

CHURCH SHIFT

SUNDAY ADELAJA

Charisma
HOUSE
A STRANG COMPANY

Contents

	Preface: A Word From the Author	xxi
	Prologue.	xxv
1	People Power	1
2	The Kingdom-Minded Church	15
3	Finding Your Promised Land.	29
4	Becoming Kingdom Minded	49
5	Hard Work Leads to Success.	71
6	Thriving in Persecution	81
7	Go to the Least of These	93
8	Learn to Fight!	101
9	You Are a Deliverer.	115
10	Imposing the Kingdom on the Culture.	133
11	When to Stop Praying	147
12	The Orange Revolution	157
13	The World Is Waiting for You	175
	Epilogue.	185
	Notes	189

Chapter 1

PEOPLE POWER

I COULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT GOD WAS TELLING ME TO do. I kept pacing the floor in my place of prayer where I had determined to spend a week alone with God. And I kept resisting Him.

“But Lord, what you’re telling me to do is unsanctioned and dangerous,” I said. “We could be shot. The government might bring their tanks out. People might be killed. At the very least our reputation in Ukraine could be ruined.”

But God was not budging. During that entire week I spent in prayer, His answer to me remained the same: He wanted my church to openly protest against our government in Kyiv.

In my mind this was not just foolish, it was dangerous. It was like declaring war on the government. We could be treated harshly, jailed, or shot, as had happened to protesters in the past.

Even though Ukraine was not officially communist anymore, the people of the nation still lived under a mind-set of oppression. For many years the Soviet Union had taught the Ukrainian people to unquestionably submit to authority. Though the Soviet Union was gone, people still couldn't imagine a government that respected them. So the government felt free to treat people as sheep and servants. There was no accountability in the leadership as there is in a democracy. Leaders were as corrupt as they wanted to be, and the people simply accepted it as the way things would always be. They continued to hide their thoughts and feelings deep down inside and pretended to agree with the government. Even though Ukraine had become independent more than a decade earlier, people still feared that the persecutions and concentration camps of the Soviet era would somehow return.

As a result there were no protests and few peaceful gatherings in Ukraine. People did not want to provoke the government. They were fatalistic. The country was frozen in place. Nobody dared step out of line. The underlying threat of violence or hardship against anyone who promoted what the government deemed "social upheaval" was well understood. Groups that gathered without government approval could be met with bullets and tanks, prison terms, harassment, or at least the scorn of the country. It was one thing for a political group to protest, but it was an entirely different thing for a church to bring out its people in a mass protest.

For us, a church already viewed with suspicion by many Ukrainians, any hint of civil disobedience was very risky. Pastoring an evangelical church in Ukraine and other Eastern European countries is a delicate tightrope walk between a hostile culture, suspicious government leaders, a highly educated atheist elite, and unjust laws that keep your church disenfranchised. Ukraine prizes itself on its

educational system, all atheist based, that has produced fourteen Nobel Prize winners. As the motherland of the Orthodox church, Ukraine people are conditioned to believe that the Orthodox church is the only true church, an emblem of their culture more than a place to worship God, and that other churches are cults, foreign interlopers, even cover organizations for spies. We had fought that impression for years by working peacefully in Ukraine and serving the people. We started a soup kitchen that fed two thousand people daily—more than a million people overall. We raised up businessmen in the church through our business training programs. We held marriage preparation courses, counseling for unwed mothers, and men's conferences that helped to create strong families and a more stable society. We worked in AIDS prevention and drug rehabilitation, helping three thousand people to become free from addictions. We were curing many of society's ills without a penny of government money. We were doing the work of God without posing a threat to anyone. We were serving Ukraine in love.

But our country still treated us with suspicion and made laws to constrain us. In fact, we were facing a crisis at that moment because as a "cult" we were told we were not allowed to buy land, even though ours was the largest evangelical church in all of Europe. Imagine having a church of thousands and being barred from building your own sanctuary. That was our situation (and it continues to be the situation for many or most evangelical churches in the former Soviet Union). The Orthodox church and its allies in the government had painted us as an army of zombies and accused me of being a charismatic leader who kept the church members hypnotized. Never mind that the Embassy of God fed more people than the city government of Kyiv and that all our

efforts were making the country more stable and prosperous. We were still labeled a threat to Ukraine's national identity.

