

MOVING TOWARDS THE DARKNESS

Dr. Steve McEvoy

For years the Holy Spirit has been speaking and preparing the church for something new. He has been changing our understanding of the role the church is to play in the communities and nations in which we live. We have been hearing the voice and heartbeat of God sowing into the wineskin of the church which is being prepared for something different. Rumbblings of change are being heard and new expectations are forming. I firmly believe that what the Holy Spirit has been speaking is actually beginning to be the thing that He is now doing. The season has changed, and something new is now taking place. If this is true, then what type of activity can we expect to see that may be different than in times past?

Understanding the Wineskin

Jesus spoke an important kingdom principle when He said,

Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.

Matthew 9:17

When Jesus spoke these words, He was referring to Himself as the new wine. He was also referring to the systems that the religious leaders were serving. The systems and structures of His day could not hold the new wine of what He was doing and was about to do after paying for the sin of man.

It is essential that we understand the principle of the wineskin and how it applies to the church. Historically, a wineskin had two options for its fate. After it was emptied, it would either be discarded or go through a rigorous process of preparation to be used again. In the context of the life of the church, this principle must be applied very carefully. Certainly, there have been movements in history

that were blessed of God but seem to have lost their relevance in the present. There will be times when the Holy Spirit will make it abundantly clear that things are to be removed or laid down.

This is where we gain insight from the wineskin. I am leaving out much of the historical process of preparing a wineskin for new wine, but I want to focus on the aspect of the oiling of the skin. In order to handle new wine, the skin had to be repeatedly oiled to soften and prepare it. Here is an interesting fact. At a point in the wineskin's history, both the wine and the wineskin were new. In application, the wineskin that is now old and hard does not necessarily mean that something or someone is hardened in a rebellious way. It simply means that it grew hard by containing the only thing that it knew. It was designed to hold the wine of its day. It means that in its current condition of being old and hard, it cannot handle new wine. If the new was poured into the old, then the old would be destroyed and the new would be lost as well.



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Keeping the analogy of the wineskin in mind, it is easy to become critical of things that we perceive are old. Even though it is true that the Holy Spirit may be doing something new, He was the author of many things that we would consider 'the old'.

Even though something new may be coming from the heart of God, He still has love towards the old. This is true despite the fact that He may be initiating the changes. It doesn't mean that change isn't important, it simply sobers us with grace towards things that we want changed when we realize that, at some point in history, they were birthed as something new from the heart of God.

In the context of the era that Jesus was in, He was the transition from a law system that had been birthed by God to a new system of grace that also was about to be birthed by God. Both were from Him. In fairness to the religious leaders of Jesus' day, they were serving something that had generations of history and had been birthed by God Himself. They were ingrained in this system and it was all they knew. Some were hard because all they knew was the old and it would take time to recognize the new. Others were hard because, within their heart, they had an agenda to serve themselves and they were far away from the Kingdom of God.

We must use wisdom as we study and seek to apply this amazing kingdom principle. If we feel that we are seeing and walking in the new, we should remind ourselves that much of what we perceive to be old was once new and birthed by God Himself. In various ways, we have all been affected by something 'old' that was working to prevent something 'new' from emerging within our life or the life of the church. It is imperative that we move into God's 'new' as healed and whole people and look upon what we consider to be the old with eyes of grace and love. It is imperative that we move into the new without criticism or anger towards the old, even when hurt resulted as others and the systems they represent

worked to prevent God's new from emerging through our lives. God loves those who still cling to the only thing that they know. The hard wineskin only represents rebellion when someone refuses to consider that God may be the author of some new things.

Recognizing Confusion

A challenge in the process of a wineskin being prepared for new wine is a misunderstanding of the season that we are in. Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. When He begins the process of preparation by oiling some current hardness in our lives, we actually begin to see something new on the horizon, even while restrained to live in the old. This can create confusion. While we are being prepared for the new, we are still in something that is considered old. But because we see the new, we interpret that this is where we actually are to be now. This can give birth to striving and struggling to be in a place that, in the present season, the Holy Spirit is still preparing us for.



Many of us have made mistakes in our decision making process. We have seen enough of what lies ahead to grow discontented in our present place, circumstances or structure. We can easily misinterpret what God is doing and presumptuously put ourselves in a new season that has not yet been birthed within us, or in the body of Christ. In fact, this can slow down our process or even cause us to miss our destination entirely.

