

# Reflections on 2009

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## *A Year of Transition and transformation*

This past year was truly a year of transition and of transformation, characterized by our being vigorously sifted, tested, and pruned. Many of us, at both a physical and a spiritual level, began de-cluttering our lives and shedding excess weight.

## *From Experiment to Experience; the birthing of the 101 Community in Sutton Quebec, and of field houses*

A couple of years ago, the Lord led us to study the Nazirites of old who took vows to draw near to God (see Numbers 6). Inspired and convicted, we began to explore how we might draw near to God and live such a life of no compromise, wholly SET APART unto Him. In this process of exploration we were awakened to the reality that community living is the most effective vehicle for this adventure. As a result, in August 2008, we launched SET APART, an 8-week long “experiment” or a “school” of sorts where young people who desire to respond to the radical call of Christ could explore living life differently, SET APART unto God for a time. Thirty-five men and women came from across Canada to participate. They represented some 10 different cultures and nations, and included men, women, couples and children. Although most were younger folks, we had a few older, wiser friends with us 😊. Our ages ranged from 18 to 67 years -- in addition to the children. For one week, we all lived together in community on Mont-Sutton exploring how we might live life differently with other authentic Christians who are SET APART to God. This was followed by seven weeks of distance studies and weekly conference calls to discuss what we were learning.

Although it was not easy, this “experiment” was so life changing for many people that the desire to always live a SET APART life grew tremendously. Consequently, Lana (from Kelona via Montreal), Hannah (from Montreal), Shaneen (from Ottawa), and Lanny & Tammy and their children (from Alberta) moved to Sutton over a period of months during 2009. Those who moved to Sutton basically moved from experimentation to actually *living* in community with others who are trying to live a SET APART life. This was one of the most exciting things that happened last year among the Lovers of God.

A few who are not able to move to Sutton to become part of the 101 community started “field houses”. The members of a field house embrace the same SET APART lifestyle but do so right where they live and in connection to Lovers of God.

## *Discovering the good old ways of the spiritual disciplines*

Jeremiah 6:16 says, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.’”

During this last year we also seriously embarked on discovering these “old paths”. Like the early church, we began setting fixed hours of prayer and the prayer watch of the Lord, during which we pray the

Bible. It is such an awesome thing for people from many different cities to stand and pray together in the spirit. What a spiritual fortification!

We also began examining our diet and modifying it to have less impact on the environment, and less control over our time and our appetites. In large part this resulted in simplifying the foods we eat and the way we prepare them (plain and simple), and it also included incorporating different kinds of fasts. (We've discovered that fasting, as an ancient path, is powerful in leading us out of numb-ville into spiritual awakening. It put a cleansing torch of fire to lives, melting the wax from our ears and opening our blind eyes to see God again.)

Other disciplines we have found harder to integrate into our lives as of yet: silence (we discovered that silence is the path to listening to God since silence is the mouth piece of God), inner stillness (the path to knowing who is God), and solitude or aloneness with God (the path to intimacy with God). But we are still working on them!

This has been both an immensely rewarding while at the same time a challenging journey. It was not easy for us, coming from such a young, decadent and discipline-less Western society, to adopt what initially seemed such austere spiritual practices. We always thought they were confined to the old ways of monks and nuns in some monastery in the deserts of the Middle East! ☺ As we studied the scriptures and the lives of early church believers, we realized that we had lost those invaluable old paths where the good way is. We began to understand (through both study and experience) that the spiritual disciplines that have been embraced and practiced by millions of our forefathers of faith across church history are essentially our part in yielding or cooperating with the grace of God that is at work in our lives. Exercising them is like ploughing the fields of our hearts in preparation for God's seeds or like an athlete training to win the gold medal in the Olympic Games. Practicing these disciplines keeps us spirituality fit for the work of God.