We had avoided direct confrontation with the government for a decade, but then our building lease came up for renewal, and the government decided to kick us out so they could renovate the property. We had nowhere else to go. No place was large enough. Bulldozers were parked outside our current facility, waiting to move in. Soon we were forced to meet outside in the rain and snow for our services. The largest church in Europe had become homeless.

At the beginning of the crisis I had done what I always did—I went to God. He had never failed me, and I knew He would have our solution. I wasn't the least bit worried, but as I prayed, I received no answer. God seemed silent. I prayed for months, then for a full year, as the tractors moved in and our lease expired and the building's owners shut off the plumbing. Our people began to wonder where we would go. Still, God gave me no guidance on the subject. His silence shook me more than anything. I could handle government oppression—I had been dealing with that since I had come to the Soviet Union in the 1980s. I could handle crises involving our church location. We had moved often, changing locations half a dozen times in one five-year period. We had bounced all around the city—and still had grown. Man-made problems didn't alarm me. But the silence of God did. Where was my ever-present help? What had I done wrong?

Finally, His reply came during a time of intense prayer: "Stand up to the city government. Don't let them shove you around anymore." His answer challenged me to my core. I was so unprepared to accept it that I cleared my schedule and took another

week in prayer to make sure I had heard correctly. I prayed all day for seven days, and God's message to me did not change. He was preparing us to have a bigger impact than I had anticipated. We just had to learn to listen.

PEOPLE POWER

God told me to take our church to the streets of Kyiv in protest. "The people are the power," He said. "Use the power you have." Such a move was unprecedented in Ukraine. But God opened my eyes to see that to complete the Great Commission, we must have impact upon nations, not just people in churches. Transforming nations requires bold steps. We could no longer be concerned with just preserving what we had or adding numbers to our congregation; we were being called to move strongly into every sphere of society. That included using methods we had never considered, like public protest.

My views on civil disobedience were traditional and conservative. I believed Christians were never to disobey or demonstrate against the government but rather to humbly submit to it because it bears God's authority and power to punish. I was not afraid of the punishment, but I certainly wanted to obey God, and so I taught myself and my people to honor the government and comply with its laws.

But in that place of prayer, alone and broken, God showed me I was wrong. He took me through the Book of Acts and showed me that civil disobedience can be righteous when you are fighting unrighteousness. He showed me how the disciples had disobeyed the law when the law prohibited them from preaching in the name

of Jesus. (See Acts 5.) I had never seen that as civil disobedience before, but now I did. Not only did they disobey the law, but also God backed them up in it. In our situation, even though peaceful demonstrations were allowed by law, we still needed special permission from the government to conduct such a protest. Those special permissions were never issued.

I left that time of prayer sure of what I needed to do. God's message rang in my ears: "The people are the power. Use the people."

I announced to our church leaders what we had to do, and many of them rejected it out of hand.

"That's suicide," said one.

"It's unbiblical," said a few others.

I had already girded myself, knowing I would have to do battle with my friends before fighting the real battle in the streets of Kyiv. Then I told the church what I believed God wanted us do. Letters of resignation arrived on my desk almost immediately. "We have families and businesses," people wrote. "We are afraid. We don't want the government to clamp down on us like in communist times."

To try to restore unity, I told the church leadership to take a week off and seek God for an answer. These twelve men did that, and they came back with a confirmation of what God had told me. They were as astonished as I had been, and now they too were preparing for the battle to come. God was about to teach us one of the most important lessons to influence a nation, which is: you will never accomplish it if you remain within the four walls of the church.

Through it all we were discovering what the Great Commission really means. God had been teaching us that our mission as believers is to save nations, not just evangelize individuals and build

churches. God is not terribly concerned with church size and church ministries. These are all sidelights to His main goal, which is for all nations to walk after Him in kingdom principles. The church fulfills its mandate when it changes society, not when it's confined to its sanctuary and Sunday school classrooms. The church is to build the kingdom of God in a nation. The kingdom must overflow into streets and workplaces, governments and entertainment venues. That is its nature, to grow and take over. If you try to keep it to yourself, you lose it.

