

BEING GOD

Stealing God's Power,
Glory, and
Kingdom

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Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures are taken from the King James Version.

Other scripture versions are notated as follows:

AMP Amplified Bible
BBE Basic Bible in English
CEB Common English Bible
CEV Contemporary English Version
ESV English Standard Version
GNB Good News Bible
GW God's Word
HCSB Holman Christian Standard Version
KJV King James Version
MSG Message Bible
MEV Modern English Version
MKJV Modern King James Version
NET New English Translation
NIV New International Version
NLV New Life Version
NCV New Century Version
NTE New Testament for Everyone
VOICE The Voice Translation
YLT Young's Lateral Translation

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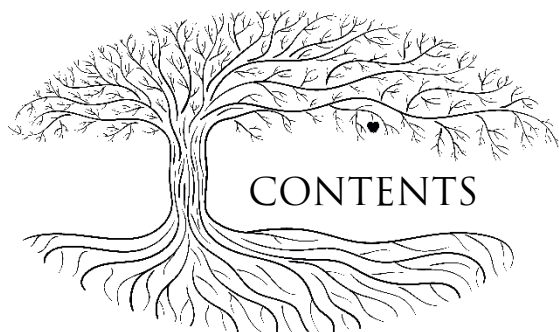
*Dedicated to those who are continuing to seek
the highest relationship with God in Christ Jesus.*

**You don't know
what you don't know**

**You never discover
what you will not search for**

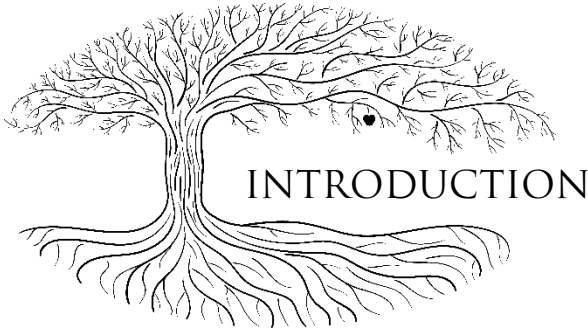
**You can't see
what you are blind to**

**You don't accept
what you don't understand**



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Isaiah 2:11 (GNB)

A day is coming when human pride will be ended
And human arrogance destroyed.
Then the LORD alone will be exalted.

The scriptures declare God the owner of the universe. They also affirm Him as the owner of all the heavens and this planet. The Bible proclaims God owns all the creatures on the earth, including mankind. It also asserts that God owns each individual human life, including you. In other words, God owns everything from the farthest galaxy to the smallest microbe on this earth, and you are in that spectrum.

The problem is we do not acknowledge His ownership. We live as if we owned ourselves. We make our own choices, direct

our own affairs, and conduct our lives without considering that there is a powerful God above us who has authority over us. We may believe in Him, ask Him for favors, and even acquiesce to letting Him manage some part of our lives. We may even incorporate truth from scripture into our daily choices that point to His wishes.

Even though we may say, “God is in control” or “I live in the will of God,” we have only placed Him in a management-level position in our life. We want God to take over only when things are going poorly for us. If His solutions are not fast enough, or to our liking, we move Him aside and take over the situation. We do that because we still see the problem as “my” problem. We own the problem because from our point of view, we own ourselves. The words we use reveal our attitude of ownership. We say things like “I have God here to help me” or “Lord, I have a problem.” Our terms give us away; “I,” “me,” and “my” are all ownership words.

We have stolen ownership of our problems from God. If God owns everything, then the problem is His, the outcome is His, and the success or failure of the matter also rests on Him. A more appropriate phrase that reveals His position as owner would be “He solved His problem that happened to involve me.”

