

ANCIENT PATHS INSTITUTE

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The Fear of the Lord, Humility, and Wisdom

The Interior Marks the King Is Recovering in His Bride

“This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it...”

— Jeremiah 6:16

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Executive Summary

The institute's earlier paper **First-Century Church Structure** reformed the gathering. **Shepherds, Not CEOs** reformed the pastor. **The Spirit-Led Gathering** reformed the method by which the gathering operates under the Spirit. The papers that follow will reform the calendar, the civic life of a disciplined people, and other layers of inherited form. Every one of those reformations addresses a structure. Every one of them assumes something the structures themselves cannot produce.

That assumption is the interior condition of the saints. A reformed gathering filled with proud men is still a proud assembly. A reformed pastorate held by men who do not fear the Lord will reproduce the very celebrity dynamic the **Shepherds, Not CEOs** paper set out to retire. A Spirit-led gathering led by facilitators without wisdom will be hijacked within a season. The structures matter. The structures cannot save themselves. The structures require a particular kind of saint to fill them, or they collapse into a sanctified version of what they replaced.

Scripture has named the three interior marks the King is forging in His bride. They are the fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom. They appear together repeatedly in the wisdom literature — not as three separate virtues but as one fruit growing on three branches. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life (Proverbs 22:4). The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility (Proverbs 15:33). The three are braided. Pull on any one and the other two come with it. Cut one and the others die.

This white paper traces three movements:

- The King's design — the triad as it appears in Scripture, the way Proverbs 1, 9, 15, and 22 braid the three together, and why the book of Proverbs is the most overlooked operating manual the King has given His people.
- The drift and the furnace — how comfort, entitlement, the corporate-church model, and the late-modern self have hollowed out all three; the present shaking through which the King is recovering them; and the structural diagnosis Scripture has already named in advance.
- Witnesses and the way forward — three witnesses across three centuries in which the triad was unmistakably present, and a practical roadmap for the household, the gathering, and the reforming shepherd who recognizes the hour.

The fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom are not three virtues. They are one fruit on three branches. The King has not promised His bride He will give her these as a download. He has promised He will forge them — and the fire is already on the altar.

The thesis is direct. The Western church has built sophisticated machinery to produce religious experience while losing the three interior marks the King's bride is recognizable by. That loss is

not first a moral failure of individual saints; it is the predictable harvest of a culture that has not been broken since living memory. The King is now breaking it. The cascade of fallen ministries is one front. The pressure rising in the financial system is another. The disclosure apparatus that has begun to reach inside the church itself is a third. None of these is the trial. They are the early tremors of a shaking the King is using to give His bride back what comfort took from her. The bride who emerges from this furnace will be unmistakable. She will fear the Lord. She will walk in humility. And she will carry the wisdom Proverbs has been waiting two thousand years for her to pick up and read.

PART I

THE KING'S DESIGN

1. One Fruit, Three Branches

Scripture does not present the fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom as three separate virtues a saint can pursue in isolation. It presents them as one fruit growing on three branches of the same tree. The wisdom literature braids them together repeatedly, and the braiding is theological, not stylistic.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” — Proverbs 1:7, NKJV

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” — Proverbs 9:10, NKJV

“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.” — Proverbs 15:33, NKJV

“By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life.” — Proverbs 22:4, NKJV

Read these four verses in sequence and the structure of the triad emerges. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom — a saint who does not fear the Lord cannot acquire the King's wisdom, however many books he reads, however many degrees he holds, however many years he has been in ministry. The fear of the Lord is also the instruction of wisdom — it is the schoolmaster, the discipline, the form within which wisdom is shaped. And before honor comes humility — the King will not entrust His honor to a man who has not first been brought low. The three feed one another. They cannot be separated without killing all three.

This is why the present hour requires careful attention. The Western church has spent forty years pursuing growth, pursuing reach, pursuing relevance, pursuing influence. None of those four words appears as a New Testament metric. The metrics Scripture names are saints equipped (Ephesians 4:12), the body built up in love (Ephesians 4:16), disciples made (Matthew 28:19), the lost sought, the weak strengthened, the broken bound up (Ezekiel 34:4, 16), and elders raised up (Titus 1:5). The institute's *Shepherds, Not CEOs* paper named these structurally. This paper goes underneath them. Behind every one of those metrics stands the same condition of soul: a saint who fears the Lord, walks in humility, and operates by the wisdom of the King. Where the triad is absent, the metrics cannot be reached, however the structure is reformed. Where the triad is present, the metrics emerge — sometimes slowly, sometimes in seasons of unmistakable acceleration, but always.

1.1 Why the Triad Is the Foundation

Every reformation this institute has argued for in earlier papers depends on the triad. The household assembly of the first paper will become a small corporate church if its members are proud. The shepherd-pastor of the second will become a softer version of the CEO if he does not fear the Lord. The Spirit-led gathering of the third will be hijacked by the loudest voice in the room if the facilitators do not have wisdom to redirect. The fivefold operating unit cannot operate in formation if the saints carrying its offices have not been broken into humility. The civic structure of the Covenant Commonwealth — explicitly hypothetical, explicitly conditioned on the kingship of Christ over a fully disciplined people — will not function in the absence of the triad. The structure is the frame; the triad is the wood and iron without which the frame holds nothing.

This is why the institute has paused at this place in the series. Before any further reformation is attempted at higher layers — calendar, civic order, the marketplace, the household economy, the formation of children — the foundation must be named. A reformed structure built on unbroken saints is a more sophisticated version of the problem the reformation set out to solve. The King is not interested in giving His bride better machinery. He is interested in giving her Himself. And He gives Himself most fully to those who fear Him, walk humbly with Him, and carry His wisdom into rooms where men have spoken for centuries without it.

The structures of the previous papers are necessary. They are not sufficient. Without the triad, every reformation hardens into the next form of the problem. With the triad, the smallest gathering in the simplest home becomes what the New Testament describes.

2. The Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is the foundation of the triad. It is named first in every braided sequence in Proverbs, and the order is not accidental. Until a saint fears the Lord, nothing else the King intends to forge in him can take its proper shape. Humility without the fear of the Lord becomes either timidity or self-deprecation as performance. Wisdom without the fear of the Lord becomes cleverness, manipulation, or the accumulated cynicism of men who have seen much and understood little. The fear of the Lord orders the other two.

“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.” — Psalm 19:9, NKJV

2.1 What the Fear of the Lord Is and Is Not

The fear of the Lord is not the dread of an angry tyrant. The man who reduces it to that has read neither the Hebrew Scriptures nor the gospel accounts of how saints actually responded to the presence of the holy God. The fear of the Lord is the right and trembling response of a finite, fallen creature in the presence of an infinite, holy King who has every authority to judge him and has

chosen, at infinite cost to His own Son, to redeem him instead. It contains awe. It contains reverence. It contains a sober awareness that the One who saves is the same One who will judge. It contains the recognition that He is God and we are not.

Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple, and the seraphim crying “Holy, holy, holy” — and Isaiah's response was not theological reflection but instinctive collapse: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5, NKJV). Job, after thirty-eight chapters of insisting on his own integrity, met the Lord in the whirlwind and answered, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5–6, NKJV). Peter, after the miraculous catch of fish, fell at Jesus' knees saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8, NKJV). John, the disciple who had leaned on Jesus' breast at the supper, fell at His feet as dead when he saw Him glorified on Patmos (Revelation 1:17). The fear of the Lord is not a doctrine the saints recited. It is the involuntary posture of every man who has actually seen Him.

What the fear of the Lord is not is equally important. It is not religious performance, the affected solemnity of men who confuse atmosphere for reverence. It is not legalism, the multiplication of fences that produced the very Pharisees the Lord confronted. It is not the moralism that mistakes propriety for holiness. It is not, above all, the mood of the contemporary worship set, manufactured by lighting and minor chords and a soft voice on the microphone. The fear of the Lord cannot be produced by any human technology. It is given by the Spirit to saints who have come into actual contact with the actual God.

2.2 Why the Fear of the Lord Has Been Lost

The fear of the Lord has been deliberately exiled from much of the Western evangelical pulpit over the past two generations. The reasons are documented and traceable. The seeker-sensitive movement, which began in the late 1970s and accelerated through the 1980s and 1990s, was built on the explicit premise that the unchurched would not return if they encountered anything that frightened, convicted, or unsettled them. Bill Hybels' early Willow Creek surveys of “Unchurched Harry” were honest about this; the operating principle was to design weekend services that minimized friction with secular sensibilities so that a gradual on-ramp into discipleship could be built. The intent was missional. The unintended consequence was a generation of saints discipled in environments engineered to remove the very encounter Scripture says is the beginning of knowledge.

The therapeutic turn of the late twentieth century compounded the loss. As pastoral care merged with the categories of clinical psychology, the language of sin, judgment, and the holiness of God was progressively replaced by the language of brokenness, unmet need, and self-actualization. There is genuine help in some of this, and the institute has affirmed in earlier papers that mental health information should not be flattened. But when the language of the therapist replaces the

language of the prophet in the mouth of the shepherd, the saints stop hearing what makes them tremble. Sociologist Christian Smith's research on Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, published from 2005 onward, named what the church had taught a generation of its own children: a god who exists to make them feel good about themselves, who watches over them, who wants them to be nice, and who does not really demand anything they do not already want to give. That god is not the God of Sinai. He is the god of the suburban living room. He cannot be feared because he was designed not to be.

2.3 The Test Case: Money, the Gospel, and the Fear of the Lord

If the fear of the Lord has been hollowed out in the comfortable Western church, the test case that proves it most visibly is money. The condition of a saint's heart toward money, and the condition of a ministry's relationship with money, is the place where the fear of the Lord either holds or breaks. Outsiders see this with painful clarity. They watch online sermons interrupted three times in forty minutes for an appeal to give. They watch megachurch conferences charging four-figure platinum tickets to learn from the celebrity pastor. They watch YouTube ministries paywalled into membership tiers, deliverance sessions sold as packages, prophetic words offered in exchange for a love offering at a particular price point. They watch the merchandise tables outside the auditorium and the affiliate links beneath the videos. And they conclude, with a clarity the church has too often refused to give them, that “the churches are all about money.” They are not entirely wrong. The fear of the Lord begins, for many, exactly here.

