

G'day, Mates!

Greetings from Australia, that is--where I've just finished two weekend conferences. A flock of large white cockatoos, with bright yellow crests, screech outside my window even as I write this!

The father-wound is at least as deep here as elsewhere in the world, and the men are hungry for the blessing of sonship. On the first night, I asked 250 fathers, "When you became a dad for the first time, for how many of you did your own father reach out to talk to you about fathering?" No hands went up. On Sunday evening, after my "Daughters of the Father: Healing the Father-Wound in Women" teaching, I sat down and a lay pastor boldly walked up to the front. In behalf of the men, he asked the women's forgiveness for not being the fathers and husbands they needed.

As his voice cracked, other men began getting up to join him, and soon a battalion of men lined across the sanctuary in agreement. As my heart filled with admiration for these brothers and excitement for the healing their courage beckoned, the Enemy's fury fell upon me. I began praying fiercely in the Spirit. Women were crying, and then, as the men stood uncertain, the leader's 18-year-old daughter walked up and threw her arms around his neck in tears. "What shall we do now?" one man cried out. "Go and do likewise!" I shout-ed, and the men spread out across the room to hug and bless their wives and daughters.

That night, as so many times lately, I was privileged to see before my eyes real men, letting God use them to fulfill the pivotal text in the biblical faith: "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:5,6). Prophets and kings, as Jesus said, wished they could've seen such things, but did not. What can you do but praise God for giving us a front-row seat to His Kingdom restoration--even offering us a starring role!?

At such times, I remember not long ago, when conferences and finances were scarce, and I was tempted to give up hope for the Lord's ministry in and through me. Often, I begged Him to move some larger Christian organization of which I had been a part to sponsor me--perhaps the United Church of Christ (my ordination), Harvard Divinity School (my seminary), the Vineyard (I pastored at its original church), Promise Keepers (I keynoted at the first stadium event in '92), or either of my three book publishers. As all of these rejected my ministry at their highest organizational level, I pouted and became angry at God for "abandoning" me.

My frustration was resolved one Sunday morning earlier this year, at a Church of Christ congregation. This was the first Evangelical/ fundamentalist church to welcome me, and the men, though few, had boldly stepped out that weekend to meet their true Father at last. The pastor came forward before I sat down after preaching, and announced that they would offer the last hymn--sung acappella, as the COC does not permit musical instruments--as a prayer for me.

As voices rose in the Lord's praise, others stepped forward to lay hands on me. In that moment of exquisite grace, I thanked the Lord for opening to me this new door in His Body--one I never would've thought possible. And then, I knew the truth: Amid the sadly polarized Body of Christ today, if any one of those very different, larger organizations with which I had been associated had claimed me as their own, it would've

been the kiss of death--as all the others would never consider my ministry! Suddenly, I wasn't so angry at God any more--but indeed, humbly thanking Him for NOT saying Yes to my prayer, and asking Him to forgive me my presumption and use me to unite His Body!

And so, at last, I rest. The Father has called me to minister to a wound that knows no denominational, theological, or political boundaries. It's His ministry, and His responsibility both to make it happen and provide for our needs as He does. As another has put it, I no longer demand of God, "I can do it with your help"; rather, I confess, "You can do it with my cooperation."

Lord, help us to discern your call and cooperate with you in fulfilling it!
(Ephesians 1:17-20).

Have a cracker of a day! (as our Aussie brothers would say)

Shalom,
Gordon