

# THINGS I'VE LEARNED

By Pete Beck Jr.

## INTRODUCTION

To give a proper perspective, I need to give you some background before talking about the things I learned the hard way. I was miraculously brought from darkness into light by Christ in 1970. I had an immediate supernatural deliverance from alcoholism. Alcoholics get mad at someone or something, and this time it was my wife. I had been at the beach, drinking and angry and headed back to Charlotte, NC where I had the vestiges of a business. It was late afternoon. As I drove, I continued to drink. Somewhere that night near Charlotte I pulled off for gasoline, and upon trying to get back on the highway, I, for the life of me, could not remember which way to turn to proceed to Charlotte. Finally realizing my condition, I pulled back in and asked for permission to take a little nap and sleep it off. Somewhere in the early morning before dawn, I was awakened by a vision. I saw a pinpoint of light, much as you would see in an ice-skating show when the arena is darkened and the light falls on an individual skater. The light revealed a dark blob which then was hit by something like lightning and in a puff, was gone. In my spirit or soul, I know not which, I knew suddenly that that dark blob was my darkness, selfishness and denial and God had destroyed it and I was free. The problem was me, not my wife or other people or my circumstances, but me.

I drove into Charlotte, phoned AA and went to a meeting that very morning. After that I went faithfully to AA meetings for about a year, always acknowledging God's part in my deliverance. I have never wanted, desired nor had an alcoholic drink in the 52 years since, with the exception of a thimble full of wine at Christian Communion.

I was introduced to the Full Gospel Business Men's' Fellowship and was Baptized with the Holy Spirit. My wife, Jane, and I were part of the Catholic renewal until they felt the need to make our meetings merely a prelude to a Mass with time constraints on us among other things and we decided to separate ourselves.

During the following years I had several visions and occurrences which confirmed me in my calling. For the first time in my life I knew what I was to do. I was to serve and follow Jesus Christ.

One of the first things I experienced was an introduction to the New Testament church vision. My son, Pete Beck III, after graduating from Duke University, where he had been born again and Baptized in the Holy Spirit, moved to Hampton, VA. in order to attend New Covenant Church, pastored by a dear brother named Tom Jones. When I visited New Covenant, I encountered biblical teaching, freedom in the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and a joy and freedom I had not known before. What I experienced there impacted me deeply and resulted in my starting a meeting in my home with other Catholics and a mixture of unchurched people. That meeting in 1972, became Maranatha Church, which grew over the next 22 years to nearly 600 members.

I knew I needed mentors. The Lord said for me to follow that pattern I had seen at New Covenant and attach myself to Tom Jones and learn from him. From there on it has been pioneering ever since.

My earliest and continuing mentors were Tom Jones, Earl Kellum, Apostle to Mexico and Central America, and Costa Deir, International teacher from Elim Fellowship in Lima, New York; all great men who loved the Word and the Church, but who, like myself, were all called by Christ to leave our homes to go we knew not where. We were self-taught in the scriptures and had no formal church training. We were all pioneers. We all learned the hard way, through tribulation and experience. I learned to hear the Holy Spirit and how to minister the gifts, and many excellent things, but unfortunately some things were left missing. I've said many times that if I could go back with what I now know and understand, I would do some things much differently and would do a much better job of setting the prisoners free and binding up the brokenhearted. Alas, that is not possible.

At the suggestion of one of my Pastor friends, Bill Powell, with whom I have had a steady relationship for over forty years, I have written down a few of the things I have learned through experience that I wish I had known sooner. I sincerely hope this effort might help a younger leader avoid some of the mistakes I made and tribulation I caused along the path and make his or her life more fruitful.

I divide this paper into three categories: Church matters, People Problems and Personal Things. I sincerely hope it helps someone.

## SECTION 1 – CHURCH MATTERS

### 1. DON'T BE GLAD TOO SOON.

A lot of prospects for leadership look gifted and good when you first meet them. I have learned that a man's/woman's obedience to the Word is more important than his or her gifts; that the heart and therefore character is more important than gifting or appearance or perhaps even interpretation of doctrine. I am not saying that good doctrine is not important, but I have known men with excellent doctrine whom I would not want on my leadership team because of character or motivational aberrations. Therefore, vetting men and their wives before delegating any authority is vital. I say wives because they are a part of the picture. A wife who does not understand and share in the vision and a have a love for the church can be a thorn in the flesh of her husband and can eventually cause loyalty problems and division. She has a greater influence over her husband than you ever will.