God will prepare us for the new before He leads us into the new. If this preparation is not achieved and we move ourselves into something new ahead of God's schedule, we will have to start the process all over again. You have probably heard the metaphor of "going around the mountain again". This can define our life. Instead of receiving what God is

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doing to prepare us for something new, we get disgruntled and presumptuously move ourselves into something new ahead of God's timeline.



Here is where I see us currently. The Holy Spirit has been speaking and confirming that we have entered a new season. Prophetically speaking, the Holy Spirit has been increasing His intensity in applying His oil to the lives of people and the body of Christ as a whole. He has been getting ready those who are hearing and are responsive for a new season.

I believe that what we have been seeing and hearing is now beginning to take its form and shape. We have left a restrained season and entered into a 'God is beginning to now do it' season. In this hour, a new wineskin is being revealed that many have been prepared to move into.

An Interesting Word

I want to share an excerpt from a book by Kris Vallotton called, "Heavy Rain". Kris shared an amazing word from the Lord that I believe speaks into the hour towards which many individuals are being moved by the Holy Spirit. As he was preparing to speak, he received this word:

"Prophesy to the class before you preach to them. What is the word You want me to share?" I inquired. 'The season has changed and it requires a new prophetic mascot. The prophetic mascot for this hour is no longer the eagle; it's the owl. The owl is nocturnal, so it is designed to live in the night, see through the darkness and knows who's who. It's the symbol of wisdom, and it feasts on rats, rodents and snakes'.

I came to the pulpit and prophesied this word to our students as the class listened intently. Just as I finished my declaration, worship leader Jenn Johnson

rushed to the front and excitedly took the microphone. 'A student was driving home recently and there was an owl in the middle of the road that wouldn't move. He finally got out of his car, picked it up and brought it home with him', she proclaimed, almost jumping out of her skin. 'I just called him, and he is bringing the owl to class today'.



The next day, my son Jason, and I flew to Los Angeles to work out a business deal with Ahmad Givens. In the midst of working out the details of our business transaction, the Lord suddenly gave me a word for Ahmad. I was a little nervous to share it with him because I had never met him before and with our attorney present, the timing seemed a bit strange. I decided to go for it anyway: 'Excuse me, Ahmad, God gave me a prophetic word for you and I don't think I can continue this meeting without giving it to you.'

He looked a little stunned but asked me to continue. 'The Lord showed me that you are a young prophet called to minister in the deepest, darkest places in society. In fact, your calling is so powerful that the Lord had to rescue you from death in your mother's womb. Lately, He tells me that you know what that sign is,' I proclaimed.

Ahmad interrupted me before I could continue. 'I almost died in my mother's womb from a disease,' he said. 'The doctors said I am a walking miracle'. As he shared these words with us he was choking back tears.

'As to the sign you spoke of, three times in the last two months, white owls have swooped down on me, almost hitting me, in three different cities'. He turned to his manager and said, 'Steve dude, you were there twice, right?' 'Yeah, dude, it freaked me out,' Steve testified.



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Maybe the most amazing thing about this story is that I had not yet told Ahmad about the owl word that I had given the day before in the school”.

Kris Vallotton – Heavy Rain (pages 93-94)

This is an amazing story that carries some important prophetic insight into what the Holy Spirit is saying and doing in the lives of the children of God. In October of 2012, I was invited to participate in a



retreat with other leaders. I felt prompted to take Kris’ book on the trip and to read it a second time. As I spent time alone enjoying reading the book, I came to this point in Kris’ message regarding the owl as the

new mascot. I recalled reading the story in a past season, but the reality of its truth had not penetrated my mind. I read it again as if for the first time. I was struck by the revelation of what the Lord had been saying and doing in my life for many years. Then, I had an amazing experience.

I left my room to go eat a meal with other leaders. Part way through the meal, I noticed a leader on the other side of the table looking through a large pile of photographs. I was surprised at what I thought I was seeing from across the table. Upon inquiry, I was told this story. One of the kitchen staff owns a nearby farm and they have a family of owls that live there. A major international photography magazine found out about this and received permission to photograph these owls. They said to the woman, “As a thank you, we want you to look through these photographs and pick a single one that we will blow up as a large picture for your wall”. This leader was looking through these sample photos.