Thine Is the Kingdom

We have stolen the Garden, this planet. We think we are responsible for it. We think the outcome rests on us because we are responsible. The word “responsible” is an authoritative term. Responsibility rests on the owner. If you think you are responsible, you think you own the item in question. We think we can control this planet, its rain and wind, its temperature and seasons. Are we responsible for fixing these things, or is there a powerful, prevailing God who

is the ultimate owner? Can we impede the earthquakes or calm the seas or even stop the volcanoes or the hurricanes? We blame Him for the catastrophes and call them “acts of God,” but take responsibility for anything we can exert some control over.

Not only do we think we are responsible for the planet, but we have assumed ownership of our own individual destinies. We consider ourselves owners of the human race and individually, ourselves. We feel responsible for our own success or failure, not taking into account what the creator may have gifted us with or even limited us to. We do not acknowledge He created us and gave us the talent that made the success possible. “My Life” is a popular song by Billy Joel that conveys how we perceive ourselves.

Thine Is the Power

We have stolen God’s power. We think we have power to fire God from the management position we elevated Him to. We think He got His promotion from us, that we gave Him something. We perceive that He is grateful and happy that we allow Him such honor.

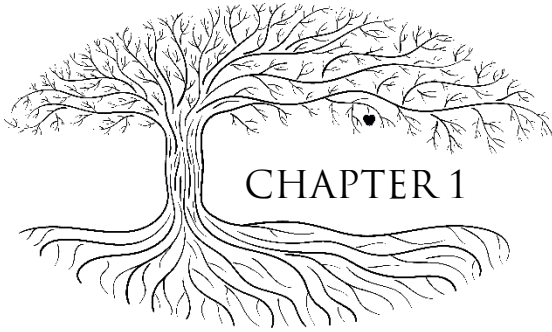
The fact is just the opposite—God is the owner and can fire us. We can’t promote God, nor can we fire Him. We have stolen the owner’s power as the final authority. When we steal God’s power to hire and fire, we are “being God.” He is not the manager we can promote or set aside under our ownership, but rather the owner over us.

Thine Is the Glory

We have stolen His Glory. Every time we elevate ourselves, point to our achievements, or let our pride take us to heights in our minds above reality, we have diminished His glory and taken glory for ourselves.

When an employee invents something, the company is the owner of the invention. They pay the employee to do the work, so they own his time and the inventions he designs. Since God owns us, every good thing we may brag about or try to take glory for is owned by God, who made us and lets us breathe His air. Our pride is the theft of God's glory. We continuously take ownership of all of this, HIS creation.

In the following pages, we will examine the ownership of God and determine His jurisdiction. We will examine how mankind has tried to steal everything God owns. We will look at how that inclination to "Be God" (take His Place as owner) causes us to fail in our understanding of God and who He is. We will look at what life can be when you declare God your owner and live under His authority.



THREE WORDS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name,
shall humble themselves, and pray . . .

“I asked God.”

Those three words changed my life forever. They were the words used to describe a prayer. It was not my prayer, but the prayer of another and the description the man used to convey its meaning that would impact the rest of my days. I heard the prayer on a mountainside high in the Peruvian Andes. I was far into the countryside some four-hour trek from the nearest village helping a missionary, a former classmate in seminary, take the Gospel deep into the land of the Incas to reach a people who had not heard it.

My friend had requested my help with this adventurous task that was far away from his home base in Lima. We shared several characteristics; we were both mission evangelists, dedicated, full of passion, and at times we felt bulletproof. Planning the details of the travel and getting reliable information about the rugged, wild country we were venturing into was difficult to obtain, but a tidal wave far greater than we could resist carried us. We were going there by divine assignment. The farmer's prayer, which he had sent into the heavens, had engulfed our lives and brought us seven thousand miles to his door. Those words changed me and would shadow me for the rest of my days.

So many things had tried to discourage us from making the journey. We recalled some of our more stressful moments sharing the Gospel the previous year pushing the boundaries on the Napo River, an Amazon tributary. As we drew close to Ecuador in our makeshift houseboat, communication became difficult as we began to encounter unknown Indian dialects.

A week before my departure, an earthquake in Peru had devastated a village of six thousand people. The news came over the wire that all the houses of the entire village slid down the side of a mountain, leaving only two survivors. Where was God taking us, and what purpose would be served by going to another dangerous place?

