

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES


Insights

The Way to a New Life
MAY / JUNE 2013

BLINDSIDED
BY BETRAYAL

THE TALE *of* TWO MEN

— Help when hope fades



HE *restores* MY SOUL

BY DR. DENNIS BURKE

There is help when hope fades.

IN THE EARLY 1990s, A DISTURBING REALIZATION HIT ME BY SURPRISE.

I had been ministering in the work God called Vikki and me to fulfill since January 1979. We were traveling the world, watching as God did so many amazing things through us. Our first step into our calling had occurred long before this season of ministry. Only

next thing that came out of my mouth shocked us both. I replied, “Well, that’s great to hear, because I don’t feel like I am having any impact at all.”

There it was — a window into my own soul to reveal the sense of failure that lay hidden within. Feelings

of discouragement rushed into my soul. I felt like I was failing both my calling and my Lord.

My friend prayed for me then,

but I knew I needed to look deeply at my own discouragement and find out what was going on. Over the following weeks, my eyes were opened to the attack I had been enduring unaware. The hope, the effectiveness, and the future of my calling were slipping away, and I had to do something about it.

In Ephesians 1:18 (*Message*), Paul wrote about this calling: “Your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for Christians.”

After walking with God for more than 20 years and being deeply involved in ministry for most of that time, I felt weak. This is not supposed to happen to a man who ministers the Good News of Jesus’ victory over the devil. At least, that’s what I thought. But it had happened.

The Holy Spirit was so gracious to me. Instead of being harsh or condemning, He was ready to lift me to

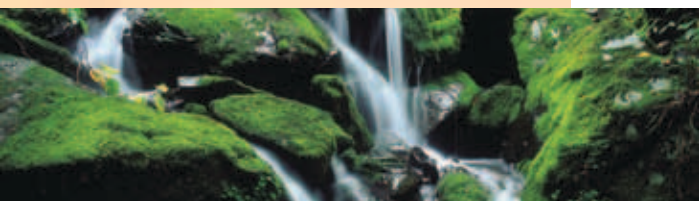
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weeks after Vikki and I married on June 23, 1973, we became the youth ministers at a thriving church in Southern California.

Having had these many years of experience in ministering God’s message of faith and grace to multitudes, I thought I was in a good place in my spiritual walk. Yet on this particular day while talking with another minister, I was hit with the truth. I was losing the hope of my calling.

My friend had simply commented to me that he had been in many of the same churches where I had been ministering in various parts of the country. He commented to me, “Dennis, everywhere I have been going, I’m hearing about the great impact you’re having.” It was such an encouraging thing to hear.

But it didn’t strike me as encouraging at all. In fact, the



the place I belonged and then made me even stronger than I'd ever been.

There were many things the Holy Spirit reestablished in me in those days. He took me back to King David's life, and through the light of the way David received from God, I saw myself regain the ground I had lost.

Many times the shepherd-king had experienced God's work to restore him. When he doubted himself as he faced Saul's assaults, God came to his aid. When David sinned and faced his darkest days, God's light and revelation came to him and put him back on his feet.

The shepherd-king knew God was also a Shepherd who would care for His sheep. When David wrote the beloved Psalm 23, he eloquently expressed the fullness of God's grace and compassion on the highest level. In this psalm, David revealed a side of God as only a shepherd could.

One line stood out to me as I faced my own dark days. It is in verse 3: *He restores my soul.*

When we think of restoring a piece of furniture, a motorcycle, or an old car, we typically plan to see it looking again just

as it did when it was new by bringing it back to its original beauty and condition.

With God it's different. He isn't working in our lives to restore us to a place we once were. His Word is working in us to bring us to a place we have never been before. *We are being restored to God's original intention for people.*

When God restores us, He returns us to His thoughts of our authority, His life of love, His peace and His abundance. He is restoring people to His fullness.

David's experience as a shepherd gave him keen insight and an ideal picture of God's way of restoring, because often the manner in which a shepherd takes care of sheep can well describe God's way of restoring us.

I once read the description of a man who spent considerable time shepherding in Africa. He described how, from time to time, one of his sheep would wander off from the flock and get itself into desperate trouble.

Sheep face an odd danger that makes them especially vulnerable. They are not only defenseless against predators and in need of their shepherd's protection, but even their own recklessness can turn deadly. And in the African heat, it may

take only hours.

As a wandering sheep grazes and becomes full, it will look for a place to lie down. If the sheep happens to make its resting place on uneven ground, it sometimes accidentally rolls onto its back as it lies down — and is then unable to right itself!