And we didn't want to lose it.

CHURCH-FOCUSED CHURCHES

Too many Christians and Christian leaders spend their energy, creativity, and precious time promoting churches instead of the kingdom. They work for the success of their church, or perhaps for a group of churches in their city, or they work for their ministry or denomination. They believe that by building churches and ministries they are building the kingdom. They think *church* and *kingdom* are practically synonymous. This isolation of the church from the world has led to ineffectiveness and failure to carry out the Great Commission.

But the church is not the kingdom. Jesus said in Luke 17:21, "Nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." It's not confined to temples and churches. No church can contain or control the kingdom of God. The kingdom is meant to inhabit the entire earth, not just your church sanctuary.

The Great Commission is not what many of us have understood it to be. We have understood it to be evangelism—bringing people from the world into our church buildings. But the Great Commission mandate is to go out and disciple nations. The focus is not *in here*, but *out there*. This was Jesus’s goal in coming to Earth. It is supposed to be our goal as redeemed people. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 says:

Go and make disciples of all nations.

Jesus did not say, “Go and build great churches.” He did not even say, “Go and save individuals.” He never said, “May thy church come on Earth as it is in heaven.” Neither did He say, “Seek ye first the church and all its righteousness.” Rather, His heartbeat is for nations to be ruled by kingdom principles. That is the calling of every believer and of every church.

So why has our attention been lavished on personal evangelism and building churches? The problem is our mind-set. We often forget that the kingdom has come. We forget we have been called to rule our promised lands—and to rule nations. We forget about the power we received from Jesus Christ. So our attention is drawn to churches. Building a church seems much more manageable than transforming a nation.

My own religious background taught me that the kingdom of God was all about heaven, not Earth. I thought kingdom work took place after we die, once we had passed over into the kingdom. I misread the Bible and the words of Jesus. I made the kingdom of God all about the future, and so my focus and purpose in life were off course. I was having little impact on the world around me. But

because God wanted to do something in Ukraine that was much bigger than our “big church” or me, He graciously taught us to take a proactive position in society, to go outside our building and enforce His authority over an ungodly nation and government.

Today many people sit in church pews hoping to make it to the kingdom of God, and they don't realize that, according to Jesus, the kingdom is here and now. Nobody has to die to see the kingdom. We are as close as we will ever get. Jesus didn't leave the kingdom of God in heaven when He came to Earth. He brought it with Him. The born-again believer is in the kingdom at this moment. We can stop hoping for it—it came two thousand years ago, and it is present with us now.

When we forget that the kingdom is here and now, we shrink from our calling to disciple nations. We want to use the church as our escape hatch from the world's problems. The battle is certainly fierce, but God is sending Christians not to hide out in, or even build, churches but to have impact in their lives and on the nations of the world. If you are trying only to build a church, your goal is wrong. The promise of God is, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance” (Ps. 2:8).

Imagine that! We are meant to inherit nations. We are responsible not for sanctuaries and Sunday school rooms but for our nations. We are not separate from our nations in God's sight. We belong to nations. God will hold us responsible for nations. We cannot flee into the church and think our hands will be washed clean of all that happens outside. We are called to the world to restore the kingdom. And if there is any nation that is suffering under a godless culture, it's because Christians have not subdued it with kingdom principles. God did not answer our church's many prayers to resolve our

problem of having a place of worship because He had something bigger in mind—the salvation of the nation, not just providing a new place for us to gather.

Some people believe that if they work in the nursery or sing in the choir, they are fulfilling their area of ministry. But this is not really ministry. It is merely housekeeping. Your work as a choir member, nursery volunteer, or usher is what we all must do to keep the church functioning, but it is not necessarily fulfilling the Great Commission. The Great Commission happens outside the church. Ministry is what you do to bring your life and your sphere of influence under kingdom rule.

THE KINGDOM-DRIVEN CHURCH

Church has never been the focus of the Great Commission, but it has always been the most important tool for carrying out the Great Commission. The church is the primary vehicle God uses to train people so they know how to find their promised land and rule in their nation. Church is the headquarters, but battles are not fought at headquarters. They are fought in the field.

