an image of the Holy Spirit. I often pray for the Spirit to help me and all those involved in change to not be damaged by the heat being produced. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 ends with the idea that none of these things are against the law. There is always room for joy, kindness, gentleness and all the rest as relationships are stressed from taking different positions regarding change. The fruit of the Spirit is essential in reducing the heat we create in change.

Mark, you are a leader. But do not expect to be God's provision for all of the leadership capacity needed in your ministry assignment. Instead look expectedly for the Wild One to call out leadership contributions from many people including those not serving in official leadership positions. It is just another example of the wild Spirit playing jazz. As McQuilkin says,

An essential element of demonstrating that Christ is indeed Lord in a congregation is a heart attitude of humility and love. . . . Whatever the structure, if the New Testament model is to be followed, the authority and responsibilities of leadership will be dispersed among several, not reserved for a single leader.¹⁵

Diffusing the leadership contribution among a several people spreads the joy tasted in exercising the three realities in my gift to you. Think of my gift to you as a large gift basket to unwrap and set on the table for many to enjoy.

Dance with the Spirit letting Him lead. Enjoy intimacy throughout your day and in special moments alone with Him in prayer. He will whisper to you! And expect His work to be major heart surgery transforming every aspect of thought, word, and deed for the individual and the community of Christ followers. God is into personal and group change so ride the wave.¹⁶

¹ Richard John Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 3.

² Neil Cole, *Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2010), 28–42.

³ "Writings" (<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/leadershiplessons.html>).

⁴ Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, *On The Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 46.

⁵ *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2011), 13–14.

⁶ These blessings in and by the Spirit will empower us to live a Christ following lifestyle until Christ returns:

- a. His constant, personal and powerful indwelling presence (John 14:16–18, 20, 23; 15:5, 8–9, 11, 16; 16:22–24; 17:15);
- b. Being marked by the Spirit, identified as God's children (John 15:3, 19–21, 26–27; 16:1–3; 17:14);
- c. Granted the authority to freely make requests of the Father in His name (John 14:12–14; 15:7, 16, 21; 16:23–24, 26; 17:26);
- d. Going to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) and yet quickly recognizing and bonding with other Christ followers in a unexplainable unity that is similar to the oneness of the Father, Son and Spirit (John 13:34–35; 15:12–13, 17; 17:11–12, 18, 21–23);

- e. Sparks of creative illumination in their minds as humble followers seek his wisdom, involvement in and discernment to solve problems and face challenges (John 14:26, 16:7–15, 33);
- f. A whole array of grace fueled gifts entrusted to every believer giving them a contribution to God's cause and the welfare of their spiritual family (John 16:14–15; Romans 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12–14; Eph. 4:11–12);
- g. A taste of their inheritance that they will anticipate enjoying with Him at his return (John 13:36; 14:1–3; 17:24; Eph. 1:3–14).

⁷ *Missional Renaissance*, 4.

⁸ *Life in the Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 263–264.

⁹ “Living in the Age of Distraction” (<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/Wheatley-LivingInTheAgeOfDistraction.pdf>).

¹⁰ *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 106.

¹¹ Does the Bible say anything about God helping His people to navigate change? What does it look like for the Bible to be our functional authority in communicating change? I think the answer is obvious—it is almost on every page. The entire Bible is a record of God initiating and processing change. Creation, redemption and reconciliation are only a few of His changes. How does God guide us into change with clear, memorable and transferable communication? As I went through the Bible asking this question here are a few of the things I observed:

1. God uses STORIES (real history and parables): “Remember Abraham. . . .”; “A farmer went out to sow his seed. . . .”; (Genesis 12-20; Mark 4:3)
2. God uses PICTURES/IMAGES (in words and in objective learning tasks): “I am the vine. . . .”; “Drink this cup. . . .”; (John 15:1; Matthew 26:27)
3. God uses PROVERBS (distilled wisdom in memorable words)—they are God’s bumper stickers! “Ox, Dirty Stable, Greater harvest. . . .” Do I need to say more?; (Proverbs 14:4)
4. God uses POETRY (the majority of poetry is set in musical form which makes it memorable and transferable): “The Lord is my shepherd. . . .”; (Psalm 23:1)
5. God uses CONSEQUENCES (reaping from what is sown “letting the chips fall”): “So, God gave them a king. . . .”; (1 Samuel 8:7)
6. God uses QUESTIONS & DIALOGUE (some he asks and some he lets the people ask him): “Adam, who told you, you were naked. . . .”; “Jesus, why do you say. . . .” God listens as well as speaks; (Genesis 3:11; John 14:22)
7. God uses GIFTS/THE BLESSING: “It is the Father’s good pleasure to give you. . . .”; (Luke 12:32)
8. God uses CORRECTION/THE CURSE: “A father disciplines those he loves. . . .”; Heb 12:6
9. God uses PRESENCE/BEING AMONG: “The Word became flesh. . . .”; John 1:1-14

I was a speech and drama major at the University (back before the flood!). As I look over God’s various ways of communicating truth and guiding his people through change I realize that every great communicator I have studied uses many of the same forms. I try to really clarify what I want others to take home and apply. I then think through this list and try to use three or more of these forms in getting the one idea across.

¹² Paul Stanley and J. Robert Clinton offer a constellation model of mentoring which may be helpful for Christ followers and leaders: “Mentoring is a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources. . . . A lifetime constellation affirms that God, in His typically wild and unpredictable manner, will touch our lives with a variety of people. They will serve in a variety of roles (discipler, spiritual guide, coach, counselor, teacher, sponsor and hero [contemporary and historical]) who touch us for various lengths of time and with a broad range of depth of engagement” (*Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992, 33, 41–42).

¹³ Gordon MacKenzie, *Orbiting the Giant Hairball: A Corporate Fool’s Guide to Surviving with Grace* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988), 159.

¹⁴ Paraphrased from a personal email exchange with my son June 2013.

¹⁵ *The Five Smooth Stones: Essential Principles for Biblical Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 176.

¹⁶ John 14:12,17; 17:13-24; Roman 8:6; 2 Cor 3:18; Ephesians 2:8-10.