I had traveled three days by car to Miami. The South American turbo prop based out of Ecuador delayed the departure for repairs so it could survive the flight. The direct, nonstop jet to Lima was more than I could afford. I had a ticket on a hopscotch flight landing in Caracas, Bogotá, and Quito before arriving in the cloud-covered city of Lima. Upon landing, I boarded an old,

American school bus that had been sold to a South American bus line. The bus company had painted it wild blue and lettered it with advertisements of all kinds. They had moved the seats closer together to accommodate shorter people and get more passengers aboard.

The bus traveled south on the Pan-American Highway to Nazca where it made a left into the rugged gravel roads of the Andes mountains. For thirty-six hours, with very few stops, the bus ground through mountain-cliff roads on its way to Coracora. As I looked out over the edge of the road, there were old, burned-out hulks of buses that had fallen from the overhanging mountain walls to their doom. I expanded my prayer life with short prayers for safety mingled with questions about the future. God's ownership of His servant was being tried by fire. Could I walk into the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or would someone have to throw me in? My owner had determined I should go, so I was on my way.

At a small village named Puquio, the bus stopped to pick up a passenger. The driver had not intended to linger, but the passengers swarmed the doors to exit, as many had been shouting for a pit stop for the last couple of hours. We picked up a second driver to act as a spotter on the rugged mountain roads ahead. We also picked up a very drunk hombre who smelled like he had fallen in the tank at the brewery. There was only one seat left, and it was beside me. I was the tallest one on the bus, so the empty seat had given me a little room for my knees as I sat angled in the seat. But the inebriated man eliminated that option, so I sat straight up to accommodate the new rider. I let him sit next to the window so I could put one knee into the aisle for some relief.

The next hundred miles took ten hours to travel. It was one-lane, mountain gravel with tight turns requiring the driver to reverse and zigzag his back wheels closer to the mountain to avoid tumbling over the side. The spotter often walked ahead of us guiding the driver and watching the outside wheel. I would have gladly traded places with him.

About an hour out of Puquio, the man beside me shouted that he needed a pit stop. The driver did not answer. Nor did he answer the second or third requests. In urgent need, the man took off his sombrero and relieved himself in it. He put the hat out the window, turned it over to dump it, brought it back in, and placed it back on his head. I grew up on a farm and knew life from the raw side, but this trip taught me a whole new set of tricks.

The name Coracora is a Spanish version of the Quechua Indian name Qura Qura, meaning a collection of special herbal plants. It had caught the attention of my missionary friend in Lima who saw an advertisement for the village festival to celebrate the three-hundred-year anniversary of their god's physical appearance. The advertisement had appeared a year in advance of the ten-day festival. It had given my friend enough time to contact me for help and to make all the arrangements for the journey. He wanted to use the gathering in Coracora as an opportunity to take the Gospel to a village that to his knowledge had never been visited by a missionary.

It was the mid-1970s. There were no phones in the mountains, only shortwave radio into our intended destination. It was not a tourist area or place to take your family, but rather a hotbed of civil strife as communist rebel groups tried to incite Inca Indian uprisings against the democratic governments of Bolivia and Peru.

All roads were desert gravel, made of the rock and sand they were carved through. There were occasional wide spots in case you met another oncoming vehicle. One vehicle would back up depending on which driver was willing. Drivers were armed to protect from highwaymen, but the general population was too poor to own guns. All the buses were old school buses from the States. They made a colorful picture as they passed one another on the roads all painted in different exotic colors. In open flats on some of the mountain plateaus, they would leave the road and race two and three abreast, taking a shortcut across the desert plains trying to beat each other to the next canyon where the road again narrowed to one lane. We had found the last remnants of the Wild West. And it was just as rough, rugged, and dusty as the old Western movies had portrayed it.