First Timothy 3:15 calls the church the pillar and foundation of the truth. It upholds the kingdom by being the school, the equipping place, and the place of support for world changers. But our focus must remain outside, not inside. We are to go from the “school” into the world and bring the powerful kingdom principles to bear on its problems.

When Christians change the goal of the church and make it a place of conservation and escape rather than equipping and sending, we are working against the Great Commission. We

are conserving crowds, not sending them out. We are hoarding kingdom resources, namely, people and their gifts. In many churches, God's workers are in captivity. They are like prisoners and the pastors are the wardens.

We are not called to huddle inside the church sanctuary but to restore the kingdom of God to the world. But some Christians and preachers misinterpret the word *ecclesia*, the Greek word for "church," which means literally "called-out ones." They mistakenly believe it means we are to be "called away from the world." This is a grave error. Jesus said in John 17:15, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."

As a church we are "called out" from the evil principles of this world, but we are still required to live here. We are not built for monasteries. Our calling is to operate from a different and superior set of principles than the world we live in. The church is to train us to be Christlike, to embody Jesus and His principles, so that in everyday life we may operate from a godly perspective. That's what the church is for. That's why we come on Sunday. That's why we preach, teach, and worship together.

God holds the church responsible for societies. It is the most potent organization in the world because it was started by Jesus and is His bride. No other entity in the world is as important as the church, in spite of all its failures; it is the hope of God because through it, and only it, the kingdom can come.

But the church is only relevant on Earth. It is irrelevant in heaven. When the church gets to heaven, it will become one with Christ. So the task of the church is here and now to bring the kingdom to Earth. Churches come and go, but the kingdom is everlasting.

Our focus must be on the kingdom and on redeeming nations. The church is to be the training ground for people who will impact the society around them.

As I and the people in my church began to grasp our kingdom calling, our fear melted away. We decided to take the massive risk and march on city hall, even in the face of danger. “The people are the power,” God had told me. It was time to take that power to the streets. Little did we know that this act of obedience to a divine instruction from heaven, though unconventional, would go a long way to shaping the history of our nation.

As we obeyed, we learned impacting principles that we had never discovered before. I will share them with you now. It’s what I call “churchshift.”

KINGDOM PRINCIPLES FROM CHAPTER 1

1. The church fulfills its mandate when it changes society, not when it is confined to its sanctuary and Sunday school classrooms.
2. This isolation of the church from the world has led to ineffectiveness and failure to carry out the Great Commission.
3. The Great Commission mandate is to go out and disciple nations.
4. Ministry is what you do to bring your life and your sphere of influence under kingdom rule.
5. We are not called to huddle inside the church sanctuary but to restore the kingdom of God to the world.
6. God holds the church responsible for societies.
7. The church is to be the training ground for people who will impact the society around them.

Chapter 2

THE KINGDOM- MINDED CHURCH

THE DECISION TO STAND UP TO OUR GOVERNMENT was not our first effort to reach our nation for God, but it was the most dramatic to date, and it became a watershed moment for us and for the entire nation of Ukraine. We had very good reason to believe our lives were in danger. The last time any group had gone to the streets in such massive protest was a few years before, and people had been shot. So we proceeded very carefully. We requested permission from the city to gather. The city denied us permission. We tried every angle we could to conform to the law, but we were stonewalled.

Opposition from within the church also increased. More people wrote letters of resignation. Others loudly opposed our plans. They wanted to remain at the level of safety and influence we'd always had. But God had spoken: if we did not move forward down this difficult avenue, the kingdom would stop advancing through us. We could not let that happen.

On Monday, November 13, 2003, three thousand members of our church took the bravest step of our lives and marched on city hall. We took buses to the city center and walked a kilometer to city hall. As we flooded the streets, traffic stopped. Commerce all but halted. Nothing could move.

There was an unexpected surprise: the prime minister of Turkey was visiting that day, and the country's capital was paralyzed—by a church group! We were rejoicing, blessing everyone in sight, carrying big banners, celebrating, and singing praises. The government was embarrassed to have this incident during a state visit and wanted to avoid national disgrace.