2.3.1 The King's Own Verdict in the Temple

Scripture is not ambiguous on the seriousness of the question. The cleansing of the temple is one of only a handful of events recorded in all four gospels, alongside the resurrection itself — and the unanimity of the witness is itself the King's verdict. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each took care to record what the Lord did when He encountered men profiting from the things of God.

“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” — Matthew 21:12–13, NKJV

The money changers and the dove sellers were not technically illegal in the temple courts. They were operating in the Court of the Gentiles — the only space in the temple complex where seekers from the nations could come to pray — because the temple authorities had granted them concessions. They served a real function: pilgrims coming from distant places needed to exchange foreign currency into temple shekels and to purchase animals for the prescribed sacrifices. The system had a justification. It also had a price markup, an exchange rate skim, and a structural arrangement by which the priesthood profited from the transactions. The Lord did not enter into a debate about the justification. He overturned the tables, drove the sellers out with a cord of small ropes He had taken time to braid (John 2:15), and gave a single explanation: His Father's house

had been turned into a marketplace. The institutional convenience that ran on commerce inside the place of worship was, in the King's judgment, theft. The men who profited from the worship of God, even when their service was sanctioned, were thieves in the King's vocabulary. He drove them out twice — once at the beginning of His ministry (John 2) and once at the end (the Synoptics) — framing His public work between two acts of cleansing.

This must land. The Lord Himself, who healed lepers without charge, who fed the five thousand without taking up an offering, who told His disciples “freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8, NKJV), and who refused to inherit money from a man who asked Him to settle a will (Luke 12:13–14), is the One who entered His Father's house with a whip in His hand when men had built a profit center on top of the worship of God. Any contemporary church culture that imagines the Lord would be neutral about the present arrangements of monetized ministry has not read the gospels carefully. The temple cleansing is His standing verdict on what happens when the things of God are made to pay.

2.3.2 The Apostolic Pattern: A Right Held, a Right Renounced

The institute will not flatten the New Testament's actual teaching on the support of ministry. Scripture is balanced, and balance is part of wisdom. The apostle Paul taught with care that those who labor in the gospel have the right to be supported by the gospel. “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” Moses had written (Deuteronomy 25:4, NKJV), and Paul applied that text directly: “Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1 Corinthians 9:9–10, NKJV). The right of the laborer to his wages is real. The Lord Himself said it (Luke 10:7). Paul affirms it (1 Timothy 5:18). Elders who labor in the word and doctrine are worthy of double honor. The institute is not arguing that paid ministry is itself the corruption.

What the institute is arguing is what Paul himself argued in the same chapter. Having established that the right exists, he immediately wrote, “Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:12, NKJV). And again: “What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:18, NKJV). Paul made tents (Acts 18:3). He labored night and day so as not to be a burden (1 Thessalonians 2:9). He told the Corinthians that he refused their support not because they were unworthy but because the surrounding culture was full of itinerant teachers selling philosophy by the lecture, and Paul refused to be confused with them (2 Corinthians 11:7–9; 12:13–18). His standard was higher than the right. The right existed, and he renounced it for the gospel's sake.

Peter's confrontation of Simon the sorcerer is the apostolic verdict on the inverse error. Simon, a man who had recently come to faith, watched the apostles lay hands on believers and impart the Holy Spirit, and he offered them money to acquire the same power. Peter's response was not pastoral negotiation. “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not

right in the sight of God” (Acts 8:20–21, NKJV). The historical name for this sin — simony — is taken directly from this man, and Peter's verdict on it is unsparing. The gift of God cannot be purchased, and the man who tries to commodify it has not yet repented. The principle runs both directions: the gift of God cannot be bought *or sold*. The seller is in the same theological category as the buyer, and the King's verdict on the seller is the temple cleansing.

The pastoral epistles state the standard plainly. An elder must be “not greedy for money” (Titus 1:7, NKJV; 1 Timothy 3:3). Paul warns Timothy of those “who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself” (1 Timothy 6:5, NKJV). False teachers “by covetousness will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Peter 2:3, NKJV). Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders, recorded by Luke, includes the line he wanted left to the church for the long centuries ahead: “I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel” (Acts 20:33, NKJV). The apostolic standard is not that ministers must be poor. The apostolic standard is that ministers must be visibly free of the love of money, must refuse to use the gospel as leverage for personal gain, and must hold their right to support so loosely that the watching world cannot mistake them for peddlers.

2.3.3 The Present Infestation

The contemporary picture in the comfortable West does not match the apostolic standard, and the saints know it. The infestation is structural and observable. Discipleship courses sold as paid programs. Worship events ticketed at concert prices. Pastors' conferences gated behind registration fees that exceed the monthly income of the saints they are training. Books, online courses, coaching programs, mastermind cohorts, and “inner circle” access tiers — each one priced to extract maximum revenue from the most committed followers. Streaming services interrupted three or four times in a single broadcast for tithing appeals. YouTube ministries with merchandise stores, affiliate links, sponsored segments, and subscription paywalls layered on top of the message itself. Deliverance sessions offered in exchange for a love offering at a particular dollar amount. Personal prophecies dispensed for a suggested donation. Healing lines that pass an offering bucket through them. The pattern is so widespread that most saints have stopped noticing it, and most outsiders have never been able to unsee it.

The fall of the celebrity-pastor model documented in **Shepherds, Not CEOs** did not eliminate the underlying disorder; it only redistributed it. The megachurch model concentrated the financial extraction in a building. The independent online ministry model has decentralized it across thousands of one-man YouTube channels, each running the same play at smaller scale: build an audience around a personality, monetize the audience, expand the funnel, layer in higher-priced offerings. The infrastructure of the contemporary digital ministry economy — the platforms, the membership tiers, the email funnels, the upsells — is not theologically neutral. It is the architecture of the marketplace, dropped on top of the gospel, and the men operating it are doing exactly what the temple sellers were doing in the Court of the Gentiles. The justification is the same: “We have to fund the work somehow.” The temple sellers had the same answer. The Lord did not accept it from them, and there is no reason to believe He accepts it now.

The cost is not only theological. It is missional. When seekers say “Churches are all about money,” they are not slandering the bride of Christ. They are reporting honestly what they have seen. The infestation is the single most cited reason given by post-Christian Westerners, particularly Gen Z and Millennial Westerners, for why they will not consider returning to the church their grandparents built. The shepherds who imagine that better marketing or more contemporary worship will solve this misread the data entirely. The problem is not the worship style. The problem is that the saints and the seekers alike can see that the men selling the gospel do not, themselves, fear the Lord enough to refuse the silver — and they are correct.

This is the test case. The fear of the Lord, in concrete terms, looks like a shepherd who refuses to monetize the saints he is supposed to be feeding. It looks like a discipleship program offered without charge because the King has not authorized His servants to charge admission to His house. It looks like a worship gathering that does not interrupt itself three times to ask for money. It looks like a ministry that has structured its life so that the watching world can see that the men leading it are not, by any visible measure, in it for the gain. It looks like Paul making tents at midnight rather than being a burden. It looks like the King with a cord of small ropes in His hand, driving out men whose justifications were institutionally sanctioned and who never imagined the Lord would object.

Repentance is required, and the repentance is specific. It is not generic acknowledgment that money is a tempting subject. It is the deliberate examination of how a ministry, a church, or a personal financial life is actually structured — what is being sold, to whom, at what price, with what visible witness to the unbelieving world — and the willingness to change what cannot stand under the weight of the temple cleansing. For many shepherds and many saints, the fear of the Lord begins here, because this is the place where the saint's confession most visibly meets the saint's wallet, and the wallet has been telling the truth about the heart for a long time. The King is calling His bride to let the wallet finally agree with the confession.

The fear of the Lord and the love of money are mutually exclusive. “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24, NKJV) is not a metaphor and not a warning to the rich only. It is the diagnostic test the King has placed at the door of His house. Many ministries that have refused to fear the Lord in pulpit, theology, or governance have refused first — and most visibly — in their handling of money. Repentance here is not optional. It is the beginning.

2.4 The Fear of the Lord Is the Beginning of Knowledge

Proverbs 1:7 is unflinching. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Not the end. The beginning. A saint who does not fear the Lord has not yet started. He may have accumulated information — he may know the sixty-six books, the systematic theology, the historical theology, the original languages, the church fathers, the reformers — and he has not yet started, because he has not yet feared. This is why the most learned theologians in any generation are not always the

wisest, and why uneducated saints in persecuted contexts often see what the credentialed in comfortable contexts cannot. The credentialed have read about the King. The persecuted have stood in His presence. The first generates content. The second generates wisdom.

Pastors and teachers should read this with particular care. The risk of the office is that the daily handling of holy things produces a familiarity that mimics reverence without being it. A man who has preached for thirty years can become so accustomed to the cadences of Scripture that the words no longer cut him before he passes them on. The fear of the Lord must be cultivated, returned to, sought again and again, or the office becomes a performance — even a competent and helpful performance — of words a man no longer trembles at. The shepherd whose own knees still bend when he reads the Scripture he is about to preach is the shepherd whose preaching will reach his people's knees as well.

The fear of the Lord is not what frightens the saints into religion. It is what makes religion impossible — because religion is what men do to manage God, and the saint who fears Him has stopped trying.

3. Humility

Humility is the second branch of the triad and the bridge between the fear of the Lord and the wisdom that follows. Where the fear of the Lord is the saint's posture before the King, humility is his posture among men, his posture toward himself, and his posture toward the work the King has assigned him. The two are inseparable. A man who fears the Lord cannot, by structural impossibility, walk in pride; a man who walks in pride has not yet feared the Lord, however orthodox his confession.

*“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” — James 4:6, NKJV
(citing Proverbs 3:34)*

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” — James 4:10, NKJV

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” — 1 Peter 5:6, NKJV

3.1 The Anatomy of Biblical Humility

Biblical humility is not the false modesty that performs smallness while expecting recognition for the performance. It is not the self-deprecation that masks an inverted form of pride. It is not the timidity that refuses to act on the gifts the King has given. Biblical humility is the accurate self-assessment of a saint who has seen God, has seen himself in light of God, and has agreed with what he has seen. He knows he is a creature, a redeemed sinner, a steward of gifts he did not earn, working under a Master to whom he will give an account. That accurate self-assessment produces a particular set of postures: he will not exalt himself, he will not strive for preeminence, he will

not require recognition, he will receive correction without crushing, and he will hold his calling open-handed because he never owned it in the first place.