There it lies with legs pointing to the sky, and no amount of straining or wiggling will free it from this predicament. The sheep is in a "cast-down" position, and now the clock is ticking. Of course, it is utterly defenseless if a predator finds it. But there is also the danger of heat on the plains of Africa. With the sheep's stomach full, the heat can so expand the undigested grass that it can literally die from this alone — and in only a few hours.

The shepherd knows the terrible dangers this wayward sheep faces and moves quickly to find it. When he does, he quickly and gently stands the animal upright and restores it to the flock.

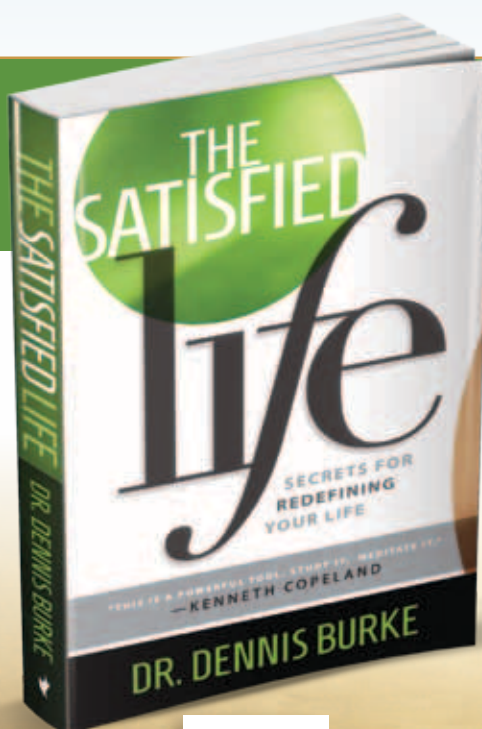
This rescue is a beautiful picture of our Shepherd restoring our souls. Too often we can find ourselves in a position from which we cannot seem to right ourselves. We are in a cast-down position, and we need our Shepherd to come quickly.

The Lord is our Shepherd, and He will restore us to experience our greatest victories.

When I took a fresh hold of my Shepherd, He brought me back to the hope of my calling. He reminded me of His love and care. He renewed my joy in Him, and I saw again how rich I was just to know Him and to be His child.

In these days when there are so many reasons to be distracted and filled with anxiety about the things happening around us, we can tend to get overwhelmed. Refocusing on Jesus will always bring the best results. So set your affections and interest on Him again. Let His love and grace fill you fresh and anew. As you do, I am confident you'll find the Shepherd's hand setting you up on your feet again.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures come from the New King James Version.



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a secret struggle taking place all around us. Unfulfilled dreams, past events, current circumstances, or opinions of others define many lives and control their destiny.

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BLINDSIDED BY BETRAYAL: THE TALE *of* TWO MEN

BY VIKKI BURKE

Most of us have at one time or another been blindsided by betrayal. We're running our spiritual race, giving our all for Jesus, when some insult or injustice knocks us off course. Best case scenario, we stagger around nursing our wounds for a while and then manage to go on. Worst case, we lose our way altogether, fail to get back on track again, and wind up falling permanently short of our God-ordained destiny.

We'd all like to believe the latter could never happen to us. But this is the truth: It can happen to anybody. In fact, the devil is planning on it. He's always plotting his ambushes. He's setting up strategies designed to derail every one of us. Jesus warned us about it in Luke 17:1:



But here's the shocking truth: Benedict Arnold started out as

go sprawling. We'll be sure-footed enough to stay upright and keep on running.

"Well, I think I'm pretty well-prepared," you might say. "I know the Bible says we're not supposed to get offended. So whenever somebody hurts my feelings I just tell myself to get over it."

I'll be honest with you, that doesn't cut it. When you're reeling from the pain of mistreatment it's not enough just to smack yourself with the command, "Thou shalt not be offended."

Sometimes you need something more.

And, I'm glad to say,

the Scriptures provide it. They're full of stories, examples, and instructions that can help you recover when your heart has been wounded. They provide wisdom that can help protect you so that you don't have to be blindsided by such wounds again...and again...and again.

God knows, even if we don't, this is serious business. An offense can cause genuine harm. We tend to forget that because the word offense is tossed around so casually. But according to the dictionary, *to offend* means *to violate*,

transgress against, attack, or assault; to hurt, anger, shock, and cause to stumble. You might as well tell a cancer patient to "just get over it" as to say to someone who has experienced such things to simply ignore them and go on.

