



To all members of the Church Family
From Paul Langham
Following a sermon delivered on 17 January 2010

Sermon – 17 January (9 & 11 am)

If you were not present at either of these services, I do encourage you to listen to one of the sermons, either directly through the website or by ordering a CD from the Church Office (835835).

Introduction

I am writing to inform you of what the church leadership considers to be a significant and determining Word from the Lord, which we have been weighing and praying about for several months.

Let me give you a little background. You will all know that, over the past 3 years or so, we have been on something of a journey as a church, increasingly dissatisfied with even the wonderful things the Lord was doing among us in terms of growth and mission. We sensed there was more! We have been looking at a number of movements & teaching programmes around the world – all of which have blessed us and led us further on. But, as a leadership, we had a sense that the Lord did not want us to copy anyone else, but rather to wait on him for his own particular revelation to us.

Throughout this time (and even before it), we have received a number of prophetic words for *htcd*, which are attached as a separate document. These are what I call 'What will be' words – in other words, they describe what the Lord is wanting to do in our midst, how he intends to shape our life, how he wants to bless others through us. These were all very encouraging, but none was the 'How this will be achieved' word for which we were waiting. And when that word arrived, it did so in a manner quite delightfully typical of the great God we serve.

In August of 2008, I received a letter from a member of the leadership team. The writer had been awoken in the night and had a sense from the Lord that he wanted to deliver a word to me. The word was brief – I was to wait upon him, and he would, in due course, give me '5 keys' with which to lead ***htcd*** into the future he has planned for us.

The writer was a person I knew heard accurately from God, and who would not pass on anything like this without a clear sense that it was genuinely the Lord speaking. Even so, I weighed it, as I would any 'word', and kept the letter against the day when its meaning might be revealed.

Almost a year passed. 2008 became 2009, and as that New Year dawned, the church appointed a new Youth Worker, Chris Whitwell. Sometime after his arrival, he asked to see me. He clearly had something significant to tell me, and after a while, he began to speak. He was understandably nervous, as what he felt he was to deliver had been something he had received before having any idea that he would come to join our team – he had shared what follows with his previous church's leadership, but they had not felt able to receive it. This was, I think, quite a blow to Chris at the time, but he chose to take God at his word, and so stored up what had been revealed to him for whenever God would choose to make use of it. Later in 2008, he & Helena were led to leave their previous church and move to join us. Anyway, back to our meeting ...!

His first words were, 'I believe the Lord wants to give this church some keys ...' I interrupted him with the words, 'There are five, aren't there?' and he replied, 'How did you know?' It was a very emotional and powerful moment, and I will now let Chris carry on in his own words. What follows is what Chris wrote for the Church Council in May of 2009.

Prophetic Word for *htcd* - '5 Keys'

As you sit and read this document, please know that I am the most surprised person of all to be writing this. It has nothing to do with me and everything to do with Him who has released it – I am in the truest sense, an empty vessel! However, I truly believe this information is from the Lord and it contains some powerful and significant points for us to consider as we build into the future of His church here at *htcd*.

Context:

From the beginning of July 2008, God has been revealing and unveiling something to me regarding the battle between the old church and the releasing of the new church. The battle however is intense and my own personal feeling is that it could be easier for us to remain unchanged and unmoved, but I know that God is calling us forward and into new territory. The enlarging of our tent (Isaiah 54) is definitely not just physical, but if we choose it, hugely significant in the spiritual realm too.

So I believe that what is written here is significant for the releasing of the new church and I urge you to read with open hearts, ears and minds. Much of it may be very simple truth but hey, after spending 3 weeks in India, I can say with integrity that simple is very effective.

Content:

The following points have been released mainly through dreams and pictures. I am not someone who dreams much, but I know that when I remember so vividly, God is saying something. I do not know if the order of the points is significant, so I just release them in the order they were given. It will be important for you to view these points as keys in a big door.

PICTURE 1:

I had a picture in early July of a huge padded door that had many locks around the outside. Each lock requires a different key to open it and each key represents something that the church needs to move into the new. The opening of the door represents the new church, but actually getting through it is probably more significant. As the picture continued, I noticed that on the other side of the door there was a huge force trying desperately to keep it closed. Now it will be important to know here that it wasn't just the devil, but people within the existing church that were also on the other side of the door. What does this mean? Well, simply that it is not just the plans of the enemy that we will come up against in this battle, but also the opposition of people. This is simple, but hugely significant.

PICTURE 2:

The first key was given to me as a word and picture and it was simply, openness. So key number one is **openness**. Without openness of heart and mind, probably none of this will work or be received at all well, so I encourage you again, read with openness, it is the first of the keys.

DREAM 1:

On 2nd July 2008, I woke up from an extremely vivid dream. I had dreamt that I was speaking at our youth graduation in the Kendall Hall and I was talking about the future. As I was speaking I said one particular phrase and then woke up immediately. This is what I said:

'The person of Mary Magdalene will be hugely significant for the body of Christ in 2009 because she was a radical worshipper'.

Radical worship is the second of the keys. I had the sense that yes this of course means the way we live but that more importantly in this context, there needs to be a significant shift in our musical worship too. This will act as a catalyst for lifestyle change.

A greater depth of desperation and abandonment to Jesus through our musical worship is so significant in the releasing of the new church and many of the other keys written here. There is so much more to be said about this, and this will hopefully be discussed.

DREAM 2:

On 20th July 2008 I dreamt that I was driving around England having a long conversation about revival with Todd Bentley sat next to me. Like the first dream, it is a statement that I said which was significant and I can only remember part of it.

