



JOHN BEVERE

Author of the Bestsellers  
*The Bait of Satan*  
and *The Fear of the Lord*

A HEART  
ABLAZING

IGNITING A PASSION

Preview

A HEART  
ABLAZE

**A HEART  
ABLAZE  
IGNITING A PASSION FOR GOD**

**JOHN BEVERE**



**THOMAS NELSON**  
*Since 1798*

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

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## I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO TWO GODLY MEN:

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He had entrusted it to you. You have prayed for us as if you were praying for your own needs.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**his book is a journey toward truth. Many long for truth, yet when confronted by it, they reject, ignore, or twist it for their own benefit. This condition has created desperate problems for our generation, resulting in a society bathed in deception. Jesus repeatedly warned the children of our day against this very thing.

Deception poses a major problem because those in its grip believe they are walking in truth. Paul described the latter days to Timothy: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3–4 NKJV). One definition of the Greek word for *fables* in verse 4 is “falsehood.” If falsehood is represented as truth long enough, many will stand by it with their very lives.

When the actual truth is revealed through Scriptures, it will be rejected as heresy. Paul warned that they will not endure sound doctrine. I heard one speaker say, “Unsound doctrines taught in our churches are not messages from the phone book. They are messages taught from Scriptures.” He was warning that these are doctrines derived from the Bible and therefore widely accepted, even though they are unsound.

The writer of Proverbs foresaw this situation and wrote, “There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness” (Prov. 30:12 NKJV). We will learn through this book that the generation is ours.

If truth was pleasant to our senses and easy to embrace, the entire world would knock at its door and enter. However, Jesus made it clear that is not the case: “Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:20–21 NKJV). Only those who fear God love truth.

This day and this hour bring with them difficult questions. Why do so many in the church lack passion? We've invested billions of dollars in media, buildings, advertisements, and countless other venues to propagate the gospel, yet why do so many in the church still wrestle with lust and the desire for the pleasures of this world? Why do more than 80 percent of our converts wander back into a world of darkness? How can sinners claim a new birth experience yet remain unchanged? I believe an answer to all of the above can be found in: a lack of the fire and passion of God.

If we look at those who went before us, we find clear differences. What gave Moses the desire to pursue God when it cost him a lifetime of achievements? Why did Jeremiah, Isaiah, and others continue to proclaim the very words that brought them persecution and hardship? Why were people in the early church able to forsake their possessions, comfort, and very lives for the gospel? What strength did the early church possess that enabled them to boldly preach under the threat of torture and death when the greatest struggle for too many in the church today is overcoming a bad self-image? Again, the answer is the fire of God.

We need the fire of God, and it is available to one and all who hunger for truth. It does not come without confrontation, but most are already fed up with flattery and are ready for change. The fear of remaining the same outweighs any painful encounter with truth.

Those who take such a position are desperate to hear from the Lord of glory. They are ready to see Him truly glorified in their lives.

No matter where you are in your walk with God, there is still room for more of His holy fire. If you fear the fire is almost gone, take courage and have hope. He has already promised:

A bruised reed He will not break,  
And smoking flax He will not quench,  
Till He sends forth justice to victory. (Matt. 12:20 NKJV)

What gracious love our Father has! I pray that this book will progressively reveal His true concern for our condition. He is more concerned with our condition than our comfort and loves us enough to tell us what we need to hear.

I have never been so excited about a message because these truths have

touched me deeply. This project only strengthened the realization of the One who truly authored it. I am only a vessel through whom the Master has spoken His message. I am careful to give Him all the glory for whatever He does through this book. May it ignite a holy fire in your life, and may you never be the same. As we begin this journey, let's pray,

Father, in the name of Jesus, as I read this book, I ask that You would speak to me personally by Your Spirit. I am not afraid of truth. I desire it. As I embrace it, cause Your holy fire to burn within my heart. Let its intensity consume me, causing me to love what You love and hate what You hate. As I read, open my eyes to see Jesus more clearly than ever before. I acknowledge that He is the revealed Word of God and the Truth. I thank You in advance for changing my life by Your message within this book. Amen.