During the festival in Coracora, the population swelled because the people who had moved away returned for a visit and all the area farmers from fifty miles around came to sell and celebrate. We were going to evangelize on the streets and hand out Gospel tracts printed in Spanish and Quechua. We would use street corners, plazas, or parks to have small gatherings as well.

Arrival in Coracora

To our surprise, we found a church in Coracora. It was a small storefront with a sign lettered in Spanish and Quechua. We had no idea that Christians had ever visited the village before. There had been no reports from the area of Christian efforts. We inquired as to where we might find the person with a key since the front door had a master padlock on the latch. We found a neighboring shopkeeper who told us a farmer four hours out of the village had

the key as he pointed down a street toward a trail out of the village. It was not a road, but more of a rocky footpath clinging to the slopes. The man drew a crude map to the farmer's house for us.

The farmer was reported to be the only one they knew who had ever been at the church. The neighbor storekeeper did not know of any other people who ever went into the church. He reported the farmer had traveled to Lima where he had been influenced by a missionary. The farmer had rented the store and was inviting people to come and study the Bible. We were in awe that God may have already provided a place for a service and privacy off the streets to talk with the residents and pray. But more importantly, He had provided a dedicated follower as a starting point.

We found a hotel in the village. It was the high-class hotel where the famous matadors from Spain who had come for the bullfight were staying. We were in the best the village had to offer. It cost us four soles, the Peruvian dollar. That was about twenty cents at that time in our exchange. The door had a latch with a padlock. I had padlocks at home as a boy just like it. I got them out of gum-machine dispensers for five cents. They were as big as my thumb and about as strong.

There was a table and one chair in the room. The rest of the concrete floor was available for you to throw your sleeping bag anywhere you wanted. Travel advice for Peru in the seventies—bring a sleeping bag and make sure it was a warm one. Even though the temperatures would hit seventy during the day because of the high sun and little air to filter it, the mountain nights would freeze at that altitude.

The bathroom . . . did I mention a bathroom? It was an open area in the center courtyard surrounded by the rooms. They had

built a knee wall around it so the actual commode was not visible from three sides, but the toilet had been broken and was cemented back together with concrete surrounding the bowl. We crashed for twelve hours of sleep. The altitude adjustment to sixteen thousand feet and thirty-six sleepless hours on the bus had taken its toll.

The Mountain Farm

We started in the morning on our four-hour expedition. Up and down steep mountain trails, rocky terrain, and all at sixteen thousand feet, we finally arrived at the farmstead. There were two buildings there set in an L shape. The first was a one-room, one-story adobe mud house with thatched roof. The other building was similar but about double the length with barn doors open and a pig or two milling near it. Chickens roamed the area and paid no attention to us as we approached.

We introduced ourselves to the farmer and explained to him what we had come to do. There was silence for a moment. Tears began to well in his eyes. He took a moment to gain a form of composure and said, “I asked God to send someone to help me.” There they were, the three words that would captivate me for eternity: “I ASKED GOD.” With those words, the power of the universe was unleashed onto the world stage.

How profound! I was an answer to someone’s prayer! Hearing that statement after such a long journey changed my life forever. Never again would I doubt God’s power and ability. When you become the answer to a prayer, you no longer belong to yourself. You are owned and directed by the God of this universe, who will put you where He needs you.

God can take a Phillip (Acts 8:26) and direct him into the desert where he leads an Ethiopian to Jesus before he is spirited away to another needy person. He can take a Daniel from the lion's den and put him in the king's court (Daniel 6:22). He can take a Nehemiah and stand him on the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 6:3). He can take a Gideon with three hundred men and destroy a mighty army (Judges 7:22). He can pull Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace and put them in a king's palace (Daniel 3:28–30). He is the God who can take Jonah from the belly of a whale and have him preaching in the streets of Nineveh to bring an entire city to repentance (Jonah 3:1–5).

He is the God who can place me any day, at any time, exactly where He wants me. I revel at the times He has used me to answer the prayers of others. If you respect God's role as the owner of your life, you will live out the words of Psalm 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD."