### *Another paradigm shift: Events to Lifestyle*

In 2009, the Lord did a major shift in me personally (Hany), and in all of us as a community, from being oriented around Christian function and performance, to pursuing a lifestyle that is simply all about Him. Our faith is becoming less and less centered around pockets of Christian activity, and instead is becoming more and more about how we live each moment. Whether washing dishes, shovelling snow or changing a child's dirty clothes, we are seeking His face and his thoughts all the time. We are seeking to *live in* Him, not just *walk with* Him. It is about coming back to the Garden; that place of sonship and friendship with God.

## Looking Forward to 2010

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### *2010: Hearing & Obeying*

I believe one of the main characteristics of 2010 is that God will train His chosen ones to live a lifestyle of hearing and obeying. Recently God has given dreams to members in the community about living on

“Mount Simon,” about living martyrs who dwell in “Simon’s House,” and about an infant child named “Simon.” The name “Simon” in its Hebrew form means “hear and obey.”

This past year was a year of preparation. There were a lot of transitions and some amazing transformations, not to mention testings. As I look ahead to the year 2010, I believe that it’s going to be year of hearing and obeying. Scriptures describe our life in this world as a spiritual battle, a war to be fought with vigilance and determination (Ephesians 6:12). We take orders from the “Lord of Hosts,” our resurrected Commander in Chief. Our ears are to be attuned to his voice and our hearts ready to act on His every command. As we “hear and obey” we will see God in our midst, manifested with His grace and His power.

### *Wanted: Living Martyrs*

To hear and obey is to become what I call a “Living Martyr.” When Christ called us to be his “witnesses,” the word he used was the Greek word for martyr. Today, God is still inviting us to become his witnesses. He is calling us to be “Living Martyrs”—people who are dead to everything but alive to Him; people who have learned absolute obedience to Him at all costs, who have denied themselves (Matthew 16:24), crucified their flesh (Galatians 5:24), and who have surrendered themselves completely unto Him (Proverbs 3:5). These living martyrs have developed their skills to listen for His voice day and night, and they are ready to do whatever it takes to accomplish His purposes.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27). The ability to hear Jesus' voice is the indispensable characteristic of the follower of Jesus. God spoke yesterday in dreams and visions (Acts 2). He still speaks today in dreams and visions. He will continue to do so. Just as He poured out His Spirit during the days of Pentecost and young and old had dreams and visions, He is doing it still today where those who are thirsty to hear Him will have dreams and visions from God. God will not change His prophetic language. It is our responsibility to learn His language and understand it and follow Him.

### *Emerging Nazarite Signposts*

For some, being a living martyr will mean God calls them to live a Nazarite lifestyle. In Israel, for generation after generation, the Nazarites were like walking signposts whose lives upheld up the uncompromising standards of God.. Without words, their lives reverberated with God’s message, a message that disturbed the comfortable, and comforted the disturbed: “Draw near to God! Repent and get rid of your idols. Bear fruit of repentance.” They pointed people back to God.

### *Learning to Pray*

God is going to teach us how to pray. In the past three to four years Christians have been praying more, a whole lot more than we have ever done. But most of the prayers have been according to our own ways. Most of the church is camping on the Mount of transfiguration yearning for the clouds of old glory. Meanwhile the Lord is on Gethsemane sweating blood, waiting for us to crucify our flesh and its passions so that we might join Him in prayer for one hour.

We have approached God as a prayer “Pop Machine.” We decide which product we would like, pay our tithe, push the corresponding button and wait for the results to “fall from heaven.” We really don’t know how to pray. I believe that God is going to train us to become like generals in prayer, true prayer warriors. We are heading into desperate times and it will be indispensable to pray effectively, so that when we pray, He answers. So that when we pray “Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven,” it does come!

### *Backing up to move forward*

In order to move forward this year we have to look backward. We will have to reverse into our future by paying the price for the words, prophecies and promises that God spoke over our lives a decade ago. The last decade has been a long and intense training and equipping process, preparing us and honing our character so that we might obtain these promises. Preparation belongs to us but timing belongs to God and I believe that in 2010 the timing of God has come to release all those who have had their soul put in iron because of the word of the Lord over their lives. This year is the year to walk into the promises of God from a decade ago. 2010 will be the year that the Lord will complete and seal the work He has started in His people ten years ago.