## CHAPTER 1

### AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENING

*God will ignite His people with an intense, burning passion like we have never known before.*

**I**t was the fourth and final in a series of meetings at Covenant Love Family Church, Fayetteville, North Carolina. It was not my first time with them, for I had ministered at this church several times before. The meetings always bore wonderful fruit because of their genuine hunger and love for God.

It was late, long past the time a regular service would have let out. Yet I was hesitant to close; I was in the midst of a struggle. The message had come forth clear and concise, and the people had responded enthusiastically. But I felt a sense of incompleteness. I was usually able to close a series of services with a sense of fulfillment, especially with such a receptive church. That night it was different.

Adding to this struggle, I kept hearing the words the Holy Spirit whispered in my heart while I was flying to Fayetteville: “These meetings will be the most powerful you have experienced at this church.”

I had been to this church seven or eight times over the years, and I wouldn’t hesitate to include it on my list of the most life-changing meetings. I remember thinking on the plane: *That’s saying a lot.*

As I stood on the platform, I was bewildered. The meetings were not the most powerful. It was hard for me not to compare them to the significant acts and testimonies in previous services. I wrestled with the temptation of complaining within, yet I knew I had to stay focused on the service before me. I desperately needed to hear from God.

It seemed the presence of God was hovering over the people. It was almost as

if He wanted to fall on the congregation in a strong and powerful way, yet was somehow restrained. There were isolated pockets of people weeping here and there, but I knew God wanted much more. Although I had sensed a similar atmosphere on previous nights, I was certain that on the last night the Lord would honor us with His refreshing presence, just as He had in the past. There was not to be another service. “Why is He not touching these people when I perceive He desires to?” I kept asking myself.

## REVELATION THAT GAVE DIRECTION

Then I heard the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit speak to me.

He showed me that something was hindering the churches of this city, just as there was a hindrance in the service. It kept the churches from growing beyond a certain point. Once they achieved it, they either split or became religious and ineffective.

No sooner had I shared this with the congregation than the pastor jumped up and confirmed it. He had done present and historical studies on the city and affirmed this was statistically correct. While he was speaking I again heard the voice of the Holy Spirit. He explained how this hindrance could be broken.

When the pastor was finished speaking, he handed the microphone back to me. I said, “Folks, God has shown me that a forty-day fast will break this hindrance.”

I could almost hear the thoughts of the people, *Go forty days without food!*

I continued, “It is not necessarily a food fast, and most likely it is not a total refraining from food. It is a fast of what keeps you from seeking the Lord. It may be television, videos, computer games, newspapers, excessive shopping and phone conversations, and so forth.”

This is a true fast. Too often we go on hunger strikes to hear from God, yet continue our busy, distracted lives. That is not a fast; therefore, we get very little benefit. A true fast occurs when we abstain for the purpose of seeking God in a more focused manner.

The children of Israel would abstain from food and question the Lord: “Why

aren't You impressed?" or "Why don't You even notice our efforts?"

God answered them through the prophet Isaiah, "I will tell you why! It's because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting . . . This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me" (Isa. 58:3–4 NLT).

I returned the microphone to the pastor, and he immediately committed himself to the fast and pleaded with the entire congregation to do the same. They set their hearts as one to seek God.

The next day I realized the Sunday forty days later was open in my schedule. I shared this with the pastor, and he responded, "I would love for you to be here."

Over the following weeks we kept in touch. Already exciting testimonies were coming from the families who were fasting. Students, who previously struggled in school, were seeing their C's and D's rise to A's and B's. There were reports of increased obedience and respect in children and teenagers. Worldly things and pursuits seemed to be losing their hold and attraction. Wives excitedly shared how their husbands were like different men. Fathers were leading Bible studies and praying with their families. Relationships were healed while still others were experiencing physical healing. Homes were turning around as people drew near to God.

I also learned from the pastor how their services were increasingly more powerful with several new people coming into the kingdom of God. Virtually all areas were being affected as a result of this church's obedience to heed the word of the Lord.