The clearest portrait of biblical humility is the King Himself. The Son who was in the form of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, took the form of a bondservant, came in the likeness of men, humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death — even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:6–8). The Lord Jesus, the King of glory, the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God, washed feet at the table of His own betrayer. The standard of humility is the One who created the men who pierced Him and prayed for them while He hung. Any humility that does not bend toward that pattern is not yet what Scripture calls humility.

3.2 Humility Is Almost Always Forged in Breaking

Scripture is consistent on the soil in which humility actually grows. It is not the soil of teaching alone, however true. It is not the soil of conferences, however well-attended. It is not the soil of self-help, however earnest. It is the soil of breaking. Jacob the supplanter was humbled at the ford of the Jabbok, where he wrestled all night with the Angel of the Lord, and at daybreak the Angel touched the socket of his hip and put it out of joint. He left that encounter with a new name — Israel, the one who has struggled with God — and with a permanent limp. “Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip” (Genesis 32:31, NKJV). The man who had spent his life grasping had been broken at the place of his strength, and what he carried out of that night was not a story to tell but a wound that would never close. Joseph was humbled in the pit, the slave's house, and the prison — thirteen years of disappointment that produced the man who would govern Egypt without exalting himself. Moses was humbled in the backside of the desert for forty years, until the man who had once struck down an Egyptian in his own strength would say to the Lord, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” (Exodus 3:11, NKJV). David was humbled by Saul's spear and the cave at Adullam before he was set on the throne. Daniel was humbled by exile. Peter was humbled by the rooster and the courtyard fire. Paul was humbled by the road to Damascus and the thorn that would not leave.

The most striking case is Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4 is a chapter most modern Christians have not read carefully in years, and the omission costs us. The most powerful man on earth was warned in a dream that his pride would be answered. He continued in his pride, and the King of heaven answered him — with seven years of insanity, eating grass like an ox, dwelling with the beasts, his hair grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. The King's purpose was not the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar. It was his humbling. At the end of the seven years, Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven, his understanding returned to him, and he blessed the Most High, saying, “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.. He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand, or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Daniel 4:34–35, NKJV). The king who

had built Babylon for his own glory finished the chapter with the only words a man can speak after he has actually met God: “Those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Daniel 4:37, NKJV).

This is the pattern. Humility is offered as a gift, refused as a gift by the proud, and then forged in the furnace because the King loves His people too much to leave them in the pride that would destroy them. A Jesus People veteran who still shepherds a network of house churches in Southern California has spent decades reducing this pattern to a single sentence he uses when evaluating men in ministry: “I don't trust anyone who doesn't walk with a limp.” He is not speaking of a physical limp. He is speaking of the limp Jacob carried out of Peniel — the visible mark of a man who has been wrestled to the ground by the Living God and who has stopped pretending to be anything other than what that encounter revealed him to be. The shepherd's logic is the logic of the olive press: he does not trust the oil that has not been crushed out of the fruit, because oil that has not been pressed is not yet oil. It is potential oil, sitting in an unbroken olive, useless to anoint and useless to light a lamp. Saints and shepherds who have not been crushed produce a Christianity that looks competent on a stage and runs dry the moment a household, a marriage, or a body of saints requires the genuine substance of the Spirit poured out. The crushing is not optional. The limp is not a defect. The limp is the credential. The comfortable Western saint who has never been broken should not interpret his unbroken state as evidence of God's favor. He should interpret it as evidence that the King has not yet started the work He intends to finish.

3.3 Why the Western Church Cannot Find Its Humility

The structural obstacles to humility in the modern Western church are not hidden. They are documented and named. The celebrity-pastor model, addressed at length in the institute's *Shepherds, Not CEOs* paper, is in operational terms a pride-production system. The platform requires a personality. The personality requires recognition. The recognition requires growth. The growth requires the platform. The cycle does not produce humble men because it cannot produce humble men; the structure rewards exactly the opposite of what Scripture commands. Even the sincere shepherd who entered the office with a humble heart faces a forty-year incentive structure designed to surface and reward his pride. Some survive it. The roster of public collapses documented in that earlier paper — Bakker, Swaggart, Haggard, Hybels, Driscoll, MacDonald, Lentz, Zacharias — is the visible evidence of those who did not.

Beyond the pulpit, the broader cultural environment of the comfortable West has stripped away most of the experiences that historically produced humility in ordinary saints. Hunger, scarcity, infant mortality, sustained physical labor, the daily presence of death, the reality of subsistence under powers larger than oneself — these were the soil in which most Christians in most places at most times have grown. They are largely absent in suburban America. A generation of saints has come of age in homes with reliable food, reliable climate control, reliable medicine, reliable entertainment, reliable insulation from the consequences of their own choices. The structures that once forced a man to acknowledge his finitude have been engineered out of daily life. The result is not that the saints have become more godly. The result is that the saints have become more confident in themselves — which is, in Scripture's vocabulary, the precise opposite.

Humility is offered to the proud as a gift. When refused, it is forged in the furnace. The mercy of the King is that He does not leave His bride in the pride that would destroy her, even when the forging is severe.

4. Wisdom

Wisdom is the third branch of the triad and the visible fruit by which the other two are recognized. The fear of the Lord and humility are interior; wisdom shows up in the rooms where decisions are made, words are chosen, conflicts are resolved, money is spent, children are raised, and shepherds are appointed. The saint who walks in wisdom carries the King's weight into every ordinary decision. The saint who lacks it carries his own weight, however much he reads.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.” — Proverbs 4:7, NKJV

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” — James 1:5, NKJV

4.1 Two Sources, One Fruit

Scripture identifies two converging sources of wisdom in the life of the saint, and both must be honored or the wisdom that emerges will be deformed. The first source is the King's revealed word, especially the wisdom literature, and within the wisdom literature especially the book of Proverbs. The second source is the experience of suffering, breaking, and tested obedience over time. The first is the operating manual. The second is the press in which the oil is extracted. A saint who has the manual but has never been pressed will be theoretical and brittle. A saint who has been pressed but ignores the manual will reinvent every wheel and break on lessons the King has already written down for him. The two are designed to work together.

4.2 The Book of Proverbs as the Most Overlooked Operating Manual in the Bible

The book of Proverbs is the most practical book the King has placed in the hand of His people, and it is the most ignored book in the modern evangelical canon. The numbers are stark. Tens of thousands of sermons are preached every week from the gospels, the Pauline epistles, the Pentateuch, and Revelation. Comparatively few are preached from Proverbs. Tens of millions of devotional plans walk readers through the New Testament once a year and the Psalms twice. Comparatively few walk them through the thirty-one chapters of Proverbs at the rate of one chapter per day, which is the rhythm the book itself almost invites. The result is a generation of Christians who can quote Romans 8:28 and the Beatitudes but cannot quote Proverbs 6, Proverbs 13, Proverbs 19, or Proverbs 27 — and who therefore cannot answer the practical questions of ordinary life out of the King's own counsel.

This is not a small loss. The book of Proverbs addresses, with sustained attention, the most common practical failures of human life. It addresses sexual purity (chapters 5–7). It addresses the use of money, debt, and surety for others (6:1–5; 11:15; 17:18; 22:7, 26–27). It addresses laziness and diligence in work (6:6–11; 10:4–5; 13:4; 24:30–34). It addresses the use of the tongue — perhaps more than any other single subject — with surgical specificity (10:19; 12:18; 15:1; 17:27–28; 18:13, 21; 26:20–22; 29:11). It addresses the choice of friends (13:20; 22:24–25; 27:17). It addresses the raising of children (13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13–14; 29:15, 17). It addresses anger (14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; 25:28; 29:22). It addresses pride and humility (11:2; 16:18; 18:12; 22:4; 27:2; 29:23). It addresses the conduct of leaders (16:10–15; 20:8, 28; 25:2–5; 28:2, 16; 29:2, 4, 12, 14). It addresses how to receive correction (9:8–9; 12:1; 13:18; 15:31–32; 25:12; 27:5–6). The institute estimates, after honest reading, that something near nine out of ten of the practical questions a saint will face in an ordinary lifetime are addressed somewhere in these thirty-one chapters — and the answer is usually given in two or three lines, blunt enough to be remembered, sharp enough to cut where it needs to.

This is not the institute's invention. It is the book's own claim. Proverbs opens by stating its own purpose: “to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion” (Proverbs 1:2–4, NKJV). The book is offered to the simple and the young as the King's deliberate counsel for the practical matters of their lives. A church culture that does not teach Proverbs to its young, that does not preach Proverbs to its body, that does not require its leaders to be steeped in Proverbs, is operating without instructions the King provided in writing. The young will then make the predictable mistakes, will suffer the predictable consequences, and the older saints will shake their heads at “this generation” — having failed to give them the very book the King wrote for them.

4.3 The Older Wineskin's Particular Failure

There is a particular failure mode in older saints that this paper must name plainly, because the institute's voice will not flatter it into silence. The older saint who has walked with the Lord for thirty or fifty years is owed honor, and this paper does not retract that honor. But honor does not require silence about a pattern that recurs. Some older saints, having accumulated experience, begin to treat their accumulated experience as if it were equivalent to the wisdom of the King. It is not. Experience is one source of wisdom — the press — but it is not the operating manual. The older saint who has stopped reading Proverbs because he believes he has internalized it is no different from the younger saint who has never read it at all. Both are operating without the daily counsel of the King. The difference is that the younger saint can be told and may listen; the older saint will often not be told, because his age has been treated as authority, and authority is not in the habit of being corrected.

Scripture itself rebukes this pattern. Job's three friends were older men of accumulated experience, and they were wrong about almost everything they said to him for thirty-five chapters. The young man Elihu, when he finally spoke, said, “Great men are not always wise, nor do the

aged always understand justice” (Job 32:9, NKJV). The Pharisees of the Lord's day were the most experienced students of the Scriptures in their generation, and the Lord said to them, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:39–40, NKJV). The accumulated study of Scripture had become its own substitute for actually meeting the One it described. The accumulated experience of ministry can do exactly the same. Older saints who have built churches, raised families, and weathered storms must continue to read Proverbs, continue to be corrected by Proverbs, continue to be teachable in places where their own experience would have argued otherwise. Otherwise the experience hardens into the very wineskin Scripture warned against, and the new wine the King is pouring out passes them by.