Actually, the Greek word used in the New Testament for offense is: *skandalon*. It refers to a snare, something that trips up or lures into sin. In a literal, physical sense, it can refer to a trap-stick.

What, exactly, is a trap-stick? According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it's *the movable stick or trigger of a trap, an impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall*. I envision it as the stick used to prop up a cage so that when an animal touches it, the cage drops and becomes a prison.

That's a perfect picture of the snares Satan sets up for us as believers. He baits us with hurts, betrayals, and injustices. Then he endeavors to trap us with our own reactions. Exploiting our pain, anger, shock, and disappointment, he trips us into saying or doing something we shouldn't. That's when the cage falls and he says:

Gotcha!

Thank God, when we do stumble into such snares Jesus makes a way of escape. Better yet, we can avoid the trap altogether when we identify the danger before we trip the trigger so that we can live free all the time.

The life of Benedict Arnold provides us with a lesson of how the devil uses hurt and betrayal to ensnare us. Ever heard of him? You have if you've ever studied American history. He was the infamous traitor who betrayed his nation during the Revolutionary war. His name is so synonymous with betrayal that for years children have used his name as a byword, accusing disloyal playmates of being "*Benedict Arnolds*."

That's a terrible legacy! But here's the shocking truth: Benedict Arnold started out as a hero, as a man with a glorious destiny.

The facts of his life leave no doubt about it. In the early years of the

- » "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come" (NASB).
- » "Temptations (snares, traps set to entice to sin) are sure to come" (AMP).
- » "Hard trials...are bound to come" (The Message).

If we're smart, we'll arm ourselves in advance with the wisdom of God so we won't be caught off guard when something or somebody slaps us in the face. We'll strap on our scriptural track shoes now so that down the road, when we're sprinting along and the devil tries to trip us, we won't



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a hero, as a man with a glorious destiny. 

revolutionary era his reputation for valor and brilliance on the battlefield rivaled that of George Washington's. He was admired throughout the colonies. He spent his own money to help finance the American cause and fought with such ferocity he earned the nickname "America's Hannibal."

As an officer in the Colonial Army, Benedict Arnold led his troops to seemingly impossible victories. The evidence of God's hand of protection upon him was undeniable: Horses were shot out from under him. Enemy fire ripped holes in his uniform and left him unscathed. When he did suffer life-threatening wounds, he survived against all odds and courageously rejoined the war.

But then the offenses came. Not petty ones. Not minor irritations. Real, heart-wrenching betrayals and injustices: A fellow officer stole the credit for one of his greatest military triumphs while Arnold, unable to set the record straight, lay helpless in the hospital. Then Congress compounded the insult by promoting five other officers—all Arnold's juniors—to higher ranks while

sympathize with Arnold's pain. He'd suffered similar injustices from the very same people. While he poured out his life for his country, his nation's leaders had repeatedly undermined him: They created a "Board of War," and staffed it with jealous politicians who over-ruled him at every turn. They refused him aid when he most needed it. They criticized him. They questioned his fitness to command. Some even called openly for his removal.

When you compare Washington's story to Arnold's, you have to ask: Why, after facing such similar mistreatment, did the two men turn out so differently?

This answer is simple. Arnold took the devil's bait.

He let his pain ferment into bitterness. He let it agitate him until he became a turncoat. Determined to right the wrongs he'd suffered and reclaim the rewards he'd been denied, Benedict Arnold tripped the devil's trap-stick.

When he did, the cage fell. His destiny collapsed in ruins. So instead of finishing his race as a hero, he spent his dying days as a broken man and an

exiled traitor. History records that he died with his war-worn Continental Army coat draped around his shoulders. "Let me die in this old uniform in which I

fought my battles," he said as his life slipped away. "May God forgive me for wearing any other."

George Washington's story, of course, ended with far greater glory. But it could have been otherwise. Washington's legacy, too, could have been destroyed by Benedict Arnold. After all, Arnold was among Washington's most trusted friends. Washington had believed in him and supported him for years. When Congress passed over Arnold for promotion, Washington came to his defense. He sent

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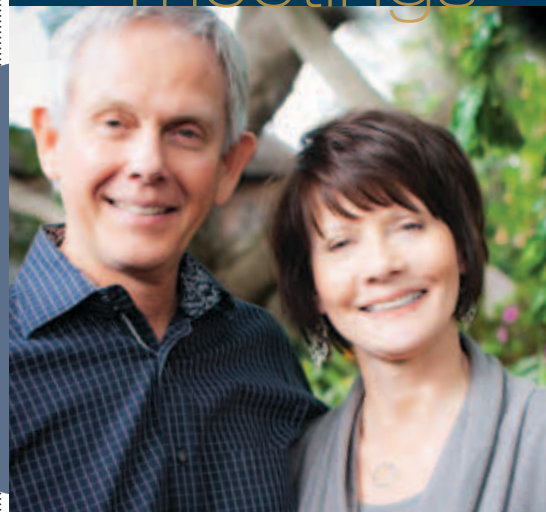
ignoring his accomplishments and leaving his status unchanged.