## A DAY I WILL NEVER FORGET

Six Sundays later, November 3, 1996, I returned to the church to minister. It would be a day I'd never forget. Even as I entered the sanctuary for the morning service, I noticed the air was thick with expectancy. The message I gave from the Word of God was met with absorbent hearts and souls.

At the conclusion of the service the pastor exhorted the congregation to arrive early that evening to prepare their hearts in prayer. He also instructed the parents that children's church would be included in the main service that evening; he wanted all age-groups together for that service with the exception of those ages

six and under. I had never known him to do that before. He admonished the parents, "If you or your children miss this service, you will regret it the rest of your life." His comment surprised and almost concerned me, but I elected not to say anything, and I'm glad I didn't.

That night the auditorium was packed with nearly 1,300 people. I taught on the fear of the Lord, with the message concluding at approximately 9:00 P.M. The teaching was so intense, you could have heard a pin drop in the auditorium anytime I paused, even with all the young children in attendance.

At the conclusion of the message, the worship leader and I led the congregation in a couple of worship songs. I then heard the Spirit of God whisper, "I want to minister to the people. Please allow Me to."

I realized that even though we were singing songs of worship, it was not the direction He desired. I alerted the people, "The Lord just spoke to my heart. He wants to minister to us, so let's be still and focus on Him."

For the next ten minutes or so, you could hear various people crying quietly in the presence of the Lord. From all appearances it seemed the same as the services six weeks earlier, yet I knew something was different and about to happen.

About 9:15 the quiet atmosphere suddenly changed. From the back of the building I could hear high-pitched cries. It was easy to identify them as the voices of the youngsters. Approximately 150 children who were ages seven through twelve were sitting with their teachers in the back right-hand side of the auditorium. I knew God was touching them. I invited them forward by saying, "The children, God is touching the children. I want all the children that God is touching to come down to the front of the platform."

I will never forget what I saw. Some of you may think what I share is a bit extreme, and if I had not seen it, along with 1,200 other witnesses in attendance, I might agree. Frankly I will not be able to do it justice when I describe the magnitude of what God did that night, but I will make an attempt. I want to point out that it is a fairly conservative church. Most of the members are from denominational backgrounds that are not demonstrative, or they have not grown up in church at all and have been saved in this church. The pastor is a very good teacher and not given to extremism, sensationalism, or hype.

I observed children, mostly ages seven through nine years, coming down the aisle toward me, weeping uncontrollably. Many covered their faces with their hands. Others struggled to walk straight. Upon reaching the platform area, some fell to their knees because they lacked the strength to stand, but most collapsed as if their knees completely gave way. They fell all over, some on top of one another. The teary-eyed ushers helped them. Within moments, I watched as nearly one hundred small children wept and cried, while most shook profusely. They were engulfed in the manifested presence of the Lord.

This did not go on for two or three minutes; it lasted more than an hour! You would think hearing so many children weep and wail for such a long period of time would possibly be irritating, but it was glorious. Most of the adults' eyes were filled with tears as they watched what God was doing in the children. Yet at the same time they themselves were being strongly touched by the powerful presence of God. It was as if one wave of God's presence would come in only to be followed by another one more powerful. When it seemed that the children couldn't cry, scream, or shake any longer, another wave of God's presence would come and raise the intensity to another level. At times I could only drop my head on the podium because of the heaviness of God's presence.

I watched one young girl, no more than seven years old, wring her hands profusely as though they were on fire. Her uplifted face was bathed in tears as she cried out. You could sense God on these children so strongly that the ushers did not touch them after initially helping them. They just stood, watched, and cried.

Several adults lay on their faces—motionless. Others stood watching in awe through eyes blurred by tears. Several times I looked behind me and saw the pastor with his face in his hands, weeping. His wife had collapsed in tears in the choir loft.

Later the pastor wrote a letter describing the evening from his vantage point. Though his account is similar, I felt it was important as another perspective.

Sunday, November 3, 1996, will be a day I will never forget. I believe it foreshadows what God is about to do in the earth. John ministered in the evening service on the fear of the Lord then declared, "We must let Jesus be Master in every area of our lives and we must now completely surrender to Him as our Lord."

