

Our nation is currently in a time of political, social, and civil division in our nation's faith communities. This writing describes methods to heal those divides supported by anecdotes of many years of ministry in the Washington D.C. area.

**Faith for the Times:
From the Shadows into the Marvelous Light**
By Jerry Aveta

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The background of the cover features a large, snow-covered mountain peak, likely Mount Everest, under a dramatic sunset sky with orange and red clouds. Below the mountain, a path of light leads down to a small figure of a person walking away from the viewer. The overall mood is one of awe and spiritual journey.

FAITH -FOR THE- TIMES

From the Shadows into the Marvelous Light

JERRY AVETA

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part 1: A Nation Divided (<i>Faith from the Shadows</i>)	11
Chapter 1: The Shadows of Faith (<i>How we see the world</i>)	13
Chapter 2: The Political Shadows of Faith (<i>Blue vs Red</i>)	37
Chapter 3: The Social Shadows of Faith (<i>Individual Rights vs the Greater Good</i>).....	85
Chapter 4: The Violent Shadows of Faith (<i>Civil Rights vs Civil War</i>).....	115
Part 2: A Nation United (<i>Faith into the Marvelous Light</i>)	147
Chapter 5 Still Waters and Green Pastures (<i>Preparing for the Path</i>).....	151
Chapter 6: Challenging Giants (<i>Facing Arguments and Strongholds</i>)	179
Chapter 7: Lowering Mountains and Filling Valleys (<i>Removing Obstacles</i>)	211
Chapter 8: Crooked Paths Made Straight (<i>Doing the Hard Work</i>)	247
Chapter 9: Amazing Grace (<i>Pursuing Unity</i>)	275

Editor’s Note: The following pages include capitalized subheadings to aid the reader in the development of concepts which sometimes require incremental steps, illustrations, or examples to further the discussion. In order to make the discussion easier to follow I use these subheadings to emphasize the transition from one component of the discussion to the next. Hopefully this adds clarity to the discussion and not confusion.

Introduction

Some people, if they reach an age approximate to mine, may have experienced what could be characterized as a “near death” experience. In my case, I can recall two such events. The first was caused by reckless driving on a snowy country road in southern Hunterdon County, New Jersey with four other seventeen-year-old passengers. The second was swimming in the ocean off the eastern shore of Maryland while ignoring warnings of the existence of strong undertow currents. The first resulted in everyone involved in the two-car accident walking away without injury. This was in spite of colliding with an oncoming car in the opposite lane, spinning out of control down the road on a hill and crashing into a tree with my car stopping facing the opposite direction from which I was driving. The second ended with my being rescued by a young lifeguard who helped me battle through an assault of crashing waves while being pulled further from shore by a strong undertow.

My faith gives me no answer as to why I was spared a fatal demise due to either of these circumstances. Saved by the grace of God seems trite, no matter how true, when one considers the circumstances of such events. However, I am humbled and grateful to be alive when I consider that one of my high school classmates did not survive a similar circumstance before he even graduated. He died in a car accident; although I do not remember the specifics, I am sure it was not any more hazardous than mine. It was certainly miraculous that my car didn't flip over after being struck by another vehicle and spinning out of control. If it did, I am not so certain my outcome would have been the same as it was.

Many years have passed since those life-threatening events, and I am happy to report that no similar experience has occurred since. I believe we all learn to recognize our limits and capabilities which helps us to negotiate around peril or dangerous circumstances if we survive those younger reckless years. Of course, we are all subject to the unexpected random events of life. Once an eggshell fell through my open sunroof driving down a parkway in Northern Virginia, hitting my shoulder. I have often thought of that event, imagining the damage that would have been done if rather than an eggshell it had been a brick or piece of concrete falling from an overpass. What a wonderful metaphor for the fragility of our existence, being subject to such random events. Hopefully, we gain wisdom and understanding over time to aid in our survival by anticipating dangerous circumstances when possible. But none of us are guaranteed tomorrow, in spite of all our best efforts. “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” (Proverbs 27:1)

However, I am not sure the same could be said when it comes to experiences of our great nation. There seems to be no such learning curve. Recent events seem to be leading to a perilous place in the life of our nation where we have not been before, risking its very existence as we know it.

A HISTORY OF REBELLION AND DIVISION

Our nation was born in rebellion against what seemed to be a just cause at the time, a cause that remains just with the hindsight of history. Taxation without representation left no other option except to sever the governmental relationship that the colonists knew with their mother country. The revolution is part of our history, and we hold it in high regard along with the products of that rebellion, including the Declaration of Independence, our U.S. Constitution and its first ten

amendments known as our Bill of Rights. These documents have served us well over the years, providing the framework of our governance. These documents have been tested, including their most severe test during which our nation first divided and then reunited during the two terms of President Lincoln and the accompanying Civil War. Looking back at that time we realize how perilously close we came to permanently splitting the United States. We get an idea of how dire the situation was by reading President Lincoln's second inaugural address. It reads in part:

“On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it – all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war – seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide the effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.”