Observe their heart and character. It is easier to lay hands on a person than to un-lay hands. Don't despair if you have made a mistake, even Paul made some errors in discernment (Alexander the Coppersmith and Demas). But if you too often place confidence in people prematurely, it will erode confidence in your personal leadership and discernment.

If you are ever called on to unseat someone who has not worked out after repeated efforts to achieve unity, do it quickly and make sure the church understands (as clearly as possible) what happened and why, so as to prevent undue speculation and rumors. This is especially important if there was hostility involved in the parting of the ways. Infections need to be dealt with speedily. it is better to lose a person or two, than to let a problem fester and produce a root of bitterness that can defile many! I had to learn this the hard way.

### 2. LOYALY IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.

This ties closely with unity, in leadership, that proceeds out of the building of trust relationships. 1 Chron 12:38 emphasizes the need for loyalty to a God-appointed leader in order

for the Kingdom to be advanced. As a called pastor, I once had a vision which my elders bought into and supported. However, I soon found that the way to accomplish the vision might be different in the eyes of one or two. A pastor should be open to dialogue with other opinions his leaders have. He might change his mind, or might not. But after the decision is made, loyalty demands that the time for criticism is over. Church leaders must all swim in the same direction without showing disagreement. It is absolutely vital that loyalty supersede self and disagreement for the sake of the church. We cannot tolerate Absalom standing at the gate and saying, "If I were King, I'd handle this differently."

### 3. NEVER TAKE A LEADER RELATIONSHIP FOR GRANTED.

Proverbs 27:23-24: "Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations."

It is ever so true that little foxes can creep into a vineyard and spoil the grapes (Song 2:15). Even in relatively mature men and women, little offenses can occur without one realizing it. A mature person will come and tell you that they have a growing problem, but many don't do that. If you have discerning you can tell if someone is distancing themselves from you. But you must work at the relationship constantly to discern that. I failed to do that on at least two occasions over the twenty-two years of my lead pastoring and suddenly I saw the damage and could only do damage control. The little fox emerged out of the bushes as a full-grown wolf. If you can possibly do it, I have found that the best time to address a problem is when it is still a little fox. Stay alert. Some are not as mature or forgiving as you might assume them to be. Most strong leaders are aggressive at times and focused on leading and can tend to take their eyes off relationships they thought were secure. Your co-leaders must feel secure in your love for them.

### 4. YOU MUST HEAR GOD CLEARLY BEFORE BORROWING OR SPENDING MONEY.

Debt is the enemy of carrying out the vision. A big mortgage can force you to cut ministry to people and start looking for tithes instead of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Many have become trapped in what I call ABC churches where the subtle change in emphasis becomes

Attendance, Building and Cash. This principle applies also to adding staff where salaries can suddenly become a large part of a budget and crowd out more biblical imperatives. The church is not a business.

Now it is true that sometimes the Holy Spirit will tell you to take a financial risk. That's when it is good to have financial people on board who are spiritual and able to hear God. A pinch-penny sort of thinking can really throw a monkey wrench into efforts to follow God. That is why, I believe, deacons as well as elders are supposed to be full of the Holy Spirit and thus delivered from a spirit of poverty.

#### 5. STICK TO YOUR GOD GIVEN VISION.

It's easy to let a little ambition creep in as you grow and the Lord blesses your efforts. David's vision was the building of the Kingdom of Israel. He took his eyes off the vision and stayed home and looked at Bathsheba and we all know what happened. My (our) vision at Maranatha was worship, missions, the teaching of the word and spiritual life in the church. I saw other churches with grade schools. They seemed to be prospering, and we gave it a try. It turned out that that was not our calling or vision as a church. Galatians 5:20 in the KJV speaks of emulation or copying as being a product of the flesh. The NKJ translates it as jealousy. I look back at that decision to copy and start a church school at Maranatha as a crippling shift that imperiled our basic vision. The Galatians started out well in the Spirit. Getting away from the DNA that Christ set in your church is not smart.