We arrived at city hall and held an outdoor meeting. We prayed for the government, then spoke to the leaders through a megaphone: “We elected you. You are supposed to serve us, so we are blessing you, praying for you. Don't be against your own people.”

I appealed to them to extend the lease on our land or provide us land to build on. But the city hall building remained quiet. Nobody came out. In an atmosphere of growing tension, we wondered what their response would be.

DOES GOD REALLY CARE ABOUT NATIONS?

Many people in today's church have a hard time believing that God cares about nations and societies. They think He is solely concerned with individuals or with His chosen people. But the Bible is very clear: God wants to redeem nations. His redemptive work on the cross is for nations as well as individuals. That's why He said to go preach the gospel to all nations and to disciple nations. God eagerly awaits the redemption of the nations.

Throughout the Bible, God's nation focus is clear. In a significant passage in Exodus 4:22, God uses interesting language to describe the nation of Israel. He calls it, "My son, My firstborn" (NKJV). It is instructive that God uses a first-person description for a nation. Normally, *son* refers to an individual. In Malachi 3:17 God did it again, speaking through the prophet that He would spare Israel "as a man spares his own son who serves him" (NKJV). I believe God is teaching us about His attitude toward nations. In His eyes, nations are not just some abstract entity. Nations are as tangible and precious to Him as individuals.

If God saved the nation of Israel, His firstborn, logically He wants to do the same for all other nations, which are His children. Israel was the beginning of a global campaign. God wants preeminence in all things in every nation. Jesus promised in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." He wants to adopt as sons all nations, not just individuals. In Matthew 28:18–20, He gave "all authority in heaven and on earth" to the disciples to be used to disciple nations, not just

individuals. There will be no end to the increase of His government, says Isaiah 9:7.

Have you ever wondered why God has such great respect for man's governments? Why does He teach us to obey and respect them and submit to their authority? If God is only concerned with saving individuals, why doesn't He tell us to simply ignore man's systems of rule? The reason is that government is God's idea. He has a government of His own, and He wants men to rule justly on the earth in their own governments. God created governments as systems of justice for Himself. He wants to administer the earth with justice through kingdom-minded leaders. Even if the government is being administered badly, it is still a God-ordained institution. That's why Paul said in Romans that every government is from God. As kingdom people we are not allowed to ignore governments, because they are established by God and are part of His plan for this earth. Our purpose is to make those governments act justly and according to all kingdom principles.

Church reformers like Martin Luther in previous ages had this national focus; they wanted to bring nations to their knees before God. But today too many Christians have scaled back their ambitions. It's time to be ambitious again. It's time to shift our churches! Until the children of the almighty God act like His representatives on the earth, nothing will change in our countries. It does not matter how big our churches get or how wealthy they become or how beautiful we build them. The destiny of your land is in the hands of the church and her willingness to declare the position of God in the society.

NOT OF THIS WORLD?

Some people object to this teaching and quote John 18:36, where Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world... my kingdom is from another place.” Christians have been using this phrase out of context for decades to forfeit this realm to Satan and neglect their calling to the nations. If His kingdom is not of this world, then we have no real assignment here except for evangelism and individual personal development. The hard work of restoring nations to the kingdom doesn’t matter. These people turn Jesus’s meaning on its head and twist His kingdom message into an antikingdom message.

Let’s consider this passage in context. Pilate was quizzing Jesus about the source of Jesus’s authority. He asked Him, “Are you the king of the Jews?... It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me” (John 18:33, 35). In response, Jesus said that His authority and assignment came from heaven, not from Earth. The Jews could not make Him a king; God the Father already had. Because men did not give Jesus His authority, they could not take it away from Him. He was operating with orders from a superior kingdom. That’s why He said, “My kingdom is not of this world.”

Did this mean He did not care about the earth? Of course not. The opposite is true. He came to Earth to bring the kingdom of God back to it. He cared about the world enough that He left a superior place and brought the superior principles of that place to a corrupted sphere. He wasn’t saying He didn’t care about the world, but that the world’s kingdoms are not the source of His authority. Jesus’s kingdom has everything to do with the earth and humanity, but it does not derive from them. “The one who comes from above

is above all,” Jesus said in John 3:31. He operates from above. So should we.