We worshipped for a short while, then John said, "I sense the Holy Spirit moving now in this place." At this point, I heard sobs rise from the children, youth and adults. Adults began to come to

the altar weeping and sobbing. John then said, “God is touching the children, the children are going to be touched powerfully by the Lord.” He then encouraged the children who were being touched by God’s presence to come.

I saw children run to the altar weeping uncontrollably: this included my sons [3] and daughter, all over children on their faces and knees called and screamed out to Jesus. Some shook and wrung their hands profusely as the fire of God moved in their midst. Nearly a hundred crowded the altars, while waves of God’s Spirit shot through the sanctuary. I watched as one child after another fell on top of each other, no one had touched them. They looked like dominoes. For an hour and a half [it was an hour and fifteen minutes but I did not want to change what he wrote], we were saturated by God’s presence. Near the end of the service parents and children embraced and wept as God knit their hearts.

One ten year old told us, as he lay on the floor, he saw rays of brilliant white light shooting down from the ceiling and falling on everyone. Several adults in the congregation and choir repeated the same thing. No one left service until 11:00 P.M. Children were carried out as they still wept.

I am still receiving reports of changed families; children are witnessing and obeying, *etc.* As pastor I can truly say my home and children are different.

Dr. Al Brice, Senior Pastor  
Covenant Love Family Church  
Fayetteville, North Carolina

The report given by the young man who saw the brilliant rays of white light shooting down from the ceiling got my attention. In the book of Habakkuk, we read,

LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD.

Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah

His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden. (Hab. 3:2–4 NIV)

I’m sure this young man had no idea that Habakkuk recorded anything like this so long ago. With our eyes, we witnessed what Joel had prophesied, “Your

sons and daughters will prophesy, . . . your young men will see visions” (2:28 NIV). The ten-year-old was describing a similar vision already described in Scripture without prior knowledge.

Another boy proclaimed with boldness, “Mom, the fast isn’t over.” Not only were his words prophetic, but he verbalized the desire of numerous others. These young people had experienced the presence of the living God, and their lives were changed. They wanted to press on and not stop.

Later that night the pastor’s wife shared with us the Scriptures God had spoken to her about what had transpired:

Therefore also now, says the Lord, turn and keep on coming to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning [until every hindrance is removed and the broken fellowship is restored]. Rend your hearts and not your garments. (Joel 2:12–13 AMPLIFIED)

As she read these verses, my heart burned within. The phrase “keep on coming” described that church’s resolve. The people were set in their pursuit of His heart. They would not draw back.

God instructs us to rend our hearts and not our garments. I have seen believers and churches that by appearance seem to have it all together, yet not touch the heart of God as this church had. The reason? They may fast, hold prayer meetings, and abstain from outward indulgences, causing them to look good as far as the outward “garment” is concerned, but inwardly they conceal stubborn hearts. They still live for their own agendas rather than for the service of others. God is more impressed with inward submission than outward appearances of Christianity. Joel continued,

Blow the trumpet in Zion,  
declare a holy fast,  
call a sacred assembly.

Gather the people,  
consecrate the assembly;  
bring together the elders,  
gather the children,  
those nursing at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room  
and the bride her chamber. (Joel 2:15–16 NIV)

The fire in my heart spread as she continued to read. It described exactly how

God had instructed this church just forty days earlier. When the prophetic word was trumpeted, everyone was to seek God. From the leaders to the children, no one was exempt. Continuing, she read,

And it shall come to pass afterward

That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

Your old men shall dream dreams,

Your young men shall see visions.

And also on My menservants and on My maidservants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28–29 NKJV)

“And it shall come to pass afterward.” I have heard this verse quoted repeatedly. In fact, since I was first saved, Joel 2:28–29 has been frequently referenced by believers and ministers alike. There is talk of sons and daughters prophesying and seeing visions along with the great wonders and signs of the Holy Spirit, yet often the word afterward was ignored in the discussions and preaching. If something is prophesied to happen afterward, then something significant must take place before-ward: the church’s response to the trumpet, by drawing near to God.