To show you how blind I was, I used 1 Thes 2:14 to justify starting the school. "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus." This scripture does not urge us to copy programs and agendas, but in context to obey Christ in preaching the Gospel and holding fast in persecution.

## 6. CALLINGS ARE SUPERNATURAL AND HAVE EVERYTHING TO DO WITH KINGDOM BUILDING.

If a person is not supernaturally called by God in areas of leadership (Five-Fold Ministry, Eldership and Deaconship) they will not have the gifting and inner strength to finish the course. Many younger people are imbued with what I call a spirit of adventure and a desire to straighten out the world and the church. This is usually flesh. Take your time in evaluating them. If one is really called supernaturally, you'll find you cannot talk him or her out their calling. On the other hand, if you fail to recognize his or her calling, you'll eventually lose them to someone who is able to discern it. Finding the right balance is not easy, but to me is one of our most important jobs as leaders to a future generation.

The missionaries we sent out from Maranatha, with one exception, stayed on the field, bore fruit for many years and far surpassed my expectations. We also started four other churches in our local area. One failed. I now see that the brother, though an excellent man, was not called by Christ to pioneer a church. The other three are still bearing fruit.

## 7. KNOW YOUR CENTERS OF INFLUENCE.

Any church faithful to Christ and His mission will attract demonic attention. When someone starts a rebellion or division in your church or attacks the pastor or the leadership. (and it will surely come) there are two things you better know quickly: how much influence does that person have and who are the centers of influence loyal to you and the vision of the church.

When an infection enters the human body, immediately the body responds by sending white blood cells and t-cells to the spot of infection and kills it. If this doesn't happen, death or necrosis of areas of the body can occur. This is what I call a church split. Make sure your people of positive influence know the source and details of the problem. As the infection begins to spread, these people, like white blood cells in the body, will be able to fight it and isolate it to the few people that might be influenced by the rebel. All elders better be loyal to the vision and to you.

If you are at fault and your action or inattention has caused the problem or insurrection, the above won't help. You must quickly humble yourself and ask forgiveness. Transparency never fails.

## 8. PIONEERS AND SETTLERS.

My wife, Jane, grew up in the southern town of Riderwood, Alabama. Riderwood was a timber and sawmill town of great influence in the early part of the 20th century. There was an accepted proverb among timber people that the man who built the mill could not run it. Pioneers cut paths and build things but very seldom have the God given DNA or people skills to successfully govern the mature operation. They are too impatient for results.

I am a pioneer. I took the church from a small meeting in our home to a congregation of nearly six hundred people. People followed me, God imparted life and vision, and we planted several daughter churches locally.

A pioneer gives his very life into establishing the structure and the framework of vision, but then should move on and turn it over to a settler to handle it properly. A pioneer will always be jumping ahead without realizing the effect this may have in tiring out the flock (See Genesis 33:14 – you can't lead the flock and the little ones too fast or they will die).

I led the church into a world-wide mission vision, took men all over the earth to establish vision, sent out several young lions into the mission field who remained and produced much fruit for the Lord. They gravitated to me because they were also pioneers at heart. Genesis 1:21 says that like produces like, everything after its own kind.

As I concentrated more and more on the mission field, it seemed my favor began to fade. There was an obvious shift as God began to tear away at my grip on the church. I had received several prophecies over the previous years where the Lord was advising me to find a replacement and begin to pass the baton, but I was finally getting a somewhat decent salary



after years of living on the edge and was pretty comfortable. I was 65 and hesitated to step out into the wilderness once again.

I failed to realize that I had the heart of a pioneer, not a settler, and was not equipped to carry the church where it needed to go. I failed to see the issue of my true calling and gifting and heart. I was in a way like King Uzziah who really messed up when he stepped out of his lane in 2 Chron 26 and thought he could perform as a priest. Had I understood this at the time, I could have avoided a lot of heartache for myself and the young man to whom I belatedly passed the baton. It is of the utmost importance to realize when, where and what your limitations are. God had to use events and people to move me out. It was very painful, but turned out to be a blessing for me and the church. I count this as one of the greatest blind spots I had to overcome and one which caused me the most pain.

Being a pioneer, I later founded Master Builders fellowship and took it to a certain level. This time I had learned my lesson and passed the baton to a younger qualified man after ten years.

