

Training Day: Breaking Stagnation and Walking in Breakthrough

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Introduction:

Some weeks ago I gave a word about God making your mistakes to prosper. I concluded that message with an expression of plaintive desire that every person has that wants to be used of God:

Coach just put me in the game!

There was a lot of response to that after the word was released. It struck a chord with people whose highest desire was to be used of God and to fulfill their destiny. Just recently I heard this from the Father:

Being on the 50 yard line is not the same thing as being in the game.

Many people live their lives in proximity to the purposes of God without ever actually engaging personally with the kingdom themselves. They read all the right books, attend all the right conferences, wear all the cool t-shirts but never actually DO anything substantive with what they learn and experience.

Are You in the Stands or on the Scrimmage Line?

In Kansas City a few years ago we frequently visited a very active house church led by a dynamic prophetic leader. The house was packed each week by dozens of affluent people who came to hear the prophet and his wife speak. Yet there was something amiss in my spirit. As I watched I could see the pressure to perform on the leaders and the passive attitude of the people. I engaged one lady in conversation who related her story of flying all over the country to various conferences and meetings which she claimed were on the cutting edge of what God was doing. After listening for a while I casually slipped in a question:

“How has your life been changed as a result of these conferences?”

“What?” She asked, taken back and clearly showing offense. You would have thought I had asked her to clean up after her dog. “What is this, 20 questions?” I smiled and turned away.

Back in the 80’s I drove from Louisiana to Southern Missouri to a conference in Springfield. This ministry has a clear testimony of powerful revelatory

understanding of the word of God. They promulgated a strong testimony of coming revival and a predicted move of God. Theirs was a compelling message. Speaker after speaker came to the platform ministering along this same theme. The anointing was palpable and tears flowed plentifully. But something was amiss. The auditorium was pregnant with ministry. There were people there who were on the edge of their seats ready to spring to the altar. There were people there who needed salvation, healing, the baptism of the Holy Ghost but no effort was made to minister to them. They were so locked in to what God was GOING to do that they were not prepared to actually give Him the opportunity to act in their NOW.

Another example comes from my years as a pastor. In my second church in Louisiana there was a very wealthy deacon who loved me dearly. I would visit his house and very often the phone would ring and it would be Kenneth Copeland, or Billy Graham, or Kenneth Hagin, Sr. on the other line (not their ministry but the man himself). I was in awe of this man's influence through his financial giving. He loved to go to conferences and over time began to take me with him. We would sit in these powerful conferences and this deacon was electrified by what he experienced in these gatherings. He would slap me on the back and shout "this is what we need!" I agreed and I too was deeply touched by his loving sponsorship to bring me to hear these powerful speakers and the speakers themselves. There was a difference however. I was a doer. I was not one to hear something and not do something about it. So we would return home to our little church and I would put what I learned into practice. We launched revival initiatives, implemented upgrades of our worship experience, we began special prayer initiatives with great zeal and hunger for more of God.

The wealthy deacon had a different response. He became angry and sullen. He withdrew his financial support. He demanded his tithes and offerings be returned. He didn't like the direction the church was going. I met with him and stood up to him: "Chester we aren't doing anything different than what the ministers you support and attend their conferences are doing. You fly all over the country to experience these things but you don't want to actually DO ANYTHING DIFFERENT you just want to hear and experience the atmosphere and anointing." Chester never got it. I could have been speaking Mandarin Chinese to him. He had been a HEARER ONLY for so long he wasn't capable of being a DOER. He was enamored and infatuated with what God might do one day but was not at all prepared to participate with what God was doing in the NOW.

Can You Take Now for an Answer?

God is not time bound in any way. There was never a time that God was more or less available than He is now. There will never be a time that He is less or more prepared to act in your life than He is now. The perspective of past, present and future is a construct made necessary by man's finite understanding. God has no such limitations.

The touchstone of the great healing evangelists of the 1950's was [Hbr 13:8] *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* Unbelief is always looking for a way out of a miracle. I have heard people ask in meetings "how come I didn't get healed?" The heartbreaking answer from a well known, respected revivalist: "God isn't doing that right now..." Or I've heard the rationalization "we are not in a healing move of God right now." Then there is the despicable but often quoted "God always answers prayer but sometimes He says no." God will never say NO to what the cross says YES to.

