

Our Hope of Glory

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This book is a compilation of many of the articles at this website. The introduction below explains more.

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I don't think it ever occurred to me that I should write a book. Over many years, I was just dealing with day-to-day challenges, trying to understand more of what God was doing and how His purpose was to be worked out in my life. As I faced the challenges, I often sought to clarify the issues by writing what I was seeing at that time. Putting things into my own words helped to clarify things in my mind and helped in the discussion of those topics with others. With the help of my daughter Diane and others, I was able to put my thoughts into tract and booklet form to share with others from time to time.

This book is a compilation of what I have written about some of the more important subjects in the life of a believer. In one way, I could say that it has taken 40 years to write! One of the dangers of writing anything is that we can only write what we are seeing at that time. As we go on, we see a little more. Usually it is not possible to go back and correct what has already been written, so we must leave it alone and trust that the Holy Spirit will make corrections as needed in the understanding of the reader. I have chosen to leave these articles (chapters) unedited, so it's possible there may be minor discrepancies.

Any writing by men in our time should never be used as authority on any subject. The value I see in reading what others write is to stimulate our thinking before God, sending us back to the scriptures, and letting the Holy Spirit apply truth to our own situations. We often get "stuck" in our minds and need others to help us break out of our ruts. I think this is often best done in person with other brothers and sisters, but written material can be helpful as well.

I have organized the material into six categories. Obviously, there is an overlap in the subjects, and since all of these were written as standalone articles, there is a repetition of truth. They can each be read alone without reference to the others. The titles allow the reader to choose what is of current interest to him or her.

The overall theme is what I see as "the purpose of God." I think it is critical to have a beginning and expanding vision or "revelation" of God's purpose for mankind in our time. In my view, our decisions in life (small or great) need to be guided by His purpose. It is relatively easy to formulate a purpose based on personality, natural ability, circumstances, and desires. We are complicated individuals with great potential. But God wants that potential to be brought under His control and made available to Him for His purpose and glory.

I began my journey in the Lord at about the age of 13. I was living in a remote area in the mountains of Colorado and first responded to the Lord through the influence of my mother and a radio ministry. Through that radio program, I heard about a mission in the Philippines that was broadcasting Christian programs into Russia, China, India, and other Asian countries. I made it my goal to be part of that! After high school, college, and four years as a junior officer on a diesel submarine in the US Navy, I

finally got there. After joining the mission I felt that I had finally "arrived," and I expected to spend the rest of my life in that ministry.

However, as I came into contact with the general Christian missionary efforts at that time, I began to have many questions for which there seemed to be no answer. I was well supported and was enjoying the work of building radio stations for Christian outreach into closed countries. But I was deeply troubled over the lack of unity among the missionaries. Yes, there was much activity, and as many of the church-related ministries were using radio in outreach, I had the opportunity to meet many missionaries and discuss these issues. But it seemed like a "smorgasbord," where each group had part of the truth and were gathering around that particular truth, but nobody seemed to have it all together. Why was this? Did it have to be that way?

During this time, I had several life-changing experiences. The first was related to a general evangelistic outreach that had taken place shortly before I arrived in the Philippines. The missionaries had decided they needed to hold an evangelistic campaign in the local area where some of the mission headquarters were. I was told that the effort was very successful. A local evangelist with an excellent reputation led the meetings and more than a thousand attended over a week's time. Reportedly, nearly two hundred people responded to the message and had been followed up in personal visitation by local missionaries. But I was told a year later by one brother who was involved that they could only identify eight who had gone on with the Lord at all. Eight out of two hundred? That did not add up and troubled me greatly. What was wrong?

A second experience involved a husband and wife who were managing one of the local radio stations in the Philippines. I was providing technical support and spiritual encouragement for several radio stations at that time, and had recently been with this couple in their home, praying with them and encouraging them in their labor. A few weeks later I received a frantic call to come immediately. When I arrived the next day, I found that the wife was confined to a mental institution and drugged to keep her calm. I was told that the day before she had ordered her husband to quarter a cat, hang the dead cat on the clothesline to keep the evil spirits away, loaded up the family in a jeep, and then with eyes rolled back and foaming at the mouth she went through the city proclaiming that Jesus was Lord and people needed to repent of their sin. Her intent was to go to the airport and fly to Manila to tell everybody in the mission the same thing. The planes were not flying that day, so she became enraged and tried to attack her daughter. I was told that it took 12 men to contain her.

I had spent time with this couple a few weeks earlier! Why did I not discern this woman's condition? My conclusion was that I was "the blind leading the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch." I felt I did not know what I was doing as a missionary, and needed to go back and start over again. (As a side note, this woman was delivered, and the last time I saw the couple they were doing well in the Lord.)