4.4 The Younger Saint's Mirror Failure

The mirror failure is equally common. The younger saint, especially the recently converted Gen Z saint carrying genuine zeal and genuine encounter with the Lord, can be tempted to treat his zeal as a substitute for wisdom. It is not. Zeal is a gift, and the King has poured it out generously in the present hour; this paper will honor that gift in Part III. But zeal without wisdom is dangerous. Paul wrote of his own people, “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2, NKJV). Zeal that is not married to wisdom will burn hot for a season and then either burn out, harden into unteachable conviction, or be exploited by the next charismatic personality who arrives to monetize it.

The remedy is the same. Read Proverbs. Read it with the older saints who have walked with the Lord for fifty years and let it correct them too. Both generations are owed the same instruction. Both generations face the same Lord. Both generations need the same operating manual. The older saint who reads Proverbs alongside the younger saint, and lets the text correct them both, is participating in the multi-generational pattern the *Shepherds, Not CEOs* paper named as the structural gift of the present hour. That pattern requires, on both sides, the willingness to be taught by the same book.

Wisdom is the visible fruit by which the fear of the Lord and humility are recognized. It grows from two sources — the operating manual the King wrote and the furnace of suffering He permits — and a saint who refuses either source will be deformed by the absence.

PART II

THE DRIFT AND THE FURNACE

5. The Comfortable West and the Hollowing of the Triad

The triad has been hollowed out in the comfortable West. This is not a metaphor. It is an empirical observation that any honest reading of contemporary American evangelicalism confirms. The fear of the Lord has been engineered out of the weekend service. Humility has been replaced by branded confidence. Wisdom has been substituted with technique. The hollowing is structural, not personal — it is the predictable harvest of a forty-year experiment in producing religious experience without producing the saints Scripture describes.

Other parts of the world have not been hollowed in the same way, and the institute has named them in earlier papers — Iran, China, Sudan, Nigeria, the underground churches of Central Asia, the Christians of the Amazon basin and the Panamanian jungles. These bodies have not been pampered into spiritual softness, because their environments have not permitted it. They have known hunger, surveillance, imprisonment, exile, the loss of children, the loss of spouses, the loss of homes. They have known the daily presence of physical and political danger. The triad is alive in them because the conditions that forge it have not been removed from their lives. The Western saint who reads about them and feels a stirring should examine that stirring carefully. It is not envy of suffering, which would be obscene. It is the soul recognizing the fruit it has been deprived of, and grieving.

5.1 The Mechanisms of the Hollowing

The mechanisms by which comfort hollows the triad are not mysterious. They have been observed, named, and partially documented across the past two generations. Five operate together.

The first is the engineering of the weekend service. The institute's **First-Century Church Structure** paper traced this at length. The room is designed for spectator response, the lighting is engineered for emotional cue, the sound is mixed for atmospheric saturation, the message is shaped for inspirational return. None of this produces the fear of the Lord, because none of this is permitted to. The weekly experience trains the saint to expect a particular kind of feeling and to leave when it has been delivered. The fear of the Lord is not on the production schedule.

The second is the therapeutic substitution. The categories of therapy have largely replaced the categories of Scripture in the pulpit's daily handling of the human condition. The saint hears about anxiety, trauma, attachment, and self-care; he hears comparatively less about sin, judgment, holiness, and the fear of the Lord. There is genuine help in the first category, and this institute has affirmed that mental health information should not be flattened. But when the first category

replaces the second, the saint loses the very vocabulary by which his soul could recognize what is wrong with him. He learns to manage symptoms he no longer has names for.

The third is the entitlement of the affluent saint. The American Christian who has known reliable food, reliable safety, reliable medicine, and reliable insulation from consequence has, on average, developed a quiet expectation that life should continue along those lines. When suffering arrives — illness, financial strain, marital crisis, the death of a parent — it arrives as an interruption to be solved rather than as the King's own appointed instrument for the forging of the triad. The saint who treats suffering as an interruption will resent the very means the King is using to mature him.

The fourth is the celebrity-pastor model, addressed structurally in **Shepherds, Not CEOs** and named here as a producer of the opposite of humility. A platform that requires a personality requires a person who has agreed to be that personality. The pressure on every pastor inside that structure runs in one direction: away from the obscurity that produces humility and toward the visibility that erodes it.

The fifth is the loss of the Proverbs canon in daily formation. Saints who do not read Proverbs do not become wise. They become whatever the surrounding culture has trained them to be, plus a layer of religious vocabulary. The book the King wrote for the practical questions of human life sits unread on most shelves, and the predictable failures it would have prevented multiply across the body.

The hollowing is structural. The structure produces what the structure is built to produce. A saint formed by forty years of engineered experience, therapeutic substitution, comfortable insulation, celebrity pulpit, and an unread Proverbs cannot suddenly fear the Lord, walk in humility, and operate by His wisdom. The forging requires conditions the structure was specifically engineered to remove.

6. The Present Shaking

The King is now shaking what the comfortable West has built. The shaking is not the institute's prediction; it is observable in the present-tense headlines of the past several years and the past several weeks. This chapter names the fronts of the shaking briefly, with named sources, and then anchors the structural diagnosis in the Scripture that has been describing the pattern for two thousand years. The institute will not embellish what is reported. It will report what is reported, and let the King's word carry the weight.

6.1 The Cascade of Fallen Ministries

The first front is the cascade of fallen ministries documented in detail in the **Shepherds, Not CEOs** paper and not repeated here. The roster is on the public record: Bakker, Swaggart, Haggard, Hybels, Driscoll, MacDonald, Lentz, Zacharias, and a longer list of less prominent

figures. Christianity Today's *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill* podcast (Mike Cosper, 2021–2022) and the ongoing investigative coverage of *The Roys Report* have produced thousands of pages of reporting and the testimonies of hundreds of victims. The pattern is consistent and structural: a charismatic solo leader, a board insulated from challenging him, a brand built around the man, a culture in which raising concerns was treated as disloyalty, a long period of staff and congregational pain before public exposure. The shaking on this front began in the late 1980s and has accelerated. It is not slowing.

The fall of named ministries is not the deepest wound. The deepest wound is what each fall does to the saints who trusted the man, supported the ministry, and built their spiritual lives partly on his teaching. Tens of thousands of saints have walked through the disorientation of watching a shepherd they admired exposed for sin, abuse, or cover-up. Some have stayed faithful. Some have walked away. All of them have learned, the hard way, that confidence in any human personality is a sand foundation. The King's mercy in the cascade is that He is teaching His bride, painfully, to look only to Him.

6.2 The Pressure in the Financial System

The second front is the pressure rising in the financial system. On April 28, 2026, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, speaking at the annual investment conference of Norway's sovereign wealth fund (Norges Bank Investment Management), told the assembled institutional investors plainly: “The way it's going now, there will be some kind of bond crisis, and then we'll have to deal with it.” He named the risk factors — government deficits, geopolitics, oil, the credit cycle. He noted that United States federal debt now stands at approximately \$39 trillion, with annual interest payments having reached \$970 billion in 2025 and projected to reach \$2.1 trillion by 2036. His remarks were reported by CNBC, Fortune, Benzinga, and TheStreet. Dimon is not a prophet. He is the chief executive of the world's largest bank by market capitalization, with decades of credit-cycle experience, who is on record warning that the conditions for a serious bond crisis are in place and that policymakers should act before they are forced to.

The institute will not predict timing. Dimon himself did not predict timing. The point is structural: the saint whose financial life is built on the assumption that the system that has provided reliable returns and reliable insulation will continue to do so indefinitely is building on an assumption Dimon and others are openly questioning. A serious bond crisis would not destroy the saint who fears the Lord, walks in humility, and carries the wisdom of Proverbs into his finances. It would, however, expose every saint who has used reliable prosperity as a substitute for the triad. The shaking on this front is the King's mercy: He is telling His people to put their confidence somewhere it cannot be taken from them, before circumstances make the lesson far more expensive.

6.3 The Disclosure Apparatus and the Approach to the Church

The third front is the most recent and the one that has reached most directly inside the church itself. In late April and early May 2026, multiple American pastors began publicly stating that they had been invited to a private meeting in Tennessee with individuals connected to United States government and intelligence circles. Among the named participants are evangelist Perry Stone, Bishop Alan DiDio of Revival Nation Church, evangelist and podcaster Tony Merkel, and pastor Larry Ragland. Stone described the meeting in a YouTube video on April 27, 2026. DiDio confirmed his presence. The story has been reported by Newsweek, *International Business Times*, USA Herald, the Daily Mail, and a number of secondary outlets. Republican Representative Eric Burlison of Missouri, who serves on the House Oversight Committee and who was reportedly mentioned in connection with one of the briefings, responded publicly to clarify his position on social media.

According to the pastors who have spoken publicly, the meeting was operationally cautious — phones in airplane mode, no recordings, a remote location — and the substance was extraordinary. They report being told that the United States government is preparing to release information regarding what is described as non-human intelligence and unidentified anomalous phenomena, that the disclosure could include claims about “reptilian” entities and “interdimensional beings,” that some of the framing being prepared would assert these beings as the actual creators of humanity, that the Bible is a text these beings produced, and that Jesus is a figure they invented. The pastors have stated that they were told to prepare their congregations because what is coming will, in the words attributed to one official voice in the meeting, “go and tell the church, they are not ready for what is coming.” On May 6, 2026, FBI Director Kash Patel publicly confirmed that President Trump has ordered the declassification and release of UAP files, with the first tranche to be released “very soon.” None of this is from a fringe outlet. It is from the named pastors' own channels, the FBI Director's own statements, and Tier 2 reporting that has independently corroborated the core of the account.

The institute does not stake the argument of this paper on whether every detail reported by every pastor is accurate. The institute states what is on the public record and invites the reader to verify it. What matters for the thesis of this paper is structural. The disclosure apparatus is reaching for the pulpit. Officials with security backgrounds, whatever their motives, are now interfacing with prominent Christian leaders to shape how the body of Christ will respond to whatever is released. That is itself a development the comfortable Western church has no historical category for. And whatever the specific content of any future release, the framing already attributed to the briefings — that non-human beings are humanity's creators, that the Bible is their fabrication, that Jesus is invented — is precisely the kind of claim Scripture has named in advance as the operating logic of the great deception.