God responds powerfully when we draw near. We must come close when He calls. Another important element is timing. This is where many believers miss it. I believe as you read this book, you’ll realize that though believers have an open invitation to come to the Lord through prayer and fellowship at any time, there are times and seasons when He calls us for specific purposes. During these, timing becomes crucial, for if we do not respond, we will miss the blessing He desires to give us.

The focus in these times is on obedience rather than our own will or desire. God is much more pleased with obedience than sacrifice. I have seen churches that fast regularly and pray around the clock with precious members sacrificing sleep to fill their prayer slots. Yet this does not guarantee His power and presence. Too often I have seen these churches lack what the church I wrote about had in abundance. They had the form; they just did not have the heart.

It is the same with individuals. I have seen many who fast and pray religiously, yet they lack the liberty, power, and intimate knowledge of God that I have seen in others who have not sacrificed nearly as much, but responded to the Spirit of God's leading.

The church heeded the calling voice of God. In the next year and a half they doubled in size. In fact, they had just finished building the auditorium that we met in that night, and within six months they had to start another building program for a larger sanctuary.

The pastor and I spoke frequently for months afterward. He said, "John, our Sunday morning second service, which starts at 10:00 A.M., keeps getting out between two and three o'clock in the afternoon." One Sunday he called and said that he had to tell the people, "Please, go home." He said they just stood there looking at him, not wanting to leave.

God fulfilled His word. Those meetings were the most powerful we had experienced. Through our cooperation with His Spirit and our obedience to His leading, He had His way. Three years have passed, yet the pastor still receives reports from that service. The fruit has remained. I have ministered there several times since and have seen only an increase of passion and genuine hunger for God.

## A FORETASTE OF WHAT'S COMING

A year earlier, I was in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ministering in the nation's largest Bible school for a week of services. At our eighth service, there was a very similar experience, but this one lasted only about five to ten minutes. God's Spirit fell on the students and many others in attendance. It is another meeting I will never forget. The morning after the service while I was in prayer, God spoke to me, "What you saw yesterday, you will see happening all over, for it is one of the final moves of My Spirit, which will occur in the church." He showed me how this move of His Spirit would yield the fruit of true holiness in the church and prepare it for the harvest to come. God will ignite His people with an intense, burning passion like we have never known before.

I do not believe you hold this book by chance; rather, by divine providence you have it to create a hunger and prepare your heart for what He is about to do. We must ready ourselves for His second coming. The apostle John recorded:

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7 NKJV).

We are that bride of Christ, and we have a crucial role in making ourselves ready to be united with Him. I want to reemphasize this point: we are to make ourselves ready. It is a divine merger. He does not do all of it for us! It is our response to His provision. He provides the grace, and we embrace the fire. He is not coming back for a church spotted and blemished by the world. He will return for a pure bride whose heart is ablaze with true holiness.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PURPOSE OF SALVATION

*God, who created the universe and everything within it, expresses  
His intent to dwell in us and among us.*

**I** have frequently heard leaders use the word *visitation* when describing an encounter with God's presence, whether it was on a corporate basis, such as the church service described in the last chapter, or on an individual basis. The Lord's desire is not a *visitation*; rather, He seeks a *habitation*. Let me illustrate the difference: I have neighbors who are good friends, and on numerous occasions I have gone to their homes to spend time with them. But once the visit is over I return to my house, which is my dwelling place. One of the greatest promises the Lord makes to believers is this:

I will dwell in them  
And walk among them.  
I will be their God,  
And they shall be My people. (2 Cor. 6:16 NKJV)

What a statement! God, who created the universe and all that is within it, expresses His intent to dwell in and among us. In accordance with this promise, Paul writes that we "are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22 NKJV). These are His promises to us. However, every promise in the Bible is conditional, and if the condition is not met, the promise is made ineffective, not by God's unfaithfulness, but by our own. It is impossible for God to lie, but not impossible for man to nullify His word (Mark 7:13) by ignoring it or twisting it. This also includes the promise of God dwelling in us and among us.