When I acquired the stack, I was surprised to see at least fifty different photos of several white owls in absolutely amazing real life scenes. I took a photo of one of the pictures with my phone and since that day, I have a beautiful picture of a white owl in

mid-flight as the phone background. This prophetic sign is now on my phone as a regular reminder of this truth. So, what is the coincidence that I would be prompted to bring this book and read it for a second time. Then, after just finishing this portion concerning the owl story, realize that I was being struck by the Holy Spirit with a fresh word. Then proceed to a meal and encounter a stack of photos of beautiful white owls from a nearby farm.

Clearly the Holy Spirit was speaking.

Before I share some insight into what I believe He is saying, let me remind you about the wine-skin principle. Here is an example of how the Holy Spirit will meet us in the familiarity of what we know and then apply His oil to prepare us for something new. In reality, the Holy Spirit had been oiling me for many years concerning this amazing revelation through the owls. My mind had been challenged again and again as the Holy Spirit worked to align me to fully embrace what He wanted to do. I was still living in a season of Him speaking but ‘not yet fully doing’. I was just closer to convergence and birthing point of the new than ever before. As I mentioned already, this is where we can become confused and frustrated. As we are more and more prepared to handle something new, the current wineskin in which we live becomes more and more intolerable. It is somewhere along this journey that we can make big presumptive mistakes and assume that we are to jump ahead, but in the end, never be ready for the new.

However, I believe that the Holy Spirit has moved many of us into a new season. If we submitted to Him in the past season, then we will now enter more easily and fully into the new.



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What is He saying?



For years, I have struggled in my functional role on the inside of the church. While certain aspects of my gifts and callings had and still have fulfillment here, there was a growing discontentment in my current place. Many years ago, I had a heart that yearned

to engage the marketplace and interact with non-believers in spheres outside of the local church.

While the prophetic word of the owl is a word to the whole church, the Holy Spirit was confirming for me a long arduous journey.

I lived with internal expectations of what serving God looked like. Because I am gifted to teach, it seemed like the only true expression of that gift was teaching the Word of God. The mindset within myself, and reinforced by others, kept me trapped in a prison of partial alignment to how God had truly designed me.

When we look at Jesus, we see him often healing the sick or doing some notable miracle and then speak about the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17, 23-25). He fixed problems and then explained that this is the kingdom of God making contact with the earth. He didn't just teach the Word, He was the Word. Everything that came out of His mouth reflected truth from heaven's perspective. He is the model for us. He entered into the problems of humanity and brought answers from a heavenly place.

With this in mind, He taught His disciples and, in turn, is teaching us to pray in like manner. He said, **"Thy Kingdom Come"** (Matthew 6:10). In the Greek, the literal word order reads **"Come! Thy Kingdom!"** The word **"come"** is an imperative. Jesus is saying that our praying is to assertively bring the kingdom of God into earth's existence. To do this, we have to get close to something that needs to be changed by the kingdom of God. This is not just a prayer that we pray from a distance and hope that it lands on

something and produces change. No, this is prayed right in the midst of something that needs the kingdom of God to invade and change it. We have to get close to problems and become the kingdom vehicles to fix it.

For years, the church has built its success around itself. It has exuded a mindset that it is successful if there is great attendance to its programs. In part, this is essential, but it is not what Jesus did. The church is essential for the development and health of the believer. We can't ignore that. But what goal did Jesus have in mind? His goal is that, as believers, we enter the business sphere, educational sphere, government sphere and so on and bring the kingdom of God into those spheres. When we do, we are privately and assertively praying the kingdom of God into the midst of the place in which we have been sent.

While many from the past wineskin of the church are trying to hold on to programs and structures that we feel indicate success, the Holy Spirit is emphasizing a new word. It is not a new word to God; it is just new in light of where we have been living as God's people. We are called to be a bunch of owls and to get into the dark. Where is this? It isn't in our church meetings, but the spheres into which God wants to send us.

Years ago, I worked very hard in building new structures in our church. Many hours were spent meeting privately with people (especially emerging leaders) and it appeared that some amazing new things were emerging. During this season, I was given a word that I was going back to the basement and that there was a crack in my foundation.

This was a word with spiritual application for my life. In the natural, we had a long standing leak, and discovered a crack in our foundation. Our basement ended up being taken over by mould. We lost about 95% of our possessions and a lot of money was spent to fix





the problem. In the midst of it all, April was hospitalized and was on the verge of death as a result of the mould attacking her body. While this was happening, it seemed that everything that I had worked towards in the church also came crumbling down. I lost everything. Let's just say, "It was terrible". April and I ended up moving into the basement and literally went back to the basement as a place to live.