As followers of Jesus, our kingdom is not *of* this world, but that kingdom should rule this world here and now. Jesus specifically prayed that we would not be removed from the world (John 17). Jesus also said to occupy until He returns (Luke 19:13, KJV). Mark 1:15 and Luke 11:20 say the kingdom is at hand. It’s here. It’s now. It’s what our lives are supposed to be about. And Daniel 2:44 says His kingdom will crush all others. The real focus of every Christian’s life, and of all our church activities, is promoting the kingdom of God in every sphere of our nations. This was humanity’s first mission, and it remains our primary mission.

OUR UNCHANGING MISSION

Our kingdom mandate predates the birth of Christ by thousands of years. God created this earth for mankind to rule. God said:

Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

—Genesis 1:26

God gave us this corner of the universe to reign, just as He is reigning over the universe. Adam was created in the image and after the likeness of God to rule the earth. He fellowshiped and communed with God; he dressed and kept the Garden of Eden. The glory of the kingdom was present in the Garden of Eden, and

men were to multiply it. But when mankind sinned, we lost the glory of the kingdom. Catastrophe came to every sphere of life.

But God had a plan in place to restore the kingdom to earth as originally planned. Isaiah and Habakkuk prophesied that the glory of God would cover the earth again (Isa. 40:5; Hab. 2:14). That possibility returned to us with the arrival of Jesus, whose primary assignment was to restore the kingdom by restoring man's original purpose to us. The kingdom solves all problems. That's why John the Baptist said it was good news (Luke 3:18). The thing that was lost was coming back! Through the Second Adam—Jesus—God's original plan is being carried out, to have an earthly sphere entirely ruled by kingdom principles.

Think of it this way. When God created Adam, He put all nations in one person. All people who have ever lived came from Adam. You and I were in Adam. We share his DNA. His sin became our sin through inheritance (Rom. 5). God created a seed of a second Adam so all of us could become righteous through Him. In Jesus, God the Father put the ability to restore all nations. Jesus carried the redeemed nations in Him, spiritually speaking. That's why He could die for all nations, not just the Jews.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man,
and death through sin, and in this way death came to all
men, because all sinned.

—Romans 5:12

God offered as a sacrifice His Son Jesus Christ in order to redeem the power and the authority from Satan and return dominion over the earth to man.

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

—Romans 5:17–18

God now expects us to move in the authority and power that Adam was originally given. We don't need to keep on looking at ourselves as if we are still not redeemed. No, we are back in Eden. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Everyone who comes to Jesus and repents of his sins acquires the holiness, righteousness, power, and authority of Jesus Christ. He has transferred to us, His disciples, this power that He won back. That's why God calls us earthly kings and priests—because we are called to deliver this planet from evil (Rev. 5:10).

God will not supernaturally spread the kingdom, because that would rob man of his purpose. Spreading the kingdom is our job. The redemption of our friends, family, communities, and countrymen literally depends on the actions of the church. If the church doesn't start fighting corruption, it will keep flourishing in the country. If the church doesn't object to immorality, society will keep sliding more and more toward lawlessness. God wants the church to become the standard-bearer of order and righteousness in every country. As the apostle Peter wrote:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

—1 Peter 2:9

Salvation has made it possible for us to rule as Adam did.

BIG AMBITIONS

That's a big ambition, and any church that is focused on winning its nation to God has big ambitions indeed. But a church that is not focused on discipling nations exchanges big ambitions for small ones without even realizing it. Many churches think they are stretching themselves by building a new sanctuary or youth wing or buying a church bus. But God's ambitions are vastly bigger. He is sending Christians to impact entire societies. The promise of God is that we can ask Him to give us the nations, not just a bigger church building.

Sometimes my minister friends in America tell me how God is blessing them by increasing attendance at their church and granting them all sorts of earthly blessings. They tell me they're believing in faith for a thousand more members, a new car, a television show, and so on. I say, "If you want to use your faith to get a new car or more church members, fine. But I'm using my faith to subdue and change a nation." There is nothing wrong with houses and earthly blessings, but those things are just tools. Some Christians become satisfied with the tools. But the real reward is nations. God wants to make many of us greater than we ever thought we would be.