6.3.1 The Gates Open: May 8, 2026

On May 8, 2026, one day after the drafting of this white paper, the United States Department of War officially released the first batch of declassified files on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena, launching a public archive at WAR.GOV/UFO under an interagency program named the

Presidential Unsealing and Reporting System for UAP Encounters, or PURSUE. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth issued the announcement, stating that the documents had “long fueled justified speculation” and presenting the publication as evidence of the administration's commitment to transparency. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard confirmed that the Intelligence Community's declassification efforts were being coordinated with the Department of War. The release follows FBI Director Kash Patel's May 6 statement that his agency had handed over its first batch of UAP files to the Pentagon-led interagency committee. Reporting was carried by Aerotime, MilitarySpot, *The Mirror*, Charisma News, Leonard David, and the Department of War's own newsroom within hours of the release. Additional tranches are scheduled to be published on a rolling basis.

The institute does not record this development in order to add a sensational closing flourish to the chapter. It records it because the same paper that named the disclosure apparatus as the leading edge of the present shaking is now being read in the week that the apparatus opened its gates. What was a structural concern when the paper was drafted on May 7 is, on May 8, a public archive on a federal government website. The bride is no longer being warned that something is coming. She is being told that it has begun.

The valley of decision spoken of by the prophet Joel is now upon the church. “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:14, NKJV). Two paths lie before the saints. The first is the path of the King's own word, His Spirit, and the truth that has been delivered to His bride from the beginning. The second is the path of strong delusion, in which men receive a revised account of their origin, their salvation, and the One in whose name they have been baptized — and in receiving it, hand themselves over to a deception the New Testament said two thousand years ago would arrive in this exact shape. The deception is not new. It is the ancient enmity of the dragon against the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), now wearing the costume of advanced technology and reframed cosmology. The mystery of lawlessness has been at work in the world since the apostles named it (2 Thessalonians 2:7), and the bride who has been forged in the triad will recognize what she has been warned about. The bride who has not been forged will not.

The hour for choosing has arrived. The King has not left His people without a word. He has spoken in Scripture; He speaks now by His Spirit; He will receive every saint who turns to Him in the fear of the Lord, in humility, and in the wisdom that is His to give. “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15, NKJV).

6.4 The Structural Diagnosis Scripture Has Already Named

The institute will not name the contemporary deception by any speculative label that ties the argument to a single contested theory. It does not need to. Scripture has already named the structural pattern by which any deception of this magnitude will operate, and the named pattern is the only one that matters.

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” — 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12, NKJV

“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” — Matthew 24:24, NKJV

“He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do...” — Revelation 13:13–14, NKJV

Three texts. One pattern. Power, signs, and lying wonders. Strong delusion. Deception capable, if possible, of taking even the elect. The point is not what specific form the signs and wonders will assume in this generation, however suggestive the headlines. The point is that Scripture told the bride two thousand years ago that exactly this kind of pressure would arrive at exactly the kind of body the comfortable Western church has become. A bride who has not been forged in the fear of the Lord, in humility, and in the wisdom of the operating manual will not be able to discern what is coming. A bride who has been forged will. The triad is not optional equipment for the hour ahead. It is the only equipment that will hold.

The fronts of the shaking are different. The purpose of the shaking is one. The King is recovering in His bride what comfort took from her, because what comfort took is what the hour ahead will require. The fallen ministries are the early tremor. The financial pressure is the structural warning. The disclosure apparatus is the leading edge. The forging is for the deception that is coming, not the deceptions that have already come.

7. How the King Forges the Triad

Scripture is consistent on the means by which the King produces the triad in the saint who lacks it. The means are not the saint's choice; they are the King's. But they are predictable, and naming them gives the saint who is currently in the furnace a vocabulary by which to recognize what is happening to him.

7.1 Affliction

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.” — Psalm 119:71, NKJV

The psalmist did not say affliction was pleasant. He said it was good. The Hebrew is unambiguous. The trouble that broke open the saint's day became the very means by which the King's word entered him in a way prosperity could not have produced. Affliction strips the saint of the substitutes he had been using to avoid hearing what the King had been saying. When the substitutes are gone, the word remains — and finds, often for the first time, a place to land. This is why saints who have walked through serious affliction often speak of Scripture as having opened to them in ways it had not before. The word had not changed. They had.

7.2 The Furnace and the Refiner

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.” — Isaiah 48:10, NKJV

“He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.” — Malachi 3:2–3, NKJV

The image is the silver refiner sitting beside the crucible. The metal is heated. The dross rises to the surface. The refiner skims it off. The metal is heated again. More dross rises. The refiner skims it off. The process continues until the refiner can see his own face reflected clearly in the surface of the metal — and at that moment, the work is finished. The picture has theological precision. The King is not destroying His saint in the furnace. He is removing what is not gold so that the gold can finally be seen. The saint who recognizes himself in the furnace can take comfort in this: the refiner does not leave the metal in the heat one second longer than necessary, and he never takes his eyes off it. The pain is real. The purpose is precise. The end is the saint's own face cleared of the dross that obscured it.

7.3 The Discipline of Sons

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” — Proverbs 3:11–12, NKJV

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” — Hebrews 12:7, NKJV

Hebrews 12 places the discipline of the saints inside the category of sonship. The Father disciplines because He has accepted the saint as His son and intends to bring him to maturity. The discipline is therefore not evidence of God's anger; it is evidence of God's commitment. Hebrews continues, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11, NKJV). The fruit comes afterward. In the moment, the saint feels

only the pain. This is normal. The King has not asked the saint to enjoy the discipline. He has asked the saint to endure it, trusting that the fruit afterward will justify what the moment cannot.

7.4 The Pattern of Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4 deserves a second consideration, because it is the King's most extended treatment of how a proud man is brought low and what emerges on the other side. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man on earth. He had been warned by Daniel and given twelve months to repent. He did not. The judgment fell precisely at the moment of his greatest pride: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30, NKJV). Within the hour, his reason was taken from him. Seven years passed.

At the end of the seven years, the king lifted his eyes to heaven, and his understanding returned. What returned was not the same man who had been broken. The man who returned wrote a chapter of Scripture by his own hand. He blessed the Most High. He named the King's dominion as everlasting. He acknowledged that all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before Him. He confessed that no one can restrain the King's hand or call Him to account. And he closed with the words this paper will not soften: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down” (Daniel 4:37, NKJV).

The pattern is the comfort of every saint who recognizes himself in the furnace. The King's intent in the breaking is not destruction. It is restoration to a man capable of saying what Nebuchadnezzar finally said. The Western saint who has not yet been broken should not assume he will escape the breaking; he should recognize that the King loves him too much to leave him in the pride that would destroy him forever. The breaking, when it comes, is mercy. The saint who comes out the other side will fear the Lord, walk in humility, and carry wisdom — and will look back on the seven years, however long they were, with gratitude that the King refused to leave him as he was.

The furnace is not the King's anger. The furnace is the King's commitment. He refines because He has accepted His saint as a son, and He has resolved to finish what He began. The pain is real. The purpose is precise. The fruit comes afterward, and is worth what the furnace cost.

PART III

WITNESSES AND THE WAY FORWARD

8. Historical Witnesses: The Triad in the Furnace of the Past

The King has not lacked a witness. Across twenty centuries, in seasons of unmistakable visitation, He has produced bodies of believers in whom the fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom appeared together with such clarity that historians who did not share the faith were nonetheless required to record what they saw. Two witnesses from the historical record will serve this paper, chosen because the triad is unusually visible in both. The first is the Moravian community at Herrnhut in 1727. The second is the Welsh Revival under Evan Roberts in 1904–1905. Both have been treated in earlier institute papers. Both will be treated here through a different lens: not the structure of the gathering or the form of the leadership, but the interior condition of the saints in whom the Spirit moved.

8.1 Herrnhut, August 1727: The Triad in a Single Communion Service

Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf had received refugee Moravian believers on his estate in Saxony beginning in 1722. By early 1727, the community at Herrnhut numbered roughly three hundred souls drawn from multiple traditions and held together by a fragile and contested unity. Theological disputes, personal grievances, and faction were tearing the body. Zinzendorf spent the spring and summer of that year in personal visitation, household by household, calling the saints to repentance and to the Brotherly Agreement that would govern their common life. On August 13, 1727, the community gathered for what was intended to be a routine communion service at the Berthelsdorf parish church. What occurred there has been documented by Moravian sources, by Zinzendorf himself, by participants who left written accounts, and by the institute of historical study that has examined the records continuously for nearly three hundred years.

The participants did not describe the event in the language of revival as that word would later come to be used. They described it as a visitation. The fear of the Lord fell on the assembly. Saints who had been at variance with one another wept, confessed, and were reconciled in real time. The communion meal became, in the words of multiple participants, an experience in which the room could not be distinguished from heaven. Many testified afterward that they could not remember the precise sequence of what occurred; they remembered only that they had encountered the living God in a way none of them had been prepared for. The community emerged altered. Within weeks, the Hourly Intercession was inaugurated — saints assigned in pairs to pray continuously, hour by hour, around the clock. That prayer meeting did not stop for one hundred years. From it issued a missionary movement disproportionate to the size of the community: Moravian missionaries were sent to the West Indies in 1732, to Greenland in 1733, to North American slaves

and indigenous peoples shortly thereafter, and ultimately to dozens of fields where no other Protestant body was working.

The triad is unmistakable in the historical record. The fear of the Lord arrived, unbidden by any human technique, in a routine communion service of saints who had been quarreling. Humility followed immediately — saints confessed to one another, restored relationships, and lowered themselves before the Lord and one another with no one orchestrating the response. Wisdom emerged in the structures the community then built: the Hourly Intercession, the missionary commitments, the financial discipline that funded missions on a per-capita scale Western evangelicalism has never since matched. None of these structures was designed in advance. They emerged from a body that had been brought into the triad by a single visitation, and the structures the body then chose were the visible fruit of the interior change.

8.2 The Welsh Revival, 1904–1905: The Triad at National Scale

Evan Roberts was twenty-six years old when the Welsh Revival broke through him in the autumn of 1904. He was a former coal miner and apprentice blacksmith who had been preparing for ministry at Newcastle Emlyn. On October 31, 1904, he returned to his home chapel at Moriah in Loughor and began to address young people after the regular service. His message was brief and devastatingly simple. It contained four points: confess any known sin to God; put away any doubtful habit; obey the Spirit promptly; confess Christ publicly. He did not preach in the sense the term would later acquire. He called for response. The young people responded. By the next evening, the gathering had not ended. Within weeks, the revival had spread across Wales — to chapels in the Rhondda valleys, to the slate-quarrying communities of the north, to the cities of Cardiff and Swansea, to mining villages whose pubs emptied and whose pit ponies, accustomed to coarse language from the miners, reportedly had to be retrained because the miners had stopped cursing.