I was giving directions in the car but as we were driving we got lost and drove into a big church driveway to turn around. As we swung the car round, there

was a HUGE wooden door with big black metal studs all over it. For some reason I knew it was locked and it was certainly closed. As we drove past the door, the driver asked me why the door was locked and I said:

'The fact that the door is still closed is prophetic of our heritage'.

This statement seemed so strange to me and it's taking ages to completely understand, so bear with me here! The third key is the **breaking of our negative heritage**. What does this mean? I obviously am unaware of the spiritual heritage at **htcd** or Widcombe but I know that this key is a big one! Also, in that statement, the heritage may represent the old and the prophetic may represent the new? I realize this is a strange one, and I am much better at talking about it than writing so I hope it will be clearer when we discuss.

DREAM 3:

I went to sleep on 24th July 2008 feeling that the Lord would unveil another key, and He did. In the dream, I was standing in a very large church and just as the speaker got up to speak, all the projection screens in the whole building flashed up on them:

'To be like Jesus'

The fourth key is **Christ likeness** in the form of the releasing of genuine identity and purpose. This might be linked with discipleship, I don't really know. I have felt ever since coming here that the issue of identity is one of significance for the **htcd** congregation.

As we behold Him, become like Him – this also forms a significant link with radical worship. As we encounter the living God, we find out who we really are because He knows us better than we know ourselves. This is also huge biblical truth and can be found in so many of the lives of people in the bible.

- Moses at the burning bush discovered he was the deliverer of a nation.
- The cripple at the gate in Acts 3 encountered Jesus through Peter and John and discovered his identity wasn't found in his condition, but that God had something different.

KEY 5:

Key number 5 wasn't released to me through a dream or vision, but more of a spark of realization as I read a passage in a book of something that I had been aware of and thinking about for a number of months.

On 17th August in India I was sat reading a book and God really made again one statement stand out strong to me. It was this statement that sparked the realization in me that key number 5 is simply **vision**:

*'Where there is no vision, the people perish'
(Proverbs 29:18 KJV)*

*I mentioned that when I first received this revelation, I believed there was no order of preference to these keys. However, after much prayer and discussion with other leaders, it now seems that addressing the first 4 will lead to a clarity of vision which will propel us into God's future. ***

It is also my observation that the churches around the world that are making a genuine impact on their communities are completely sold out and united under one vision. Everyone pulls together; everyone knows what they stand for and they trust that their leadership is taking them in the right direction.

If we are to move into the fullness of our destiny it is imperative we are all on the same page, running the same race and doing it as one family with one purpose – the extension of Gods Kingdom.

CONCLUSION:

So, the 5 keys in the order I received them are:

1. OPENNESS
2. RADICAL WORSHIP
3. BREAKING OF HERITAGE
4. CHRIST LIKENESS (Release of identity and purpose)
5. VISION

*'The world is shaped by people who pray –
or the world is shaped in the absence of those who didn't pray'.*

I realize that this is long, but quite honestly there is so much more I could have written! I would like to reiterate that this is not about me or my opinions but what I believe the Lord to be saying in this hour and this season. I never want to get in the way of what He is saying and doing, but only make what He is saying and doing what I do and what I say.

Chris Whitwell, May 2009

*** this paragraph in italics has been added to the original*

Afterword

Since Chris shared this with me, these keys have been 'weighed' by the church leadership – Executive, PCC & staff – and we believe that this is indeed the Lord's word to us.

Since September, we have been sharing them and praying into them with a gathered group of 'wider leadership' in the church family – small group leaders, Prayer Ministry Team members and others – and again there has been

widespread agreement that the Lord has given us these keys. Over the coming months, we will be exploring them together, in Sunday teaching & small group work, always firmly within the context & on the basis of scripture.

Let me finally address two important questions which may have arisen as you have been reading.

1 Why will these 5 keys make any difference?

I mentioned on Sunday that I was aware of a shift in the way we as a leadership in *htcd* have approached the question of 'vision' over the past 14 years. Nothing I said was intended to belittle or denigrate the hard and prayerful work which we put in to our attempts to phrase what we understood our DNA, mission & calling to be. However, I believe the reality is that those words and phrases somehow failed to enter the consciousness of the church family – in essence, they were not 'owned' by us.

I believe that the 5 keys outlined above will be different – simply because the Lord himself has 'spoken' them over us. As I have said, it will not be enough simply to rest on our laurels, pat ourselves on the back and congratulate ourselves for being the sort of church to whom the Lord speaks! As Chris was speaking yesterday, I could sense the understanding among the church family that, even taking the first key, 'Openness' is no easy task. Much hard work lies ahead of us. But believing this hard work is in response to the Lord himself will make it all worthwhile.

2 What will change in *htcd* as a result?

Let me use HTB in London as a parallel. Ask anyone there what that church is about and they will tell you – 'Alpha' & 'Church Planting.' Does that mean they don't do anything else? No – they still conduct weddings and funerals; have thriving youth, seniors & children's ministries; reach out to the needy and so on. But their prime aim is clear, and colours all these other activities.

We now stand, at the start of this new decade, on the edge of a new season in this church family's life. From the various layers of leadership to our small groups and throughout our ministries, each part of the body will have to pray, listen and work out what these keys mean in each particular area.

But imagine for a moment our church family, truly open to the Lord, to one another and the world beyond; living lives of radical worship; set free from all the negative heritage of the past and yet honouring all that has been good; and above all, becoming more like Jesus; so that we come to envision what he wants us to be. Now ask yourself – what will remain as it is today?

So, I invite you to join me and the wider leadership as we wait upon the Lord together, to hear 'what the Spirit says to the church.'