

Introduction (to *A New Testament Trilogy* by Tom Johnston & Mike Perkinson)

We are, by God's grace, in the process of rediscovering the truth of the New Testament Scriptures.

This book, this Trilogy, is about a journey of radical rediscovery. Rooted in the ancient and sacred text of the Holy Scripture, our path of rediscovery takes us through many crossings, on a pilgrimage of heart and mind as we seek a fresh encounter with God. Our hearts, like many that we have conversed with, ache for the fullness of what it means to be a child of God, living the life of glory, truth, and grace so powerfully expressed in the life of Jesus. There is nothing that reflects the glory of God more than human beings who are fully alive in Christ.

We are not suggesting that we have found a new truth about God, us, or the Church, but that we are rediscovering what the Bible has been saying for centuries. Somewhere in our journey we took a wrong turn and ended up at a dead end. A place where boredom and frustration reign and the joy and power of God have no place.

Our travels through several key biblical concepts are more than just a review. It is rediscovery. On our trek together, we will see vistas familiar to our heart - we know that they are there - but many have been long absent from our mind, our life and our ministry. We also hope to encounter blazing new horizons of understanding as the Holy Spirit shines His light on us, and in us.

However, our quest that forms the core of our expedition is not just *to know*, but it is also *to be known*. Our journey is not one that is ruled by a desire to simply acquire more *information*, but rather we seek *transformation*. We desire life to emerge more fully in us, changing us into His likeness. We pray that in this journey you find life imparted to you rather than a new way to package the principles of scripture or church growth (some new tips and techniques). As wonderful as information is, without the impartation of life from above, it is nothing but mere human effort that seeks to create something divine and meaningful. As noble as such a task might be without the power of God the Holy Spirit, it simply will not happen nor feed the devastating hunger in the human soul.

Our path starts with our Creator, as we revisit the core issues in the understanding of ***Our God***. From there our trail will wind through God's Word as we look at ***Ourselves***, seeking a clearer view on our identity as sons and daughters, servants and stewards. Our journey will wind up in the refreshing oasis of ***Our Community***, as we see how the Father forms us together into a Kingdom community that reflects the brilliance of His image to those trapped in a darkened world.

But the journey doesn't end there - the road continues ever onward as our rediscovery begins to touch not just our life, but also our ministry praxis. It affects how

we make disciples, and how we develop leaders for the body of Christ. It determines how we will facilitate the emergence of pastoral leaders from within our communities. It forms the larger framework on how God builds healthy and effective wineskins - local churches - to reap and keep a harvest of souls. Our exploration of rediscovery even informs how we multiply those wineskins in ever-increasing numbers, gathering more and more people into the community of the King.

On a personal note - You will find much of this book discusses the idea of community at varying levels, based within the nature of the Trinity, community's effect on the identity of the human individual and how the greatest expression of the Church is to reflect God as, and through being, community.

We have found that even in writing this book, and the associated developmental experiences and tools which flow from it, that it was impossible for us to write without living community itself. This posed certain issues as we live on opposite North American coasts - Tom on the East Coast of the United States, and Mike on the West Coast. Finding that God literally gave us "writer's block" unless we were together interacting, we have flown back and forth across the country as part of our quest, being forced to live out the interdependence of community in the pursuit of this work. Apart from Him in each other, we could do nothing. Together in Him, we found we could do all things. Having written many things in the past as individuals "on our own," we at first found the God-imposed inability frustrating and confusing. Once we figured out what He was doing to us, we realized again a profound sense of awe about the peculiar sovereignty of our brotherhood in Him, being both humbled and exhilarated by what the Lord was doing. Besides, we racked up some serious frequent flyer and hotel points!

To you, the reader, our companions on this quest, we pray that the words on these pages will be used by God to both inspire and prepare. We hope they inspire you to explore further down the path of rediscovery, and prepare you for your journey. We hope these pages will empower you to see, taste, touch, hear and smell the fresh reality of church which we believe the New Testament brings to our times. May the Holy Spirit illuminate His path in your heart and mind as you step out on this adventure.

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