What was God doing? While He was not the author of all those circumstances, His voice became loud and clear. I was building from a wrong foundation. I was trying to find the expressions of my gifts entirely in the context of the church. However, as the owl story reveals, God had different plans for my life and for the lives of others as well. Everything that I built was lost because He was changing my mindset to understand where He wanted to reveal Himself through my gifts and my life as a whole.

Like it or not, we are being pushed towards the darkness.

Where Does the Light Shine?

Prophetically speaking, Isaiah prophesied about this day coming. He said,

- 1. Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the Glory of the Lord has risen upon you.***
- 2. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you and His Glory will appear upon you.***
- 3. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.***

Isaiah 60:1-3

This is an amazing insight into the plans that God has for the church. There is a place for the gathering of God's people and I am not dismissing this. But the

Holy Spirit has been oiling and preparing many of us to shake off old mindsets of what religious success looks like. For many, that old mindset was that success is defined by how many Bible studies, small groups, or other church meetings we attend. Just like in Jesus' day, when He appeared, the old structure could not handle the new. What was the new? He was the new. No structure or program can hold Jesus and the fullness of His present activity upon the earth.

May I suggest to you that there is a new definition of success that the 'owl mascot' gives us insight into! As was reported in that prophetic word, the owl goes into the night, the dark places and fulfills its design. This is a symbol or a sign of what we see in the Word of God and in the life of Jesus Himself. Religious success in part needs to be defined in some new ways. Here are some evaluative questions:

- What problems exist in the world that you have been designed to fix?
- What current system or structure exists that you are called to change?
- What person or people, currently living in darkness, are you being moved upon to get close to and begin to bring the light into their midst?

It is essential that we see that the gifts in our lives are meant to move us to places where we fix problems that exist on the earth. This positions us to allow the light of God to shine in such a way that we can ultimately point people to their need for Jesus Himself. These questions are meant to point us outward into the places where it is dark, and not inward within the church where the light is already shining.



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If you look closely at Jesus' life, you will notice that He went about 'fixing and changing problems'. Everything He did was to bring heaven's perspective of truth and existence into this earthly perspective and system. Religious success for many years has been defined by church

programs. I believe that success in this new hour will be defined by what places of darkness have been changed by the light.

For years, I have been pulled upon to be more and more involved on the inside of the local church. This came from the simple deduction that if I am called of God, then this must mean that my gifts are to function within the internal context of the local church. While I may still be called to the local church and the Body of Christ as a whole, I now have a new lens. God has called me (and you) to bring His gifts to the dark places and not just to places where the light is already shining. Now, I am moved by problems in the lives of leaders in the world and I want to bring the kingdom of God into their midst. I can't do that unless I get close to those who are living in the dark. I have to make a choice that says, 'The darkness is not my enemy or that which I run from, actually, it is what I am being moved to'.

Is it possible that you are presently holding on dearly to something that was, in the past season, new wine in a new wineskin? But over time, you've gotten hard in your familiarity, comfort and even your definition of what it means to be successful before God. If what you are trying to achieve seems to come to nothing, or simply keeps falling apart, perhaps this is a sign that you are looking in the wrong area of God's intention for your life.

I worked privately with a leader in a significant secular position. Much of his career was over, but he shared with me a profound thing. After sitting under some of my teaching, he said, "Steve, for the first time in my life I have come to realize that my

gifts and callings have designed me to be right where I am positioned in my life". He proceeded to tell me that at the advanced stage of his career, he was praying the following prayer for the first time in his life: "God, show me how You want to release Your kingdom through my life right where I am". That is amazing. After so many years, he caught it and recognized that the current place of darkness was exactly where God wanted him to be.

I have a word for many reading this article. **Stop running away from what God is trying to turn you towards.** The church system has worked hard to get us to be scared of being in the world. We have been programmed to run from it as if it is the enemy and the thing to avoid at all costs. But, Isaiah prophesied that **"darkness will cover the earth"**. Do you see any darkness around you? Absolutely! It is everywhere.

But Isaiah went on to say, **"But the Lord will rise upon you, and His Glory will appear upon you"**. This is not hidden away in a bedroom somewhere or in a special church meeting. This is right in the midst of darkness. This is God's Glory manifesting in our lives and moving in and through us to become an answer to problems that exist within the world in which we live. In my grandfather's generation, the message was loud and clear. It was, 'get out of the world and get into a church'. The church was afraid of the world and believers were told to run fast and far from it. Now, technology, policies, laws, etc. are owned and controlled by darkened man and the church of the current day cries out against the laws that are wrong. We are reaping now what was sown in past generations. Many years later and after much oiling, a new message is arising in this hour that we are a bunch of owls called to get into the darkness where God intends to shine His light. This is massive change from the previous generations for this present generation.