#### 9. PAY ATTENTION TO THE ONES THE LORD GIVES YOU.

This is a follow up to my point number 3. Many came to me as I led the church and I thought they could all be converted into faithful men loyal to the church's vision, but some only needed more of my time and energy. Looking back, I realize that I took some of them for granted while at the same time spending more of my time and energy on others than I probably should have. I see clearly now that I poorly prioritized my efforts in my leadership role. I should have poured into relating to the faithful men God sent me. Instead, I wasted my efforts.

My lack of attention to at least one of my men, allowed little foxes to creep into our vineyard and before I realized it, an offense I had not recognized, eroded our relationship. "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Prov 18:19).

Never take a relationship for granted, especially one where the Lord has obviously and supernaturally sent that person to help you, much as He sent men to David in the cave of Adullam.

## SECTION 2 – PEOPLE PROBLEMS

### 10. ADDRESS PATTERNS WHEN CORRECTING PEOPLE; DON'T NAG.

Everyone has a bad day now and then. The very best of us can write a bad check unintentionally. Some people have never learned to deny themselves and develop bad, recurring problems from a lack of self-discipline. I had to learn the hard way not to address each failure, but to search for how to address the underlying pattern of behavior. People will receive correction better if they can see a pattern and your interest in helping them change; otherwise they may perceive your correction as nagging.

### 11. MAKE SURE YOU ARE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD

People don't always hear what you are saying or think you are saying. It's amazing how often you think someone has understood you, only to find out they heard something entirely different than what you meant to convey. In many an elders meeting a plan is discussed and four people hear different versions of what was actually said. It is good to get personal one-on-one feedback, or put things clearly in writing with copies to all.

The difficulty of communication is one reason why it is so important to follow up after delegating. Very often I failed to do follow up properly and found that a project or plan we had discussed was after a while forty degrees off course. In such cases, my efforts to bring the project back on course often resulted in confusion and hurt feelings, and left people feeling unappreciated, untrusted, and too discouraged to continue with the project. Like I said, I knew to delegate but failed to follow up properly. This can be a fault for pioneers. They operate in a sense like soldiers: once you get an order, you move. I now realize your leaders are not yours to command but to inspire.

Also, people in a place of responsibility need to be refreshed, often at a one-on-one time of review. Listen carefully, let them vent. Make sure they are content with where they are! Many outgrow a job where once they were excited, or become dulled by opposition they didn't expect.

Planned, one on one refreshing meetings to clear misunderstanding and evaluate where a person is in their life assignment and calling can often avoid conflict and disappointment.

## 12. ONLY THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF REVELATION WILL CHANGE PEOPLE; YOU CAN'T.

I found out I can't change anyone, not my wife, my children, not even myself. When I started this journey, I thought I could, but it is the anointing that breaks the yoke. I have found out that the only power to change people resides in the anointed word of God powered by the Holy Spirit. Deep calls unto deep. Intellect calls unto intellect. I am not putting down the intellect, but it must submit itself to the revelation and anointing only the Spirit of Christ can supply. The Word and the Spirit agree!

## 13. CRY OUT FOR DISCERNMENT.

Danger from false men and women is very hard to see in many cases. Only in seeking and maintaining a relationship will eventually reveal a deceptive heart. I was totally fooled and had already delegated authority to a person when I waked up to their deception. It really hurt the church in the long run.

Also the difference between true musical worship ability and anointing from showmanship is hard to see. I have found that some musicians are more showmen that worshippers. Placing them in a position of worship leading can ultimately grieve the Holy Spirit and delete the general anointing on everything in the church. True worship is the key to many things

Discerning the true heart in a person is so important when it comes to leadership.. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Proverbs 27:19 states a truth, "As in water face reflects face, so a man's heart reveals the man."

## SECTION 3 – PERSONAL

#### 14. NEVER LET YOURSELF STAY OFFENDED.

Jesus said that offenses would come. Disappointments, offenses, hurts and rejections in many forms will come when you are called to lead God's people. I could take off my shirt and show you many sheep bites and hoof kick marks. I have found that it is the flesh that reacts to offenses. I've learned that I can choose to overcome my flesh and not stay offended, just as I can choose to love someone in the spirit. I call that being mature and walking in the spirit. The Holy Spirit can be grieved, but not offended; and He is in you fully. Christ loves and holds no grudges. He who leads must set the best example possible. I have learned to reset myself daily. I cannot properly lead if I don't forgive people who offend me. I must let offenses go, as Christ did for me.