The historical record of the revival's social effects is unusual in its specificity. Magistrates' courts in some districts reported sessions with no cases on the docket. Police reduced their staff. Tavern owners closed their establishments because their customers had stopped coming. The output of the coal mines briefly fell because miners spent their breaks praying instead of cursing, and the older men found that prayer took longer than profanity. By the spring of 1905, contemporary estimates placed the number of professed converts at one hundred thousand. The revival reached England, Norway, Korea, India, and the Welsh-speaking diaspora across multiple continents. Eyewitness accounts were collected by W. T. Stead, the British journalist who traveled to Wales personally to investigate, and his published **The Story of the Welsh Revival as Told by Eyewitnesses** (1905) remains a primary source.

The triad is, again, unmistakable. The fear of the Lord arrived first — saints in the chapels reported a tangible awareness of the holiness of God that produced uncontrollable weeping and the spontaneous confession of sin in public meetings. Humility followed in Roberts himself, and his refusal to occupy the platform was itself a sign. As recorded in the institute's **Spirit-Led*

Gathering* paper, Roberts repeatedly told the gatherings that they did not need him, opened his Bible to the Lord's promise "Lo, I am with you always," and walked out of the building — and the meetings continued in his absence, sometimes until five in the morning, with the Lord moving in power among saints who had stopped looking to the visible leader. Wisdom emerged in the four-point message itself: confession, the putting away of doubtful things, prompt obedience, public confession of Christ. The simplicity is itself the wisdom. Roberts did not innovate. He named what every revivalist worth the title has named in every century: the King's people must agree with the King about their sin, agree with the King about their behavior, agree with the King about their obedience, and agree with the King about their identity.

Both witnesses share a common shape. The triad arrived together. The fear of the Lord came first as the foundation; humility manifested in the response of the saints, including the leaders; wisdom emerged in the visible fruit and the structures that endured. Neither outpouring was engineered by human technique. Neither was sustained by celebrity. Both required leaders willing to disappear behind what the Spirit was doing, and both produced bodies that operated for decades on the spiritual capital generated in a few weeks of visitation.

The historical witnesses are not nostalgia. They are evidence. The triad is not a theological construct. It is the visible interior condition of saints in whom the Spirit has actually moved — and where the triad is present, the fruit follows, in every century, in every culture, with a consistency that is itself a witness to the King who produces it.

9. The Iranian Underground Church: The Triad Forged Under Pressure

The Iranian church has been treated in detail in the institute's *First-Century Church Structure* paper, where its historical arc and operational shape were documented. This chapter does not repeat that material. It examines the same body through the specific lens of this paper: what suffering produces in the saints, and what the triad looks like when it has been forged not in revival but in the daily reality of surveillance, arrest, imprisonment, exile, and the loss of every comfortable assumption.

9.1 What the Iranian Believer Has Been Stripped Of

Before naming what the Iranian believer has, it is necessary to name what the Iranian believer has been stripped of. The list is exhaustive. He has been stripped of public assembly. He has been stripped of legal recognition; conversion from Islam carries no legal protection and substantial legal jeopardy. He has been stripped of the right to read his Bible without consequence; printed Bibles in Persian are illegal, and possession of one can produce arrest. He has been stripped of family stability; converts from Islam regularly lose extended family relationships, and many lose immediate ones. He has been stripped of professional reliability; identification as a Christian

frequently ends careers. He has been stripped of geographic stability; many converts live in rotation through safe houses, and some are forced into exile. He has been stripped, in many cases, of his liberty itself; the Center for Human Rights in Iran and Article 18 reported that in 2024 alone, at least 96 Christians received combined prison sentences totaling 263 years.

Every comfortable Western assumption about what the Christian life requires has been removed from the Iranian believer's possible repertoire. He cannot rely on a building, a budget, a payroll, a celebrity, a brand, a conference, a denomination, a sound system, or a stage. He cannot rely on the legal protection of the state, the social respectability of his profession, the support of his family, or the safety of his home. Every prop the Western church believes it cannot live without has been kicked out from under him. And the Iranian church has not collapsed; it has, by every credible accounting, exploded into one of the fastest-growing evangelical movements in the world.

9.2 What the Iranian Believer Has

What he has, when every prop has been removed, is the triad. The fear of the Lord is alive in him because he has stood in rooms where his confession could cost him his life and he has confessed the King's name anyway. Humility is structural in his community because there is no platform that could feed the celebrity instinct; the leaders who emerge are the ones willing to be arrested first, and they know the cost they may yet pay. Wisdom is forged in him daily, because every decision — whom to trust, when to baptize, how to disciple, where to meet, what to write down and what to commit to memory only — is a decision with consequences. The Western seminary cannot produce wisdom of this kind, because the conditions that forge it cannot be replicated in the classroom.

Iranian believers have testified, again and again, to a recurring pattern. Converts come to Christ through dreams and visions of a man in white who tells them, “I am the way. Follow me.” They are baptized in bathtubs and rivers and basements. They join house churches that meet in rotating locations. They memorize the Scriptures they cannot legally possess. They lead and disciple in plural pairs because singular leaders are too easily arrested. They send out workers across the broader Persian-speaking world, including by satellite broadcast through SAT-7 Pars and through encrypted digital networks. And they have repeatedly testified that they count it an honor to suffer for the King. “We have tasted, and we have seen,” is the recurring phrase in the testimonies. The phrase is not a rhetorical device. It is the literal report of saints who have met the King in conditions the Western saint has not experienced and may yet experience.

9.3 What the Iranian Witness Presses on the Western Church

The Iranian witness presses three things on the Western church, and they should be received soberly, not as a rhetorical device but as the testimony of brothers and sisters who paid in coin to learn what they now know.

The first is that suffering clarifies what the comfortable cannot see. The Iranian believer has not had the option of building his Christianity on anything other than Christ Himself. He has been

forced to discover what the New Testament was telling all of us: that Christ alone is sufficient, that the Spirit alone is the power, that the body alone is the structure, and that everything else the West has built was scaffolding, not building. The Western saint who reads the Iranian testimonies and feels the conviction should not envy the suffering. He should ask whether his own life is being built on the substance the Iranian believer has been forced to find, or on the scaffolding the Iranian believer has been forced to do without.

The second is that the triad does not require the absence of suffering. It requires the presence of suffering. This inverts the comfortable Western assumption that the triad is a reward for spiritual discipline carried out in safe conditions. Scripture has never said that. The Iranian church confirms it. The fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom are forged in the press, not in the seminar room. The saint who has not yet been pressed has not yet been forged.

The third is the soberest. If the triad is what the King intends to give His bride, and if the conditions that forge the triad are not present in the comfortable West, then the King will, in His mercy, supply the conditions. He has done so in Iran by removing the comforts the Iranian believer once had. He may do so in the West by removing the comforts the Western believer currently has. The shaking documented in Chapter 6 of this paper is consistent with that pattern. The Western saint who reads the Iranian testimonies and feels both honor for the brothers and sisters and unease about his own preparation is reading rightly. The honor is appropriate. The unease is appropriate. The King is faithful. He will finish what He began. And what He intends to finish is the bride, not the building.

The Iranian church has nothing the Western church believes essential, and has everything the New Testament describes. The Western church has everything the Iranian church does without, and lacks much of what the New Testament names as the bride's actual fruit. The triad is the difference. The triad is what the King intends to forge in His bride wherever she is found, and the Iranian church is the present-hour proof that the forging works.

10. Asbury 2023 and the Gen Z Movement: The Triad Emerging in the Rising Generation

The third witness is the present hour. The institute's *First-Century Church Structure* paper documented the Gen Z campus revival as a witness to the King's bypass of the corporate religious apparatus. The *Shepherds, Not CEOs* paper documented the same movement as the structural gift that completes the multi-generation pattern the Jesus People movement lacked. This chapter examines the same material through the specific lens of this paper: the triad in the rising generation, with particular attention to the marker that has been most consistently named by participants and observers alike.

10.1 The Marker That Defined the Outpouring

On February 8, 2023, at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, a routine Wednesday morning chapel service did not end. Worship continued through the day, into the night, and onward for sixteen consecutive days, drawing tens of thousands of visitors before the university's leadership, in pastoral wisdom, brought the public phase to a close. The mainstream press covered it. The New York Times, Time, the Washington Post, the Economist, NBC, Fox, CNN, and dozens of other outlets reported on what was happening. The reporting was uneven, sometimes skeptical, occasionally generous. What is striking about the contemporaneous record is how consistently a single word appears in both the religious and the secular coverage: humility.

Christianity Today's reporting was titled “No Celebrities Except Jesus: How Asbury Protected the Revival.” The Asbury University president, Dr. Kevin Brown, in his official statement during the outpouring, named what he was watching: “countless expressions and demonstrations of radical humility, compassion, confession, consecration, and surrender unto the Lord.” Zach Meerkreebs, the chapel speaker on the morning the outpouring began, would later publish a book titled **Lower: Igniting Spiritual Awakening Through Radical Humility** and would name humility, repeatedly, as the central marker by which he and the other stewards recognized that the Lord was leading. Tim Keiderling, writing in **Plough** magazine after a conversation with President Brown, recorded Brown's summary: “a spiritual space opens up when we are humble.”

The structural details of the outpouring are themselves the evidence. There was no celebrity preacher. There was no headline name. The chapel speaker that morning, Meerkreebs, was a volunteer goalie coach for the soccer team and a guest speaker, not a prominent figure. The university leadership refused to livestream the gatherings until day twelve, and only then as a crowd-reduction measure. The university repeatedly asked guests not to record or share the meetings on social media, framing the outpouring as something to be sought on the saints' faces, not consumed on their phones. The leadership built and maintained a “consecration room” where worship leaders were called to repentance and humility before they could enter the main auditorium to lead, and worship leaders were known to step away from instruments mid-song when they sensed their own heart posture was off, returning to the consecration room before continuing. None of this was performative. The records consistently describe it as the natural posture of a body that had agreed, corporately and individually, to refuse what the contemporary worship industry had taught its leaders to want.