Let me state clearly that God is a God of the NOW. Now is all God has to offer. He is not time bound and He is not limited by a fallen nature as we are. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:

[Hbr 11:1] Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is always NOW. If it isn't now it isn't faith. Unbelief looks back to what was. Unbelief pines for some nebulous future, but the FAITH of GOD is always a NOW proposition. So if you are going to come off the bleachers of passive observation you must press in to your NOW and be in hot pursuit of God's NOW provision in your life.

The Deception of Passive Observing in the Things of God

Watching and waiting leads to deception. An object at rest tends to stay at rest. God can deal with anything except your refusal to make a decision. If you are not prepared to mix faith with actions you can forget about change, it will never come. You will continue to pine and hope and wish for God to do something and one year from now you will be right where you are today. When I have had these conversations with God He has been kind enough to speak to me in stark pragmatic terms. God will shock you if you are willing to hear His unfiltered response to the cry of your heart.

"Things are the way they are because of what you are doing. If you want something different you must do something different. If you want what you have never had before you must do what you have never done before. What you do with what God has ALREADY SAID is much more powerful than what you are waiting on God to say or do. You have to get out of your self and into the LOVE THING. What you make happen for others God will make happen for you."

Those statements jolted me when first I heard them in the depths of my spirit. They provoked me to shake myself from the lethargy of passive observation and to step out into my perceived destiny. I say my "perceived destiny" because like you I was seeing through a glass darkly. I didn't have all the answers. I had to learn to set my understanding aside. How often have you asked God to help you understand? I've

heard people say “If I only understood I would know what to do and my breakthrough would come....” This is deception. Understanding is highly over rated as a tool of guidance. God does not lead you with understanding. Understanding is not the first foot forward in the exploits God has called you to do. Read the words of Isaiah:

[Isa 55:12] For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands.

Joy and Peace are God’s GPS Device in Your Spirit:

Do you see what God is saying here? Joy is the most powerful resource of guidance in your life. What is your highest heart’s desire? Read the following:

[Psa 37:4] Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

The desire in your heart is the prophecy over your life. Joy and peace in your heart act as a navigation tool to lead you to the center of God’s will. The ancient mariners used a course-plotting device called a sextant to navigate by the stars. Joy and peace work on the inside of you just this way. Joy determines your direction and peace determines the timing of what you are to step out and do. Did you hear that? Joy determines WHAT you are to do, and peace determines WHEN you are to do it. Understanding comes later. Why does understanding come later? Because when you are called to break new ground in your life you won’t know the lay of the land. You must first go out with joy and be led forth with peace and then later you can make a map (understanding) of the geography God walks you through as a result. You see understanding is usually not for you but for those who come after you. Everything I am writing in this article is simply a map of places I have been in God that have produced God’s greatest purpose and my greatest happiness. Whether you understand or not if you will follow the route I am pointing out it will lead you to breakthrough in your life.

You are Called but are You Among the Chosen?

Being on the 50 yard line is not the same thing as being in the game.

Many are called but few are chosen. What is the difference between those who are scoring the field goals and those who are simply watching the event? The first thing that comes to my mind is PAY OFF. Those who play the game receive the reward. We all know that in fact sports figures are some of the highest paid public figures in the world. Here is the problem: preachers, prophets and teachers call people to their meetings and talk about their exploits and what is possible with God. They get their

listeners all excited about the awesome pay offs to be had in the kingdom and what destiny looks like. However if you don't make the connection between what is being said and what you are going to do differently then you are deceiving yourself. Buying a book, listening to a message, going to a conference is not enough.

[Jam 1:22 KJV] But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

If you will learn to listen to your spirit man where the voice of God resides and follow that you don't need to read someone's book to get answers. When you are following the voice of God on the inside of you then the writings and teachings of others simply support your exploits in God rather than initiate them (which they will never actually do).

