

2006 - New Wine Needs a New Wineskin - 2006

I heard a sermon tonight about not letting our yesterdays impede the flow of what God wishes to do in, to and through us today. We were encouraged to make a conscious decision to not let affections for previous graces, previous blessings, previous ministries or ways God has used us – become stumbling blocks between God and us. I answered that challenge and publicly surrendered my life to the Lord once again. As the evening has quietly come and gone, I've been increasingly impressed by the profound truth of what I have heard.

Nearly 9 years ago, the Lord spoke to me about a **New Thing** He was going to do in and through me. He spoke to my heart about a new season of intimacy with Him, and a new season of ministry that would flow out of that deeper intimacy. At that time (as many readers know), I was in ministry with Jeff and Sharon and simply presumed this would occur within the framework of our joint work together in the Kingdom.

Not knowing exactly what was to be or what it would look like, I continued growing in a wonderfully deepening relationship with Him. Sometimes the fruit of our relationship would manifest itself noticeably in ministry, other times not. Yet I knew that there was something else the Lord wanted to do. Mind you, I didn't know **WHAT** it was, just that there **WAS** something else. A new season of ministry. What would that look like??

Three and a half years ago, Jeff and Sharon completed their 24th year of shared Kingdom work with me, and took up a new venture that would enable Sharon to be home more with the kids. That left me with all the Lord had done the past 24 years combined with an unshakeable certainty that there was still another season of ministry yet to be revealed in my life.

But what was it? What would it look like? How would I know it? Questions abounded far more than answers. And though I desperately prayed for the Lord to reveal His plans to me, I have spent three years in a deep place of unknowing.

Old wine keeps well in old wineskins because the skin has stretched so the wine "is at home" in it.. **New wine** requires new wineskins because it requires a stretching impossible for an old wineskin. As happens more frequently than I care to admit, I think I have held on to the old comfortable wineskin of yesterday's ministry. It was really good. I was comfortable with it. I have incredible memories of His wonderful working in the old days.

But this is 2006 now. This is a new day. Yesterday is gone. Yesterday's wine is gone too. New wine, new grace, new things, new ministries, new times of

intimacy with the Lord overflowing in new plans of His await me – **IF** I will give up my precious old wineskin heart– and give Him a new wineskin heart.

Tonight I made a decision to draw a line in the sand of my life. Every single thing that has transpired in my life, good, bad and ugly, glorious ministry, difficult and challenging ministry, everything - - I laid down tonight at the foot of the cross. As this day ends, I have made a conscious and deliberate decision to give up everything I have clung to. Everything – except my Savior.

He is my New Thing; He is my New Wine; He is the answer to all the questions I've been asking, all the answers I've waited for. I'm going to worship Him – now, where I find myself. I am going to “redeem the time,” that is, live this one day as though it is my last.

I'm going to “minister” every single chance I get: to the waitress at the restaurant, the clerk at the gas station, the neighbor who has just been told the cancer in his body is so metastasized that no treatment will cure him. When He opens doors, I'll also lead worship, speak and preach.

I have laid down the old wineskin of yesterday's ministry. I have laid down the ridiculous desire to be approved by other people, to be considered “a success” in a solo ministry. I'm going to gauge my success on the Lord's take on me. I have decided on a deeper level than ever that I am going to expend my life in worship to my Beloved and I am going to serve Him with every fiber of my being – NOW. Today. His approval, His love for me is enough.

I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. No looking around. No compromise. Full measure, pressed down, running over – His.

Father, I ask You for a new wineskin heart tonight, emptied of stubbornness, love for the old days and the old ways. I open myself to everything You have for me, beginning with You and ending with You. Oh great Vinedresser, give me You.

Fill me up with Yourself. Pour into me until I am drunk with You, until I am so satiated with you that I stagger like a mad man.

But oh, let my condition be one which causes You to be glorified ever greater in my life. Oh increase, my God, in me. Let me decrease.

Happy New Year, friends! New Wine, anyone?

(read next page!)

In closing, I'd like to share something I ran across a couple of years ago that thunders in my heart right now. I invite you to make this your Declaration of Surrender to the Lord in 2006.

DECLARATION OF SURRENDER

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made--I'm a disciple of his. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in his presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer and I labor with power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions are few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till he comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till he stops me. And when he comes for his own, he will have no problem recognizing me...my banner will be clear!

Found in the office of a young pastor from Zimbabwe, Africa, following his martyrdom.