10.2 The Triad in the Rising Generation

Each branch of the triad was visibly present at Asbury and has continued to mark the broader movement that has spread from there. The fear of the Lord was present in the sustained repentance, the spontaneous confession, the consciousness of the holy presence that participants reported as the defining atmospheric feature of the gathering. Saints did not whip themselves into emotional response; they responded to what was already in the room before they entered. The fear of the Lord was the beginning of what occurred.

Humility was the marker by which the outpouring was recognized as genuine. Christian Smith and his colleagues had documented for nearly two decades the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism their generation had been raised in. Asbury was not that. The Asbury students were not seeking an experience that affirmed them. They were responding to a Lord who had begun to break them — and the brokenness was held with such structural humility, so deliberately protected from celebrity capture, that even secular observers had to find a different vocabulary than the one they had brought.

Wisdom emerged in the stewardship. The decisions Asbury's leadership made under pressure are the visible fruit of the wisdom the King had given them. They knew when to host. They knew when to close. They knew when to livestream and when to refuse. They knew how to receive guests and how to protect students. They knew how to consult forerunners and how to lead forward. The instinct — to protect rather than promote, to steward rather than scale, to refuse the spotlight rather than chase it — is itself a fruit of wisdom that cannot be manufactured. It has to be carried into the room by saints who have been formed in it. The Asbury leadership had been formed in it. The outpouring continued, and ended, accordingly.

10.3 The Multiplication and the Sober Note

Asbury was the flashpoint. By the spring of 2023, similar outpourings had been reported on dozens of campuses. By 2025 and 2026, the Salt Company campus ministry network was reporting unprecedented attendance and discipleship growth. The Southeastern University outpouring of February 2026, documented in earlier institute papers, exhibited the same structural humility — leadership consulted directly with the Asbury stewards, deliberately limited public attendance, refused the spotlight. United States Bible sales crossed ten million copies in 2025. Christian self-identification among Gen Z reversed a decades-long decline. The pattern is not one campus. The pattern is a generation.

A sober note must be added, and the institute will add it without weakening what has just been named. The Gen Z movement is real. It is not yet mature. Zeal in the young requires Scriptural formation, accountability to mature believers, and the operating manual of Proverbs to keep the zeal from drifting into the predictable failures of zeal without wisdom. The structural gift of the present hour, named in **Shepherds, Not CEOs**, is that the older layers are available to the younger ones — the Gen X and Boomer shepherds who have been refined by decades of pastoral labor are present and willing to walk alongside. Whether the multi-generational handoff is received in humility on both sides will determine what the present movement becomes. The Jesus People movement was domesticated by institutional absorption because its structural gift — the older generation with cleaned-up souls willing to accompany without controlling — was not in place. The present hour has that gift. It must be received in humility. The triad is being forged. It is not yet finished. The bride is being prepared, and what has begun is the beginning, not the end.

The marker of the present outpouring is the marker of every genuine outpouring in the historical record: the fear of the Lord, manifested in

repentance and reverence; humility, refusing the platform that would corrupt the work; wisdom, in the stewardship that knows when to gather, when to release, and what to refuse. Where the triad is present, the work is real. Where it is absent, the work is a counterfeit, however large the crowd.

11. Returning to the Ancient Paths: A Practical Roadmap

Criticism alone does not produce the triad. Diagnosis names the disease; restoration requires repentance and the practical disciplines that, by the King's grace, become the soil in which the triad grows. The roadmap below is offered to the saint, the household, and the shepherd in the hour of shaking. It is not a program. It is a set of disciplines the body has practiced for two thousand years, set down here in the institute's voice for the present moment.

Discipline	Restoration Action
Read Proverbs Daily	Read one chapter of Proverbs every day. The book has thirty-one chapters; the calendar has thirty or thirty-one days. The match is not accidental. Make this a household practice, not a private one. Read the chapter aloud. Discuss one or two verses at the table. Let the King's operating manual instruct your ordinary decisions.
Recover the Fear of the Lord in Your Devotional Life	Begin every reading of Scripture with the prayer of Psalm 19:9 or Proverbs 9:10. Read the prophets, the wisdom literature, and Hebrews 12 deliberately. Spend time in passages that exalt the holiness of God: Isaiah 6, Revelation 1 and 4, Habakkuk 3. The fear of the Lord cannot be manufactured, but it can be cultivated by the saint who deliberately places himself before texts that honor it.
Embrace the Furnace Without Resentment	When affliction comes — illness, financial pressure, marital crisis, the death of a parent, the disorientation of public events — do not treat it as an interruption to be solved. Treat it as the King's appointed instrument for the forging of the triad. Pray Psalm 119:71

Discipline	Restoration Action
	<p>over your own circumstances. Resist the bitterness that will be offered to you, and ask the King what the affliction is intended to teach you that prosperity could not.</p>
<p>Repent of Pride Specifically</p>	<p>Generic confession does not produce humility. Specific confession does. Name the places where you have sought recognition. Name the comparisons you make against other saints. Name the recognition you required and the offense you took when it was not given. Name the platforms, large or small, that have become idols. The Spirit will assist this examination if you ask Him to.</p>
<p>Walk in Plural Accountability</p>	<p>Solo Christianity is not the New Testament pattern, and humility is almost impossible to maintain in isolation. Belong to a small body where two or three saints know you, ask hard questions, and have permission to correct you. Receive the correction without explaining it away. The saint who cannot be corrected is the saint whose pride is no longer addressable.</p>
<p>Steward Your Finances by Wisdom, Not by Assumption</p>	<p>In light of the financial pressures named in Chapter 6, examine your household finances against the wisdom of Proverbs. Pay down debt where you can (Proverbs 22:7). Avoid surety for others (Proverbs 6:1–5; 22:26–27). Save against the lean season (Proverbs 6:6–8). Be generous to the poor (Proverbs 19:17; 22:9). The saint who has ordered his finances by Proverbs will not be destroyed by a bond crisis. The saint who has not should begin now.</p>
<p>Cleanse the Money Tables in Your Ministry</p>	<p>In light of the temple cleansing and the apostolic standard named in Chapter 2, examine the financial structure of any ministry you lead, support, or attend. Is the</p>

Discipline	Restoration Action
	<p>gospel itself being sold? Is discipleship gated behind paid programs? Is the worship gathering interrupted multiple times for appeals? Are conferences priced beyond the saints they are meant to serve? Are merchandise, courses, and access tiers layered onto the message? Where the answer is yes, the King's verdict is the temple cleansing. Repent specifically. Remove what cannot stand. Hold the right of support so loosely that the watching world cannot mistake the shepherd for a peddler. The fear of the Lord begins, for many shepherds, exactly here.</p>
<p>Build Capacity for Discernment</p>	<p>In light of the deception named in Chapter 6, build the capacity Scripture commends. Test the spirits (1 John 4:1). Test what is heard against the word (Acts 17:11). Refuse to give your assent to claims merely because they are reported by impressive sources, including pastors. Examine the claim against Scripture. Examine the claim against the historical witness of the body. Refuse the claim if it cannot pass either test, however large the platform from which it comes.</p>
<p>Honor the Multi-Generation Pattern</p>	<p>If you are older, read Proverbs alongside the younger saints in your gathering. Receive correction from them where the text corrects you. Walk alongside them in their zeal without controlling it. If you are younger, receive the older saints who walk in genuine humility and wisdom. Resist the temptation to dismiss them as the wineskin the institute's *First-Century Church Structure* paper described; that wineskin exists, and it is not every older saint. Honor those whose lives demonstrate the triad.</p>

Discipline	Restoration Action
Lead the Household Toward the Triad	If you are a head of household, lead your home toward the disciplines above. Read Proverbs at the table. Pray with your spouse and children. Confess sin in their hearing when appropriate. Refuse the entertainment patterns that train your family in the moralistic therapeutic god. Build a household in which the King's holiness, the King's mercy, and the King's wisdom are spoken of with reverence and applied to ordinary decisions.
Lead the Gathering Toward the Triad	If you are a shepherd, examine your weekly gathering against the triad. Where is the fear of the Lord cultivated? Where is humility modeled and called for? Where is the wisdom of Proverbs taught? If the answer is rarely or nowhere, do not despair — reform what you lead by the gradual, pastoral discipline the institute's earlier papers commend, and begin with your own soul. The shepherd who fears the Lord will, over time, lead a flock that fears the Lord. The shepherd who does not, will not.

Conclusion: The Bride the King Is Forging

The thesis of this paper has been narrow and concrete. The reformations of the previous papers — of the gathering, the pastorate, the method, the calendar, the civic life of a disciplined people — are necessary, and they are not sufficient. Without the fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom in the saints who fill them, the structures harden into the next form of the problem they were designed to correct. With the triad, the smallest gathering in the simplest home becomes what the New Testament describes.

The triad has been hollowed in the comfortable West. The hollowing is structural. It is the predictable harvest of forty years of engineered religious experience, therapeutic substitution, comfortable insulation from consequence, celebrity pulpit, and the unread Proverbs canon. None of this is the fault of any single saint. All of it is the responsibility of every saint who recognizes what has been lost.

The King is now shaking what cannot remain. The cascade of fallen ministries, the pressure rising in the financial system, the disclosure apparatus that is now reaching for the pulpit — these are the early tremors of a shaking the King is using to recover in His bride what comfort took from her. He is not destroying the bride. He is preparing her. The pain is real. The purpose is precise. The fruit will come afterward, and it will be worth what the furnace cost.

The witnesses are present. Herrnhut testifies that the triad can fall on a quarreling community in a single communion service and produce a hundred years of intercession and a global missionary movement. The Welsh Revival testifies that the triad can sweep through a nation in months and reduce the magistrates' caseload while it raises the saints. The Iranian underground testifies that the triad is forged in the press and that the fruit is worth the cost. Asbury and the broader Gen Z movement testify that the King is already at work in the rising generation, with the marker of humility so visible that even the secular press has had to record it. The bride the King is forging is not a future hope. She is in the room.

The King is calling His people back:

- From manufactured experience to the actual fear of the Lord.
- From branded confidence to the humility that bends the knee.
- From accumulated technique to the wisdom of Proverbs.
- From the avoidance of suffering to the embrace of the furnace.
- From self-reliance to dependence on the Spirit.
- From the platform that produces pride to the obscurity that produces saints.
- From the entertainment of the soul to the discipline of the soul.
- From the moralistic therapeutic god to the holy God of Sinai and Calvary.