Paul goes on,

Come out from among them  
And be separate, says the Lord.  
Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you. (2 Cor. 6:17 NKJV)

The condition is that we would come out from the world's system. If we meet this condition, God says He will receive us. Conversely, if we do not come out, He will not receive us. Why will He not receive us? To answer, we must have the understanding that God is pure light and in Him is not a trace of darkness. Darkness cannot abide in the presence of pure light.

We will see as we progress in this message that His light speaks of His holiness. The Bible does not say that He *has* holiness; it says that He *is* holy (Lev. 19:2)! The world's system is darkness, and those who are drawn to darkness cannot abide in the light.

God declares, "So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I, the LORD, am your God" (Lev. 20:7 NLT). To set ourselves apart is to refuse a relationship with the world. James clearly states to us in the new covenant, "If your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God" (James 4:4 NLT). Another version is even blunter: "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (NIV).

Peter emphasizes God's desire for a pure people by writing, "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God—who chose you to be his children—is holy. For he himself has said, 'You must be holy because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16 NLT). Being holy is not an option. God will not dwell in us and among us if we fail to heed His condition of separating ourselves from the world's system. A contemporary version reads,

"So leave the corruption and compromise;  
leave it for good," says God.

"Don't link up with those who will pollute you.

I want you all for myself." (2 Cor. 6:17 THE MESSAGE)

The magnitude of God's promises to be our Father and dwell in us and among us makes it even more important for us to carefully consider the condition He places on them. Taking into consideration the seriousness of this condition, Paul stated, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1 NKJV).

Those verses hold so much meaning that volumes could be written about

them. But most believers' understanding of what is being said is limited. Many do not comprehend it at all because they do not understand the context. Paul is quoting what God spoke to Israel in the Old Testament, and by doing that he is also making known that His wishes have not changed toward us in the New. We need to understand the situations and events that led up to these statements. When we have this background, the words have the spiritual impact He intended them to have.

Consider a movie in which the writers, director, and actors have carefully designed a plot that builds up to a climactic scene at the end. Much has transpired to bring you to this point, and after walking through all the drama that led up to the climactic scene, you are overwhelmed. If you heard the actor make the same statement without seeing all the drama beforehand, it would have very little, if any, impact.

I experienced this as a young man. I walked into our family room where my sisters and parents were watching a movie. They were captivated by the story and would not be interrupted. Most of them didn't realize I had walked into the room. I glanced toward the screen at the moment the lead actor made what seemed to be a dramatic statement. My sisters began to cry. But his statement meant little to me. I thought, *What's the big deal?* I was oblivious to what was happening; yet his words riveted them and evoked deep emotion.

The same principle applies here. Many believers come to these climactic words from God's mouth and read right over them because they have not understood the drama leading up to them. To really experience the impact of what God is saying to us, we must understand the story line or drama leading up to these statements. This will take several chapters to develop. To begin, we need to go to the book of Exodus.

## I WILL TURN ASIDE TO SEE

The book of Exodus opens with Abraham's descendants in captivity. They had been in Egypt for almost four hundred years. The beginning of their stay was favorable, but as time passed, they became slaves and were brutally mistreated.

Moses, a Hebrew-born man, escaped the harsh treatment; he was brought into Pharaoh's house as a babe and raised as his grandson. When he was forty years of age, however, Moses was forced to flee to another land from the wrath of

Pharaoh because of his loyalty to his own people.

Forty years later while he was in the back side of the desert tending his father-in-law's flocks, God revealed Himself to Moses. The revelation occurred at Mount Sinai, which is called Horeb, the Mountain of God. The Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. When Moses saw the bush burning with fire, yet not consumed, he said, "'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.' So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush" (Ex. 3:3–4 NKJV).

It was not until Moses turned aside to draw near to the Lord's presence that anything transpired between him and God. Once God saw that Moses left his intended course of personal business to draw near, the Lord called to him and proceeded to reveal Himself to Moses through His word. If Moses had carelessly neglected it as a thing not worth noticing, God probably would have departed and said nothing to him. We are admonished in the New Testament to "draw near to God and He will draw near to [us]" (James 4:8 NKJV).