Has my life been easy, or without trial and tribulation? Certainly not! But through it all, I have learned to trust in Him. I learned that having Him be the owner was a far better outcome than anything I could engineer or design. I learned to look around to see who had prayed for help. I learned that God has no accidents. Nothing was incidental; God had a purpose for my steps.

God can take you to the side entrance of the prayers of others and plant you in the middle of their answer. He uses those who belong to Him. He lets those who own themselves wander in the wilderness until they find what they are looking for. What are you looking for? Be careful, lest you find the wrong thing. "Seek first the kingdom of God," writes Matthew in Matthew 6:33. Seek to

have Him be your owner; He will use you mightily for the pulling down of strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Leaving Coracora

The farmer opened the church for those ten days and worked alongside us in the streets. We gave out invitations during the day and held services every night. When we left Coracora, the church had eight committed souls added to it and another dozen interested seekers. They agreed to meet every week. My friend agreed to visit them once a month to encourage them.

We left Coracora on a different bus line and traveled south over plateaus and mesas, taking the passes and running along streams to avoid the hard mountain roads. The travel was at a higher speed, but longer. We arrived at the Pacific coast two hundred miles south of Nazca at the fishing village of Atico. The bus stopped at an isolated oceanside restaurant where we enjoyed our first steak-and-eggs breakfast since leaving the States. We rejoiced over what God had accomplished in us and through us.

Nostalgia

Out of nostalgia, I recently returned to the Andes by way of Google Maps and Street View. It is amazing to be able to travel the very roads we took so many years ago via computer and three-sixty photography shot from a Google car. Now, the road from Nazca to Puquio is two lanes and paved. I could see tourist buses on the roads, as Machu Picchu and other Inca ruins in the area were declared historical sites in the eighties. I could see a single telephone line running near the road, indicating new inventions had arrived in the land of the Incas.

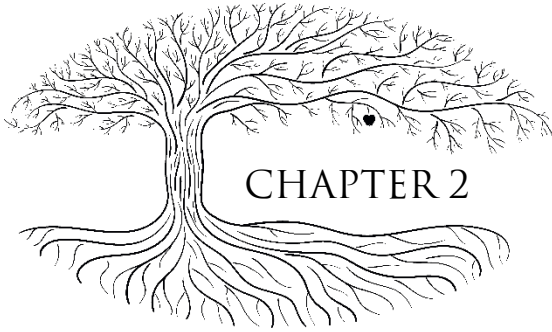
The villages have not changed, nor could I detect any noticeable lifestyle changes. But there were no pictures on Google Maps of the cliffhanging road from Puquio to Coracora. There is no way to widen a road that overhangs the cliff edges. No paving machine could make the corners to negotiate the hundred miles. Even the owner of the Google car had declined to make that journey and photograph its treachery.

Ephesians 3:8–9

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints,
is this grace given,
that I should preach among the Gentiles
the unsearchable riches of Christ;
And to make all men see
what is the fellowship of the mystery,
which from the beginning of the world
hath been hid in God,
who created all things by Jesus Christ . . .

Philippians 1:21

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.



OWNERSHIP

Malachi 3:8 (VOICE)

“Will someone steal from God?”

Yet you are *always* stealing from Me!

But you *self-centered people still* ask,

“How have we stolen from You?”

Have you ever owned something you wish you hadn't? As owner, you're responsible for all the repair expenses, upkeep, maintenance, management, legal requirements, and disposal. As an owner, the burden to care for the item, or hire and pay someone else to do it for you, falls squarely on your shoulders. Either way, you pay.

You also reap any benefits of ownership. Owning a business can be an excellent source of income, but it also requires a piece

of your life since you are responsible for it and its success. Business owners often work eighty hours a week, often worrying and fretting at night rather than sleeping. Being the owner puts you in charge of the business's success and failure. You are responsible for the accounts payable and receivable. Collecting the accounts can be a far greater burden than paying the bills. If either task goes awry, a business failure is not far off.