#### 15. DON'T BE A REHOBOAM.

Rehoboam, Solomon's heir, disregarded the older men's experience and wisdom. Give me poetic license for a moment. The practice of Pastoring is much like the practice of medicine. You learn what to do and what not to do from your mistakes. So important! There is much wisdom residing in older seasoned, experienced men of God. Our culture has not only dimmed recognition of fathers, but has created disregard for older men and women. I am not saying everyone who is old is packed with wisdom. But I am saying younger leaders will be wise to look for older mentors to guide them through rough waters and lead them around traps and mistakes. There is also in this connection a misunderstanding of the role of seasoned and mature five-fold ministry, which I will further comment on in WALK WITH WISE MEN (number 16 below). This the one area I intuitively knew from the beginning of my journey, and didn't have to learn the hard way. Spiritually placed fathers in your life are vital.

## 16. WALK WITH WISE MEN.

Proverbs 13:20 – “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed”

I knew before I was saved that if you want to improve your tennis game you must play with people who are better than you.

I instinctively knew I needed mentors when I started my journey. I had three college degrees including a law degree. I knew how to study. But now I was walking in a supernatural world of the Spirit and the church. God gave me a gift of making relationships and I went after men I saw were giants in the ministry. I traveled with them and watched them minister and helped them and then they began to push me. For years I brought seasoned five-fold men through the church on a monthly basis. This applied the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4 to my church and helped to develop many into maturity. Many of the missionaries we sent out were inspired by these ministers and other older, seasoned men and women.

## 17. SHARE WITH AND LISTEN TO YOUR WIFE.

God gave me a very wonderful wife. She was intended by God to be a “help meet” to me. That meant that she would fill in my blind spots and see things from a different vantage point than I was able to. We were to help each other along the path of life, Why I didn’t see this for quite a while is beyond me. Actually, it isn’t – I was bull headed and foolishly masculine. I thought I had it covered. As I look back, I see many mistakes I made in judgement and in handling of people; problems that I could have avoided, had I taken my wife into my confidence and had her share her wisdom. I do not mean that she was infallible, but only that together we were a better team.

Maybe you don’t have that blind spot, but if my confession rings true, please repent and change your ways before it’s too late. If you can’t respect and trust your wife, you shouldn’t be in the

ministry anyway. I realize I may have just indicted myself, but I have hopefully learned my lesson. With Christ it is never too late to change and gain understanding. Thank God for that!

#### 18. THE SUBTLE SHIFT OF MY IDENTITY.

I saved this until last because it is may be the most important thing I learned and I'd like to leave you with it.

As Maranatha church prospered, I rejoiced and became more secure. After many years of subsisting, I finally had a decent salary and some other perks. A feeling of security was welcomed. This is when the Lord began to deal with my calling and true identity as described in the Pioneers Versus Settlers section above. As He forced my hand and I stepped out onto the thin ice, living by faith once again, it was scary and painful. That's when the Lord clearly spoke the following to me. "You have allowed your identity to become Pastor of Maranatha Church instead of being first My Son." Then He reminded me of Romans 1:1: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle . . ." Sonship clearly came way before calling. God plainly commanded that I get this straight before I could go any further in ministry. One's identity should never be based on a ministry.

It was clear I had slipped into a terrible form of pride. Looking back, I now count this as one of the great blessings of my life. Christ corrected me with more gentleness than I deserved. Being a leader and having success in a five-fold calling can be a subtle trap for the ego. As one of my mentors said, "It takes a steady hand to carry a full cup." Success can be a wonderful thing if we stay fully humble and dependent on Christ. He resists the proud.

These are a few of the important things I have learned the hard way by experience. I wish I could go back in time and correct these but that is impossible. Try as much as is within you to be a team player. Stay humble. Value each of your team and every saint in your church. Learn from anybody and everybody, AND, as you run your race, "stay in your own lane Bro!" I may have been singing to the choir with this paper, but I shall publish it anyway, hoping it might help some young leader prosper and excel in moments where I didn't.

May the Lord bless you and keep you and prosper you on the path of life!

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Master Builder Team