The cost of obedience is real. The bride who emerges will not look like the church most Western Christians have known. She will be smaller in some places and larger in others. She will be poorer

in dollars and richer in saints. She will be less impressive on a livestream and more dangerous in a city. She will be unmistakable. She will fear the Lord. She will walk in humility. She will carry wisdom into rooms where men have spoken for generations without it. And she will be ready for the deception that is coming, because the King will have forged her for exactly this hour.

“Ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it.” — Jeremiah 6:16, NKJV

The King is not interested in giving His bride better machinery. He is interested in giving her Himself. He gives Himself most fully to those who fear Him, walk humbly with Him, and carry His wisdom into rooms where men have spoken for centuries without it. The furnace is already lit. The refiner is already at work. The bride who emerges will be unmistakable, and the King will not be ashamed to call her His own. Choose this day whether you will resist the forging or yield to it. The hand that holds the hammer is the hand that was nailed to the cross.

COVENANT DECREE

A Final Seal Upon the Ancient Paths

NOW IS THE TIME. THE TIME IS NOW.

$\sin^2t + \cos^2t = 1$

As the Bride recovers the interior marks of the fear of the Lord, humility, and wisdom, we decree that every spirit of pride, every false confidence, and every shallow wisdom of the age is humbled, and the reverent fear of the Lord becomes the very foundation of His people once again.

This decree is sealed in the Courts of Heaven and upon the pages of this document by the authority of the finished work of the Cross and the reclaimed master clock of the Kingdom.

It is finished.

GOD WINS — not eventually, but now.

Sealed by the Authority of the King of Kings

Appendix A: Scripture Map for the Triad

Theme	Primary Passages
The Triad Braided Together	Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; 22:4; Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10
The Fear of the Lord	Genesis 22:12; Exodus 20:18–20; Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:12, 20; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; 33:8; 34:11; 86:11; 111:10; 112:1; 128:1; Proverbs 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 14:26–27; 19:23; 23:17; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 6:1–5; 33:6; Acts 9:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:28–29; Revelation 1:17; 14:7

Theme	Primary Passages
Humility	Genesis 32:24–31 (Jacob at Peniel – the limp); Numbers 12:3; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 25:9; 51:17; 138:6; Proverbs 3:34; 11:2; 15:33; 16:18–19; 18:12; 22:4; 27:2; 29:23; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:3; 18:1–4; 23:11–12; Mark 10:42–45; Luke 14:11; 18:9–14; John 13:1–17; Philippians 2:3–8; James 4:6, 10; 1 Peter 5:5–6
Wisdom	1 Kings 3:5–14; Job 12:13; 28; Psalm 51:6; 90:12; 111:10; Proverbs 1–9 (the wisdom prologue); 10–31 (the wisdom proverbs); Ecclesiastes 1–2, 7, 12; Isaiah 11:2; Jeremiah 9:23–24; Daniel 1:17; 2:20–23; Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 21:15; Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31; 2:6–7; Ephesians 1:17; 5:15–17; Colossians 1:9; 2:3; 3:16; James 1:5; 3:13–18
The Furnace and the Forging	Deuteronomy 8:2–3; Job 23:10; Psalm 66:10–12; 119:67, 71, 75; Proverbs 17:3; Isaiah 48:10; Jeremiah 9:7; Daniel 4 (Nebuchadnezzar's humbling); Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2–3; Romans 5:3–5; 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18; Hebrews 12:5–11; James 1:2–4; 1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:12–19
The Discipline of Sons	Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 3:11–12; 13:24; Hebrews 12:5–11; Revelation 3:19
The Pattern of Nebuchadnezzar	Daniel 4:1–37 (the entire chapter); Daniel 5:18–23 (Belshazzar's failure to learn from his father); Isaiah 14:12–15 (the archetype of pride); Ezekiel 28:1–19 (the pride of Tyre)
The Pride of the Comfortable	Deuteronomy 6:10–12; 8:11–20; 32:15; Proverbs 30:7–9; Hosea 13:6; Amos 6:1–7; Luke 6:24–26; 12:13–21; Revelation 3:14–19 (Laodicea)

Theme	Primary Passages
Money, Mammon, and the Gospel Without Charge	Deuteronomy 25:4 (do not muzzle the ox); Proverbs 23:4–5; 28:20, 22; 30:8–9 (Agur's prayer); Matthew 6:24 (God and mammon); 10:8 (freely give); 21:12–13 (the temple cleansing); Mark 11:15–17; Luke 12:13–14; 19:45–46; John 2:13–16; Acts 8:18–23 (Simon Magus); 20:33–35 (Paul's farewell); 1 Corinthians 9:7–18 (right held, right renounced); 2 Corinthians 11:7–9; 12:13–18; 1 Thessalonians 2:5–9; 1 Timothy 3:3; 5:17–18; 6:5–10; 2 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7, 11; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 5:2; 2 Peter 2:1–3, 14–15
The Wisdom of Proverbs Applied	Sexual purity (Proverbs 5–7); the use of money and debt (6:1–5; 11:15; 22:7, 26–27); diligence and laziness (6:6–11; 13:4; 24:30–34); the tongue (10:19; 12:18; 15:1; 17:27–28; 18:13, 21); friendship (13:20; 22:24–25; 27:17); raising children (13:24; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17); anger (14:29; 16:32; 19:11; 29:22); pride and humility (11:2; 16:18; 18:12; 27:2; 29:23); leadership (16:10–15; 25:2–5; 29:2, 4, 12, 14); receiving correction (9:8–9; 12:1; 13:18; 15:31–32; 27:5–6)
The Coming Deception and the Bride's Discernment	Genesis 3:15 (the ancient enmity); Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24; Mark 13:5–6, 22; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 (the mystery of lawlessness); 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:1–9; 4:3–4; 1 John 4:1–6; Revelation 13:11–18; 16:13–14; 19:20
The Valley of Decision and the Choice of Households	Deuteronomy 30:15–20; Joshua 24:14–15 (“as for me and my house”); 1 Kings 18:21 (Elijah at Carmel); Joel 3:14 (the valley of decision); Matthew 7:13–14 (the two ways); Acts 2:40 (“Be saved from this perverse generation”)

Theme	Primary Passages
The Bride Prepared	Isaiah 61:10–11; 62:1–5; Ephesians 5:25–27; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7–9; 21:2, 9–11; 22:17

Appendix B: Method of Examination

This white paper follows the five-lens method established for the Ancient Paths series. A church form is never neutral — a room teaches, a schedule teaches, a stage teaches, a budget teaches, a seating arrangement teaches. The question is whether our forms teach the kingdom of Jesus or the control systems of men.

Lens	Governing Question
Scripture	What did Jesus teach, what did the apostles practice, and what commands govern this matter?
Language	What do the original Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic terms reveal about God’s intent that translation may obscure?
History	When did later patterns enter, and what cultural forces shaped them?
Theology	What does this practice or form teach people to believe about God, leadership, worship, and their own calling?
Application	What must modern pastors, believers, and households do in response?

Appendix C: Historical and Pastoral Guardrails

Strong critique must be joined to careful history and humble pastoral care. The following guardrails keep the argument sharp without becoming careless or unjust:

- Do not read this paper as a glorification of suffering. Suffering is not good in itself; it is good in the King's hand because of what He produces through it. The institute does not commend suffering as a goal. It names the soil in which the triad has historically grown, and warns the comfortable saint not to mistake the absence of suffering for spiritual maturity.

- Do not weaponize the Iranian witness. The Iranian church has paid a price the comfortable West has not. The institute names Iran as a witness, not as a rhetorical tool. Pray for Iranian believers. Support ministries that serve them. Do not invoke their suffering to score points in domestic Western debates.
- Do not claim the comfortable Western church is uniquely fallen or that historical and contemporary persecuted churches are uniquely faithful. Every body of believers in every century carries treasure in clay vessels. The institute names patterns, not absolutes. Many sincere Western saints walk in the triad faithfully, and many persecuted saints have failed in the same ways comfortable saints fail. The point is structural, not absolute.
- Do not claim that every account of the disclosure-meeting story or every detail attributed to the meeting is verified fact. The named pastors are on the public record. The reporting from Newsweek, *International Business Times*, and other outlets is on the record. The structural concern is real. The institute does not stake its argument on the precision of any single detail beyond what the named participants have themselves stated.
- Do not use the financial warning in Chapter 6 as a basis for predicting timing or for fear-driven financial decisions. The institute reports what Jamie Dimon has stated publicly. It does not predict when or whether any specific crisis will occur. Saints who order their finances by Proverbs will be served by that wisdom regardless of what the markets do. Saints who panic will not.
- Do not flatten the book of Proverbs into a self-help manual. Proverbs is wisdom literature inside the larger canon, dependent on the gospel of Christ for its salvific weight. The institute commends Proverbs as the King's practical instruction for ordinary life. It does not commend Proverbs as a substitute for the gospel. The cross is what saves. Proverbs is what shapes the saved into wise saints.
- Do not romanticize the Asbury outpouring or the Gen Z movement. Both are real. Both are immature. Zeal in the young requires Scriptural formation and accountability. The institute commends what the King is doing in the rising generation while naming the work as ongoing, not finished.
- Do not weaponize this paper to leave a faithful local church in anger. If the Spirit is convicting you of pride, lukewarmness, or unwisdom, the answer is repentance and the disciplines of Chapter 11. If the Spirit is convicting you that your shepherd is unfaithful, the answer is the patient pastoral process the earlier institute papers have described, not the public and bitter departure that destroys saints rather than reforms them.
- Do not collapse the institute's argument on money into a blanket condemnation of all paid ministry or vocational shepherds. Paul affirmed the right of support; the institute affirms it. Many faithful pastors and elders are honestly compensated for honest labor and are doing the King's work without exploiting the saints. The argument is against the over-saturation of monetization, the gating of the gospel itself, and the structural arrangements that turn worship into a marketplace — not against the principle of supported ministry. The discernment required is the same one Paul exercised: the right exists and may, in particular contexts, need to be renounced for the gospel's sake.

- Do not equate accumulated experience with wisdom. Older saints, like younger ones, must continue to be corrected by Proverbs and by the Spirit. Age is not authority. Faithful walking with the Lord is. The institute honors the older saint who continues to be teachable, and refuses to flatter the older saint who has stopped being so.

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