Who draws near first? God or us? God woos us, but it is not until we first draw near to God that He in turn draws near to us for the purpose of revealing Himself. This is the message of this book. In fact, this is the focus of our destiny.

## THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE

God revealed Himself to Moses and told him to take His words to Pharaoh to let His people go. Despite Pharaoh's stubbornness and strength, God delivered the descendants of Abraham with a mighty hand of miracles, signs, and wonders.

Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage correlates to our deliverance from the slavery of sin in the New Testament. Egypt is a type of the world's system, and Israel is a type of the church. When we were born again, we were set free from the world's system of tyranny and oppression.

Where was Moses headed with the children of Israel after they were liberated? When I ask this question publicly in services, people usually respond, "To the promised land."

Yet that is not true. He was headed for Mount Horeb, or Sinai. God's words to Pharaoh, through Moses, were: "Let my people go, so that they may worship me

in the desert” (Ex. 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3 NIV). Why would Moses want to take the people into the promised land without first meeting the Promiser? The Lord would not desire that for His people. If they were taken into the promised land without the revelation of God, they would make it into a place of idolatry.

This is what has happened with too many in the church who have been saved in the past twenty-five years. The emphasis has been on communicating God’s promises and provisions, rather than His character and nature, to draw people to Him. Our messages have attracted people to a better lifestyle accompanied by eternal security instead of drawing them to know and serve the Lord of glory. Many ministers are careful to deliver a positive message that will attract the multitudes; they forgo a strong, reproofing message that will bring the changes we need to face a holy God.

Meeting God at Sinai had changed Moses, and he knew that a similar experience was essential for the people. Had he not encountered the Lord at the burning bush, he would have been on a campaign to get them out of slavery into their own land, which he was attempting to do in his earlier years and caused him to flee from Pharaoh.

Many have been saved today because of ministers’ messages proclaimed out of their calls rather than the revelation of God. If we have a calling on our lives but have not allowed God to bring us to the back side of His desert to reveal Himself, we will seek to free people for the sake of freedom. But we need to free people for the purpose of coming to the One for whom we were created.

In the book of Acts, we read that

Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand. (Acts 7:22–25 NKJV)

Moses saw the suffering and desired to alleviate it. He also knew he was called to deliver God’s people. It was in his heart. Yet without the revelation of God he was not prepared to lead them to their destiny. Leadership without the right purpose can be more dangerous than no leadership at all. Moses was a leader, he had a purpose, but his purpose was incomplete. Without the revelation of God he could lead them at best to a land of provision void of the real purpose of their freedom—the intimate knowledge of God. That was why God led him to

the back parts of His desert to quiet Moses' heart from the world he had left. In the desert he could respond with desire to God's revelation. The preparation enabled him to say, "I will now turn aside and see . . ."

We must realize that not all "good" is true ministry. At forty years of age, Moses' wanting to see his people free was good, but it was not true ministry. Eve was drawn to the "good" side of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not the evil side. When she "saw that the fruit of the tree was good . . . and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (Gen. 3:6 NIV). She was tempted to be like God. There is much that appears to be good and like God, yet is against His character and nature. Only when we come into intimate knowledge of Him can we truly discern what is good.

## BROUGHT YOU TO MYSELF

Moses led the people of God out of Egypt to take them to worship God in the desert. Yet they did not immediately go to Sinai. It took them three months to make a journey that could have been made in ten or eleven days. Why did God do that? The answer is simple and was no different from the situation with Moses: God wanted to give them time to quiet their hearts so that they would embrace the revelation of God as Moses did.

Once they arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses left the people there and ascended to where God's presence was. Then the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying: "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel . . ." (Ex. 19:3 NKJV).

Before we read more of what God said to Moses, I must point out to whom the message was addressed. It was not just to Aaron and his sons. It was not just to the sons of Levi. God's message was to the entire nation of Israel. It was for every person who was delivered out of Egypt, from the least to the greatest of tribes, families, and persons.

Now hear God's message: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself" (Ex. 19:4 NKJV). The phrase, "and brought you to Myself," tells the whole reason you were created! The motive for which God brought you forth and went to great lengths to save you was to bring you to Himself!