Let's look at some differences between DOERS and HEARERS, between the spectators on the 50 yard line and those on the field:

1. Both players and spectators are in the same place at the same time. The difference is that some came to observe something and others came to DO something. Which one are you? The kingdom DOESN'T COME with OBSERVATION. You will never experience the righteousness, joy and peace of the kingdom in your life from a passive position.
2. Doers are CHOSEN to be in the game (my metaphor for those doing exploits in the kingdom and walking in break through). No one ever got chosen to play in professional sports who didn't have a passion for the game. The level of your passion for the purposes of God determines your choosing. Many are called to try-outs. The 300 pound couch potato may have the ego that says he has the right stuff but his passion lies elsewhere and he will not be chosen for greater things in God. Is it time to adjust your focus from self-interest and lethargy to the full-bore pursuit of all God has for you no matter what?
3. You have to be willing to do your time in the minor leagues. The first game a sports figure plays in will not be the Super Bowl or the World Soccer Cup. You must be willing to start where you are. You must be willing to do what you can with what you have and stick with it. I spent thirty years in the minor leagues of the things of God being prepared for the moment when I would step out into the destiny God had in store for me.
4. There are no short cuts. You must be willing to be trained. There are seasons in God that are like training day. You have to be willing to make mistakes and learn how to correct them. You have to get past insecurity and fear of failure. I remember how heart wrenching it was in my life when I figured out I wasn't in the game I was just in training – when God told me “I'm not going to fulfill your destiny in this place, this is just training for your future.” If you aren't willing to train you will be cut from the team no matter what plans the Coach has for your future.
5. You must be willing to walk in self-denial. I know many men and women of God with massive anointings who are sitting on the sidelines. The most

accurate prophet I ever met is a pedophile and child molester whose life pollutes every one he touches. Many aren't willing to deal with their sex addiction or substance abuse or forgiveness issues. They won't give up the blame game as to why their destiny isn't being fulfilled. They blame their spouse, their parents, their upbringing. They are masters of excuses and get mad at God and wallow in self pity when nothing ever changes. If you are going to come off the bench and do something for God you are going to have to take a brutal look at yourself and be willing to make changes that will challenge you beyond all imagining. You must be willing to make the chaos decision and set aside reputation and the opinions of others and push out in to the unknown territory of God's glory in your life.

6. You must be willing to be a team player. Having said that let me clarify. Alignment is a real buzzword in the kingdom today. How often do leaders tell people "come sit under my ministry and I will let you know when you are ready." Then 20 years later they are still saying it "come sit under my ministry and I will let you know when you are ready." Placement in the purposes of God is God's business and not man's. If you are called to play one position and you are always taking someone else's place on the scrimmage line then you will be of little use to God. Quit thinking about what the other fellow is doing and focus on your responsibility. Do your part and don't worry about what someone else is doing or what his or her reward is. When I didn't get this I was rebuffed time and time again by men and women of God who didn't have time for me because I was a distraction from what God had called them to do. Jesus dealt with this in Peter when he was overly concerned about what John's destiny was:

[Jhn 21:22 KJV] 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what [is that] to thee? follow thou me.

Conclusion:

Are you content to always be on the outside looking in on what God is doing? Are you content to simply be a consumer of the gifts of God? Are you called to be a producer of the anointing or merely a consumer of the anointing? Do you just want to have a good time or do you want to put your foot in the devil's neck and make him give up? Are you one of those lion hearted believers who won't take no for an answer and won't stop or give up or turn back until you hear the Father say "well done?" If your answer is yes then what do you do next?

It may seem counter intuitive but the next thing to do is get quiet within yourself and listen for the clear voice of God. You are going to have to shut out the thoughts of others and the opinions of men and even your own opinions until the pristine, clarion voice of God is delineated on the inside of you. What is your highest hearts desire? If money was no object and time and happenstance allowed what is your passion that you would then pursue? Move toward that. Do what you can with what

you have and stick with it. You don't have to have all the answers or all the money or all the support. It doesn't matter if no one goes with you. I have stood for hours and preached and prophesied to an empty auditorium where I was literally the only person in earshot. I was passionate about the gift of God in my life. I had a fire in my bones. Those experiences will try your sincerity. Why do you want to do the things in your heart? If you are looking for approval of man or notoriety you can forget it. Before you achieve your place in the kingdom you will be vilified, rejected, criticized and lobbied against by potent and influential people. If you listen to your critics you will NEVER make it to the center of God's will. You must focus your attention resolutely on the heart and voice of God and move toward that until it becomes a reality in your life come what may.