

Ultimately I saw that a constant emphasis on God's power may lead to the fatalism of extreme Muslims or Hindus, who conclude that we humans need do nothing because the will of God works itself out regardless. Far more impressive is the miracle of God's condescension, his humble willingness to share power and offer us full partnership in the mission of transforming the world.

Reaching for Invisible God

Take heart little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Jesus

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.

Matthew 13:31-32

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN  
IS LIKE A **MUSTARD SEED**

# A REMINDER

THE **KINGDOM OF GOD** DOES  
NOT ADVANCE THE WAY THE  
**KINGDOM OF THE WORLD**  
DOES

**HUMILITY**, NOT PRIDE

The method of the kingdom will match the message of the kingdom. The kingdom will come as the church, energized by the Spirit, goes out into the world vulnerable, suffering, praising, praying, misunderstood, misjudged, vindicated, celebrating; always as Paul puts it in one of his letters - bearing in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus might be displayed.

N.T. Wright

**EXALTED WEAKNESS,**  
NOT GRASPING FOR POWER

Jesus was the first world leader to inaugurate a kingdom with a heroic role for losers. He spoke to an audience raised on stories of wealthy patriarchs, strong kings, and victorious heroes. Much to their surprise, he honored instead people who have little value in the visible world: the poor and meek, the persecuted and those who mourn, social rejects, the hungry and thirsty. His stories consistently featured “the wrong people” as heroes:

the prodigal, not the responsible son; the good Samaritan, not the good Jew; Lazarus, not the rich man; the tax collector, not the Pharisee. As Charles Spurgeon expressed it, “His glory was that He laid aside His glory, and the glory of the church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity, and counts it to be her glory to gather together the outcasts.

Phillip Yancey

**TRANSFORMATION,**  
NOT ENTERTAINMENT

The elephant in the living room of contemporary Christianity is people's ability to simply sit in church, to consume the experience the way one would a great sporting event, a thrilling movie, or an exciting theme park ride, and then to dispose of it, totally unchanged at the soul level, as they leave the sanctuary. Sure, they might feel challenged, encouraged, or even moved, but the horizontal self simply "feels" the experience and moves on.

Mark Sayers

# A WARNING

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Matthew 7 vs. 21-23

# NARCISSISM

If we are not a generation in love with itself, we are, undeniable a generation obsessed with itself. When we stand before reality preoccupied with ourselves we will see precious little of what is actually there to be seen. Moreover, what little we do see will be distorted and shaped by self interest. The outside world has little power to penetrate or even distract you. Your reality has been reduced to the size, shape, and color of your own inner world. It is not surprising that we have trouble believing in the reality of God when we have trouble perceiving any reality at all beyond ourselves.

Ronald Rolheiser

AN **ADDICTION** TO  
THE SPECTACULAR

I used to feel spiritually inferior because I had not experienced the more spectacular manifestations of the Spirit and could not point to any bona fide "miracles" in my life. Increasingly, though, I have come to see that what I value may differ greatly from what God values. Jesus, often reluctant to perform miracles, considered it progress when he departed earth and entrusted the mission to his flawed disciples. Like a proud parent, God seems to take more delight as a spectator of the bumbling achievements of his stripling children than in any self-display of omnipotence.

Reaching for the Invisible God

# A LOSS OF **WONDER**

The struggle to experience God is not so much one of God's presence or absence as it is one of the presence or absence of God in our awareness. God is always present, but we are not always present to God. As one spiritual writer put it, "God is no more present in a church than in a drinking bar, but, generally, we are more present to God in a church than in a bar." We are in contemplation when we stand before reality and experience it without the limits and distortions that are created by narcissism, (our headaches and heartaches), pragmatism, (our pressing tasks), and excessive restlessness (our dreams and distractions).

The Shattered Lantern

# A PROMISE

He said to them, For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

LUKE 17

- PROXIMITY
- PERMANENCE
- SHARED MEMORIES
- A LONG TERM SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE
- RADICAL COMMITMENT TO ONE ANOTHER
- PATIENCE

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.  
Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to  
the work of the Lord, because you know that your  
labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15 vs. 58

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:9-10

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Reaching for the Invisible God

# PLANTING LITTLE SETTLEMENTS

IN ADVANCE OF THE COMING  
**REIGN**