A third incident involved a leader in the mission I was a part of. This man had been with the mission for many years and held a responsible position. He had four older children and from my observation, a great family. Yet there were rumors that this man was involved in serious sin. The mission authorities knew about these rumors, but the man denied them, so nothing was done. Finally, when the man was back in the States for a short visit, two other missionaries were given the job of investigating the situation to put the matter to rest once and for all. What they found was that the rumors were all true. I was told that when the man was finally confronted with the evidence by the director of the mission, he hung his head and said it was all true. He confessed the sin publicly before his church in the States and

never came back to the mission. How was this possible? Why did the mission leaders not detect the truth and take action? Why was it allowed to go on so long and deeply affect others? I had no answers, but I could not ignore what was put before me.

During this time, I met a brother from Florida, Gordon Gentry, who was using radio in his outreach and traveling to the Philippines every year to minister to small gatherings of believers in remote areas. We struck up a strong relationship, and he took time with me to try to work through my many questions. I won't go into those details here, but what God showed me during those six years in the Philippines and in my fellowship with Gordon led me to leave the mission, move to Florida to be part of a small gathering, and "start all over again."

Not long after I arrived, Gordon asked me what I felt God wanted me to do. I answered that I wanted to be able to help the gatherings in the Philippines, but that I knew I was not ready. I said, "If it takes me 20 years to get ready and I only have one year to labor, that is better than wandering around for 21 years not knowing what I'm doing." He replied that if I really saw that, it would keep me on course. Little did I realize how prophetic this was. It did take 20+ years to deal with many things in my life and take me through many experiences while learning the ways of God. Now 40+ years later I am still on the journey, learning to know God in deeper ways. Sometimes I think I am just starting today!

The last chapter expands a little on what I see regarding evangelism. I am not an evangelist, and putting this article at the end does not mean evangelism is not important. But what I have observed is that many get excited about making new converts, but do not make sure those converts are brought into the family of God, and thus many easily fall back into the world. God wants new converts, but even more He wants mature sons and daughters that are able to bear responsibility. The teaching in this book is what I see we all need to be grounded in a solid relationship with God. Our goal is to be mature sons and daughters for God's eternal purpose and glory.

Here are a few short comments about each section of this book:

Beginning with God

One of the things that I have observed is that many believers do not get a good beginning in God. They want God, and they are trying to listen to what they are taught and put it into action in their lives, but often the message is shallow or not complete. The material in this section is what I see every believer needs to get a good start in God.

Growing Up

As I began to function in a local assembly in Florida, it became more and more apparent to me that being a Christian was not just about beginning but about maturing and being changed into the likeness of Christ. There were some very challenging experiences at that time. One of them related to qualifications for leadership. I was being considered to help in leadership, but a couple of times I was very immature in how I handled situations. The result was that I was not included in leadership at that time. As I began to pray about the weakness in my life, I realized it was much deeper than I thought and would take several years to strengthen. The articles in this section are about some things God was showing me at that time.

Some Important Truth

One of the questions we all face is which truths are critical and which are not. We have the statement of Jesus: "I am the truth," but what does that mean in practical experience? Sorting through those issues has not been an easy exercise. The articles in this section expound on what I was beginning to see in this area. I trust the thoughts will be helpful to those asking similar questions.

Experiencing God Together with Others

One central area of truth that has continued to expand in my own vision and experience is that what God is doing, He is doing in a collective way. Knowing God together with others seems to be much more challenging than just knowing God by myself. Relationships can be challenging, to say the least, and yet that is the way God has chosen to bring weakness to our attention and minister to bring us to a place of strength. The articles in this section expound this truth from the scriptures. I have included one article by Gordon Gentry about "meeting with God." He wrote it shortly before passing on to his reward. I feel inadequate to expound any further on that subject at this time.

Men and Women

My observation over the years is that one of the most basic and yet challenging issues we face is proper relationships between men and women, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. It seems that the enemy strikes here at almost every turn, starting with the first man and woman and continuing to today. The articles in this section expand on what the Lord has been showing me and my wife regarding the man-woman relationship and how that relates to Christ and His bride, the church.

Expanding Our Vision

One picture that came to me regarding our growth in vision was a pole with vertical lines. As you move upward, you go around the pole, but you keep crossing the same lines all the way up. The lines are like significant areas of truth, and we can only grasp a certain amount according to our capacity. But if we walk in that truth, and let it become part of us, then our capacity to receive more is expanded. The next time we encounter certain questions or issues, we find ourselves able to understand more in our relationship with God and what He is doing in this hour. The articles in this section speak about some of those areas that I have encountered over the years.

In sharing these writings, my prayer is that brothers and sisters find value and encouragement as they pursue their own relationship with God. This life is passing quickly for all of us. God has made a way for us in Jesus Christ our Lord to live a life of victory here on this earth, and has given us a sure hope of spending eternity with Him. May we all avail of that grace and enter fully into all that God has provided for us.

David Sheats, May 2025