### *A year of Major Clean Up*

For many of us, God is releasing grace for major life changes; grace for major de-cluttering, major downsizing, and major simplifying. While in the past we may have struggled to simplify our lives and de-clutter, now is the time. Now there is divine enablement. Our natural life is directly related to our spiritual life. If our natural lives are full of man’s distractions, complications, noise, interruptions, clutter, and diversions, so it will be in our spiritual lives. It is true that God occasionally permits some of these things to remain in our lives in order to train us to live in Him despite challenges. However, most often it is we who allow props, distractions and busy-work to fill our lives. This is not the will of God because these things hinder our ability to focus and to be with Him.

### *No more status quo relationships*

The clean-up will not be limited to our “stuff.” God will sift many of our long-standing relationships, too. There will be the beauty of reconciliations and restorations. There will also be sorrow as relationships that have not progressed in the Lord will come under major testing. As we respond to the Lord, and follow Him, there will be times when it will cause wedges to come between us and people we love. But this is the Lord’s work. Through the tensions that result from misunderstandings and divine “setups” (when God allows us to be set up to look bad in the eyes of others) the Lord reveals what is hidden in our hearts. Provoked, our hidden sins (insecurity, anger, jealousy, prejudices, etc) are revealed. What we do with these sins will determine how our relationships progress or come to an end. If not approached with humility before the Lord, we are in danger of falling into criticism, slander, backbiting, accusations and false judgements, and we are prone to becoming victims and eventually vehicles for the enemy’s work to attack others who are going all out for the Lord.

If we do not allow the Lord to cleanse us, and instead just try to maintain the “status quo”, we will become blinded to the truth and will view with suspicion those who are pursuing God with reckless abandon. There is only one path toward healing in status quo relationships. It begins with genuine humility, and is followed by the transforming gift of Holy Spirit conviction and our repentance. These three things alone will break the strongholds and lies that wedge themselves between friends.

### *The Rise of Chief Psalmists and a New Strain of Worship*

A new kind of Psalmists will emerge this year. The songs these worshippers will sing will spring from hearts that have been purified and cleansed by the fire of their trials. They will be no show biz tunes. Rather, like David’s psalms, they will issue forth from the cave of God’s divine dealings. These worshippers’ unprecedented passion for the Lord will make their songs like divine fire which will devour the obstacles that keep us from Him. The sound will be original and simple, yet so profound that it will penetrate to the heart. Churches will need neither sophisticated sound system, nor worship leader. Instead, the voices of God’s people will carry the melody of a people in love with God, a people who have returned to their first love, and who cannot refrain from singing aloud in worship to the One who saved them. And God will delight in these songs. They will spread among the Christians like wild fire and will be the sparks of a revolution in Christian City, transforming worship from a performer/spectator environment, to a living, pulsing environment of true adoration. When you hear these new songs it will release a passion for Jesus that has not been seen since the days of old when hymns were like fuel on the altar of worship.

### *Prophetic journalists and writers*

The pen is mightier than the sword. The written word has a different power than the spoken word. It is a weapon that has changed lives and history for centuries. And so we find God’s command to Habakkuk (to write the vision so that others might run with it) is relevant today. God is anointing new writers today to record in writing His divine visions so that the people of God can read them and be strengthened and encouraged to run towards His purposes.

There will also be a release for God’s journalists this year. These journalists will do what the apostle Luke did when he wrote the book of Acts— that book which still today bears fruits beyond what Luke could ever have imagined. In writing, these new journalists will declare who God is and what He is doing. They will write “His-story” – an account of His divine work in our lives and nations. God’s acts have not stopped, and writing the acts of God is necessary for future generations, just as the book of Acts was necessary for us. Prophetic writing is not equal to, nor does it replace the Bible. It is simply an act of worship and a declaration that, “God is awesome today, just as He was yesterday and centuries ago!”