Have you ever taken ownership of something that belonged to God? If you are uncertain what God is supposed to own, that may be a tough question. In the next few chapters, we will explore what belongs to God. We will examine the expanse of His ownership. We will consider times when we have taken ownership of issues that really belonged to God. By taking ownership of His property, authority, and glory, we assumed responsibility for things beyond our capabilities.

The First and Last Day in the Life of a Boat Owner

I was ecstatic about buying my first ski boat. It was a twenty-three-foot inboard cabin cruiser. We had teenage children who yearned to ski. The boat was an exciting craft with canvas-covered aft and pilot helm. Imagine: a country guy from the western prairie had achieved enough success to blow that much money on a toy and feel good about it. I became a boat owner, or had I become a slave to the boat?

We docked the boat at a marina. There was a monthly rental fee for the covered parking slip where we could keep the boat tied up when it was not in use. The one-hundred-gallon gas tank had a limited number of marinas to supply the fuel, all having a limited number of customers, so they charged a heavy duty for a gallon

of gas. It took a huge bite in the wallet to fill the tank compared to filling my car. The resistance plowing through water and the load of skiers made the 350-horse inboard motor empty the fuel tank in just a few hours.

Are you getting the picture? Not only did you need a good reserve of cash to buy it, but it was going to be a continual drain on the budget just to keep it. Next, we needed a tandem trailer to move it to other lakes. The insurance bill also came to my desk. Having it serviced was a major expense, and any repairs were high because they required specialty work. Boats are considered luxury items, which engender luxury prices for all the surrounding services they require.

The money was only one liability. The boat had to be cleaned. The underside turned green from being left in the water. The canvas and topside turned black from the mold and required more energy and time. Packing and unpacking for each outing was an ordeal. The number of toys and skis to pull grew larger.

We used the boat to take the children through those early teen years before they got their driver's licenses, but once the independence of driving landed on their shoulders, the lake no longer had the pull that it once had. Once the children's attention had moved on, I sold the boat as fast as I could. The day I sold it, I was just as happy as I had been the day I purchased it. I am glad I had the boat, but it taught me a lesson about the heavy duties of ownership.

The First and Last Day as Owner of the Planet

We need to examine the mess we have made of our lives because we did not let the creator maintain ownership of things that belonged to Him. The scriptures will lay out our journey to

discover the most basic premise of the Bible that is hidden from most people. The greatest secret in the universe unfolds in this big adventure ahead. The nature of our human passion to “own” has blinded us so that we are unable to see what God proclaims on nearly every page of the Bible; God is still the owner.

Maybe we tried to take ownership of the Garden that was owned by God because it was there to take. Just as the lake was there calling for me to get a boat, so Adam in the Garden saw and took. When he became the rule-maker of the Garden, he replaced God as the rightful authority. Adam became the owner of something that would bring pain and destruction in his life and relationships. Every time we take ownership of something that belongs to God, we are being God. We tread across a forbidden line by trying to take His place as the rightful owner. We bring upon ourselves unwanted consequences that bring regrets far beyond any gain we may have intended to receive.

My journey into the discovery of God’s powerful position as owner started with just a simple step. In the process of learning to be forgiving, I canceled my ownership of the debts the offenders owed me. In so doing, I had unknowingly transferred ownership of those offenses to God. Just because I forgave and was not going to collect from those offenders did not mean God would not pursue the collection. In making the gigantic step of becoming a forgiving person, I had stumbled on the truth of His ownership.

When His ownership became a focus of my thoughts, I connected with instant forgiveness, the capability to let God retain ownership of a situation and avoid taking offense. This monumental shift in my thinking kept me from relapsing every time a new offense occurred.

I had just taken the first step in liquidating my assets on this planet. On the day I gave up owning those assets, my joy was greater than in all the days I had in possession of them.

Jeremiah 17:9–10

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked: who can know it?
I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins . . .

Proverbs 4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life.