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The wealth and power of the systems of the earth have been held by people who live in darkness. I believe that we have entered the season where God is raising up believers who will arise and be



successful agents of change in the dark places of the earth. What may start with a radical few will result in a massive movement in the days ahead. Will you participate in God's call to get into dark places so that He can shine His light through you into the world?

I repeat my word, **"Stop running away from what God is trying to turn you towards"**. You are called to be like the owl that is designed for the darkness and not to simply hide out where there is light.

There are times when the Holy Spirit will call us to have fresh encounters with Him as we gather with other believers. That is wonderful and very important in our journey. But, it is a mistake when the church memorializes these moments and chooses to camp there, thinking that this is the "now plan" of God for our lives.

Wrong! We are designed to encounter more and more of His Glory and then back to the darkness we go. The world is desperate for the Light that is in our lives.

Have you had the mindset that you have to stay distant from the world? Have you struggled with the thought that you are only successful if you are doing something that is defined by 'ministry'? Your ministry and my ministry are to change the world. We help it to conform to heaven and its plan. We change policies and structures. We find problems and bring solutions. In one way or another, we are called to enter into the midst of darkness and become an answer. As we do this, we gain an audience with people who will then look to us for the **ULTIMATE ANSWER**. We know His name is Jesus. I am thoroughly convinced that our ability to

effectively proclaim Jesus to the hearts of people will come as we reveal the Glory of God into dark places. When I answer a problem, I am positioned to become a solution to a much greater need.

As a child I had a dream of being a firefighter. Being raised in the city of Toronto, I did not know that there were volunteer firefighters. As I became aware that God had a calling upon my life, I went off to Bible College and Seminary. At the same time, I was chasing fire trucks and finding myself at fire after fire. I hate being late. But if I saw smoke, I did a U-turn and ended up sometimes ahead of the Fire Department without regard to the fact that I was late for my appointment.

After April and I moved to Truro, Nova Scotia, a friend encouraged me to join the volunteer Fire Department. First, I had to figure out what that was. Then I had an immense struggle. Why? Because I was 'called' of God! My ministry was to teach God's Word and somehow do all the internal things expected in the church.

I fought a ridiculous major mental battle to even apply to volunteer. Then, after applying and being accepted, I struggled to engage and really be part of the team. How crazy is this. After chasing so many fire trucks and landing at so many emergency situations, I was now on the inside and able to fulfill my dream but finding myself paralyzed!

It took me years to undo old mindsets that somehow this was not considered as serving God. Eventually I broke free, but I fought a nasty battle to get there. Finally, I am an



owl and I am called to be an answer in the midst of darkness. Every time the pager goes off, I am praying as I proceed to the fire hall. What do you think I am praying? I am praying, **"Come, Kingdom of God!"** How does the kingdom come? It comes through you and me bringing Him into dark situations. This is Jesus in action. Now, with joy, I can tell you that I

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have had my hands on many people in terrible situations and had the opportunity to speak and pray life into the midst of death. I could tell you story after story. The breakthrough to fulfill this part of my life acted as a door to much more than this volunteer role. Now my life is given over to this wonderful truth that is portrayed by the owl. This is why the enemy fought me with my own mindsets. And he has fought you as well.

We are all designed, in some unique way, to bring the light into the darkness. This means that we are all designed to find ourselves in some way in the midst of this darkness.

Don't miss the Glory of God over your life. It is ready to manifest in the midst of the darkness, not necessarily in the midst of the light. You are an owl and the darkness is waiting for the light that is in your life. We are in a new season and the Holy Spirit is pushing us into dark places. Are you ready and willing? It is time to go.



Steve's Firefighter life



Dr. Steve McEvoy has his doctorate in Leadership and Organizational Development.



- Through his apostolic teaching ministry, Steve assists leaders in the church in *“helping activate their people in fulfilling the calling of God on their lives”*.
- In the marketplace, he works alongside Government, Business and Education leaders and influences them in applying kingdom principles of leadership within their organizations. Steve *“assists marketplace leaders in creating a corporate ‘Who Am I Culture’”* in their current position of leadership.

To learn more about what Dr. Steve offers visit his websites at:

www.stevemcevoyministries.org

www.whoamiculture.ca