We see this motive from the beginning of mankind. Why did God put man in the Garden? Adam was not created to have a worldwide deliverance ministry. He was not placed in the Garden to build bridges or skyscrapers. No, he was placed in the Garden to walk in fellowship with the living God. Out of that fellowship may emerge skyscrapers or ministry, but that is not His purpose for man's existence.

The first seven years after I was saved, I attended and eventually worked for a large church that emphasized God's promises and provisions. It was a very evangelistic church with a passion to reach the world with the good news of the gospel, yet the gospel preached there accented the benefits of the kingdom rather than the glory of knowing God. People traveled from all over the world to come to the congregation, for it was well known internationally. The leader's zeal to see others saved was contagious. Many people in the international outreach church had a passion for ministry, and I was certainly one of them.

In those first few years of my association with that church I arose each morning and prayed as long as an hour and a half before going to work. I asked God to use me to reach the lost and dying, to heal the sick. I cried out to go to the nations to set the captives free. On and on I prayed fervently till one morning I heard the Lord say to my heart, "John, your prayers are off!"

I thought to myself, *That can't be God's voice. That has to be the enemy.* Yet I knew it was the voice of the Lord. I was bewildered: "Lord, how can You say this to me? I am praying for people to be saved, healed, and delivered. This is what You desire!" But God saw beyond my words. He saw how little I knew of His true nature, and without it He knew that even though I would have been leading people out of bondage, such ministry would have eventually led me and many of those I taught to further bondage of idolatry—within the church setting.

He said to me, "John, the goal of Christianity is not ministry. You can cast out demons, heal the sick, and lead people to salvation, yet end up in hell." He added, "Judas left his job to follow Me, he healed the sick, he raised the dead, and he cast out demons, yet he is in hell." Those words riveted my heart.

We have to remember that when the apostles went out with power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils, Judas was included (Matt. 10:1–8).

I quickly asked, "Then what is the goal of Christianity?"

He immediately replied, “To know Me intimately!” I then remembered that Paul said he counted all things as rubbish that he “may know Him” (Phil. 3:10 NKJV).

The Lord whispered to my heart, “Out of that intimate relationship will come true ministry.” Daniel confirmed that by saying, “But the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” (Dan. 11:32 NKJV).

Jesus asserts that the blind will lead the blind into a ditch (Matt. 15:14). This is true for all who seek to lead people out of captivity without first having their eyes open to see the Lord. That is why Paul so earnestly prayed that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:18). It is in His light that we see (Ps. 36:9). Without a revelation of Him we are blind. Those who have not come to intimately know Him may have good motives, but without the revelation of God, they will eventually lead others into the same ditch that they themselves are heading into.

That happened during my early years of Christianity. The pastor kept his eyes more on the blessings of the covenant rather than the Blessor. He led a very elaborate lifestyle that was obtained from believing and acting on the covenant promises of God, yet he was void of the revelation of God’s character and began to drift into error. He eventually stood before his congregation and stated that he did not want to live any longer with his wife who bore his children. He told the people if they did not approve, they could leave. He then married a young, energetic, and ambitious woman who was in ministry as well. She became a great snare to his life. His church dwindled from thousands to hundreds, with many shipwrecked and out of the church. He eventually divorced again and sold the church to the city.

Moses knew what had transformed his life: his encounter and intimate fellowship with the living God. He knew where to lead the people. It was not directly to the promises; it was to the only One who would truly satisfy. He recognized his purpose for being created and realized the need to find the heart of God. His heart was not revealed in God’s hand of blessing; it was revealed from hearing God’s words face-to-face.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**J**ohn Bevere is the best-selling author of several books, including *The Bait of Satan*, *The Fear of the Lord*, and *Thus Saith the Lord?* John and his wife, Lisa, a best-selling author as well, founded John Bevere Ministries in 1990. Since that time the ministry has grown into a multifaceted international outreach that includes a weekly television broadcast, *The Messenger*. John ministers in conferences and churches both nationally and internationally. He and Lisa reside in Colorado with their four sons.