Arnold left no doubt about how such slights affected him. He wrote about them plainly in a letter to his friend and commander, General George Washington. "Having made every sacrifice of fortune and blood and become a cripple in the service of my country, I little expected to see the ungrateful returns I have received from my countrymen," he said.

No doubt, Washington could

upcoming meetings

dennis & vikki burke



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(661) 645-3822

May 7-8

Firebaugh Faith Fellowship
355 Highway 33
Firebaugh, CA 93622
(559) 659-2571

May 19

Living Word Christian Center
7600 W Roosevelt Rd
Forrest Park, IL 60130
(708) 659-5000

May 26

Word of Life Christian Center
3100 19th St NW
Rochester, MN 55903
(507) 271-2328

June 1-6

Victory Life Centre
1 Neil St
Osborne Park 6017 Western Australia
61-8-9209-7111

June 7-9

Rhema Family Church
16 Queens Rd
Slack Creek Queensland 4127 Australia
61-732-086-640

June 21-23

The Word Church
1802 49th Ave
Lloydminster, SASK S9V 1T2 Canada
(306) 825-9673

a letter of petition on Arnold's behalf. "Surely a more active, a more spirited and sensible officer fills no department in your army," he wrote.

Yet Arnold repaid his friend's faithfulness with treachery. He used the position Washington had given him as commander over the fort at West Point to commit treason. When Washington received the news he wept over the betrayal as though his heart would break. "Whom can we trust now?" he cried.

Washington's faith in God could have sustained a mortal wound at that moment. That was the devil's clear intent. But General Washington didn't take the bait. He made that clear just a few months later. As he watched his troops file past him at Vails Gate, New York, he turned to a fellow patriot who had seen his anguish the day he'd gotten word about Arnold.

"I know the answer to that question now," he said. "*Whom can we trust now?* The Invisible Hand...We can always trust in the Invisible Hand."

These two men, these two destinies, are worth remembering because, as one author so aptly put it, they represent:

One invaluable lesson for today: Always be on guard. It's easy to let seemingly mundane annoyances pile up until they boil over...Always be on guard. George Washington was; Benedict Arnold was not. One is now a national hero; one is now a national disgrace."¹

Be on guard.

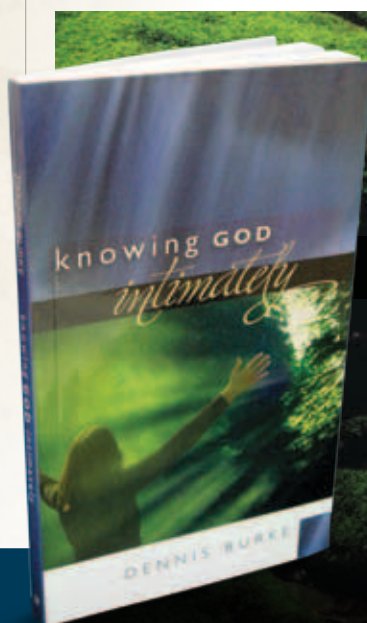
Today more than ever we need to pay attention to that warning. We're living in a time when offense is on the increase. The traps of mistreatment that destroy destinies is on the rise.

It's not unexpected. The Bible said it would happen. Jesus told us that in the last days "you will hear of wars and rumors of wars...For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places." (Sounds like the six o'clock news, doesn't it?) "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another." (Matthew 24:6, 7, 10, *NKJV*).

Many will be offended. It's a sad statement but it's true. In our day, many will stumble over the traps Satan so skillfully set. But you don't have to be among them. Instead, you can strip the devil of the one thing he depends on to make his traps effective: the element of surprise. You can uncover what he's up to and see exactly

how to thwart his plan. Once you're equipped to counter his strategies with the wisdom of God's Word, you'll be able to keep on running even when others trip around you.

You'll be able to say with well-founded confidence, "No one will ever steal my destiny."



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