Our ambitions need to match the size and scope of Christ's ambitions in coming to the earth. Did the only begotten Son of God humble Himself and come here to be violently and brutally murdered, hung on a cross, despised and mocked, then come back from the dead and preach and teach for forty days just so we could be prosperous and have emotion-stirring praise and worship times and pass out colorful leaflets and set up clever Web sites, all while people around us are depressed and committing suicide, spreading AIDS, dying of hunger, wrecking the planet, and much more? I think not.

I want to challenge you to lift your faith from small satisfactions. God will do more than pay your bills. That's what the Gentiles think about. God doesn't even call that a reward. Those things come automatically with salvation. Our ambition must be much bigger. We are part of the body of Christ whose members are called to restore the kingdom of God to Earth! The reward for seeking God is influence over a sphere of society so people can be rescued from the horrors of sin and evil. Anybody who walks in obedience to God has the right to ask for nations to be restored and given into his hands—and that very much includes you.

The time has come for us to remember the cross and the big ambitions Christ has for this planet. It is time to shift our thinking from hiding in church to ruling our promised lands for the glory of God. It's time for Christians to come into their inheritance, to discover their promised land. It's time to act, knock, and seek results. The time has come for the kingdom of God to be manifested so that the nations will follow God.

It is time to stop thinking of ourselves as occupying the bottom step of the social ladder. It is time to stop lying low. It is time to

stop seeking redemption from influential people like politicians or tycoons. It is time to see ourselves as instruments in the hand of God. We are neither small nor insignificant, but God's messengers. He sees in you the destiny of your family, your friends, your co-workers, and your nation.

For a long time the church has taken care of itself only, but the time has come to take responsibility for every sphere of society, from our circle of friends to our families; from our workplaces to our city councils and schools; from sports and the arts to politics and business. Today the church needs to bring peoples and nations out of the desert, where they have been wandering. The kingdom of God is God's total answer to man's total problem. It is synonymous with God's will and ways. When He says, "Your kingdom come" (Luke 11:2), it means through you and me. We are to walk in power. Every gift and talent we have is to be exercised in service of the kingdom. Believers need to start social organizations and charities that will become strong social movements that captivate people's attention. We need to find effective ways to serve the homeless, the troubled, the orphan, the beaten, the addicted, the criminal, and the helpless.

God is waiting for us to take action. We don't have the moral right to be indifferent. God doesn't want a passive church.

One day our own nations will be judged. God will send some nations to hell as it says in Psalm 9:17 (NKJV):

The wicked shall be turned into hell,
And all the nations that forget God.

Let us work with all the skill and passion we have so that our nations will be saved.

As our church waited in the city square for the government's response to our protest, I could feel that change was coming to our country. We had cracked the ice. The deep freeze that had encased millions of souls for generations was beginning to thaw. Finally, the mayor of Kyiv came out of the building to address us personally. This was a wonderful surprise. He spoke through the megaphone and said the city would provide several hectares of land for us to build on. They would give us the land for free—a \$5 million value. In return we promised to clear people from the streets so normal life could resume in Kyiv.

We had won a great victory. But we would soon discover that in a country like ours, victories like this could be short-lived. There was even greater turmoil to come than we had ever dreamed. And God was about to put us on the vanguard of a much bigger movement than we had bargained for.

KINGDOM PRINCIPLES FROM CHAPTER 2

1. God eagerly awaits the redemption of the nations.
2. God wants preeminence in all things in every nation.
3. Until the children of the almighty God act like His representatives on the earth, nothing will change in our countries. The destiny of our countries is in the hands of the church and her willingness to declare the position of God in the society.
4. The real focus of every Christian's life and of all our church activities is promoting the kingdom of God in every sphere of our nations.
5. If the church doesn't start fighting corruption, it will keep flourishing in the country.
6. A church that is not focused on discipling nations exchanges its big ambitions for small ones without even realizing it.
7. If you want to use your faith to get a new car or more church members, fine. But I'm using my faith to subdue and change a nation.