Comparing the Civil War experience to our present-day circumstances illustrates how history repeats itself. Then and now people of common faith can hold opposite views of political and social issues. President Lincoln was keenly aware of the divided view in the people of faith of his time and addressed his concern in his second inaugural address as follows. “Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not lest we be judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.”

In President Lincoln's own words, he states that this divide in the people of faith of his time "seemed strange" and determines all he can do about it is to refrain from passing personal judgement unless he would put himself in danger of being judged by God. Wise counsel given the fact he is referring to scripture that is a direct teaching of Christ (Mathew 7:1,2). Additionally, Lincoln noted that it was impossible for the prayers of both sides to be answered, at least in full, because the heart of the issue contained opposite positions. One side was for slavery, one was against. All the proposed compromises such as slavery being banned from future territories were rejected. There was no compromising. Lincoln's final thought on that matter was that God will use this divide in the people of faith to achieve "His own purpose." That is, God would use this divide to achieve whatever divine purpose He had in mind for the people of faith and the entire nation.

THE CURRENT DIVIDE IN OUR NATION

I find the current times have an eerie feeling similar to that of Lincoln's days regarding the people of faith in our nation. People of faith are divided over many social issues. People of faith are for abortion rights; some are for the ban of all abortion rights. People of faith are for gun control; some are for no gun restrictions at all. People of faith are for vaccine mandates; some are against them. People of faith are divided politically as well. People of faith live in red states and people of faith live in blue states. People of faith are conservative, and people of faith are liberal. People of faith support both the Republican party and the Democratic party. Each will defend his social and political views based on his interpretation of scripture and his subsequent doctrinal beliefs of faith. This statement is not a judgment as to whether one is correct or incorrect. This is simply a statement of fact about the division of beliefs. Each will invoke God's support in furthering its view. Similar to Lincoln's circumstance it seems that God

cannot answer both sides of the issue completely, because each side represents complete opposite and opposing positions to the other. Also, as in the days of Lincoln, there seems to be no compromise between the sides. Each side is so dug into its own point of view there is no ability to see things from a different view and consider a compromise.

In my experience, a large part this division in the evangelical community of faith has to do with fear. Fear that we are going to lose something. We are going to lose our jobs or our guns or our religion or some other liberty. The majority of us have become fearful that if the political party not of our choice is in control, we are going to lose the America that we know and love. This fear has grown in recent years. This is not based on any empirical study; it is my opinion based on thirty years of ministering in the evangelical communities of faith. But there is a paradox with the people of faith. That is, for our present circumstance, while our different views of faith are causing the divide, I believe the remedy for the divide can be found in our faith.

If fear is driving the division in the people of faith, then faith can overcome fear. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment." (1 John 4:18) God's love is perfect. Faith in God is to enter into an experience with perfect love. Faith is fear's antidote. Faith and fear cannot coexist, they are opposites. Faith unifies, fear divides. Faith offers peace and understanding. Faith is intended to build up, not tear down. Faith is not critical; it edifies. People of faith pray and willingly join others in prayer. They understand that praying is an act of humility before the God of their understanding and before each other. It is a sign of surrender to God and each other. Where there is humility, there is a lack of pride. Where there is humility there is harmony. The remedy for healing of any divide does not come from the doctrines of our faith, but from the experience of our faith. Doctrinal arguments hardly ever change minds

and hearts. Only God's presence can do that at those intersections of the natural with the supernatural which is the place that I believe births faith in us. The answer is not found in the people of faith coming together to reason through our differences. The answer is found in the people of faith coming together and experiencing the presence and the life changing power of God together.

Why does that make a difference? Because when God shows up, we are humbled in His presence. When He shows up, we are emptied of all pride. When He shows up, new revelation is imparted to our hearts and minds. When He shows up, all fear is removed, all anger is dissipated, and peace reigns and rules our hearts. It is only when the people of faith are positioned to receive their faith in God in this fashion that we can really experience our faith as God intends. Once we arrive at that place, watch what can be accomplished through a united people of faith!

I believe this is the first step from a divided state to a truly United States of America. It requires a new faith experience for the people of faith – a faith for the times! A faith that requires the people of faith to lead the way. But we cannot lead if we are divided, so we must close the divide among the people of faith so we can save our country. So how do we close the divide? Let me answer that question with one of my experiences as a pastor.

CLOSING THE DIVIDE: AN EXAMPLE

One of my privileges experienced as a pastor was the opportunity to routinely lead a Sunday service in the local county jail. This was not a place where hardened criminals were serving long sentences. The main function of a county jail is to temporarily confine individuals waiting for trial. Services were always well attended, usually thirty-plus inmates, all wearing jumpsuits of various colors designating the

seriousness of their crimes. Most were wearing orange suits which indicated that the crime was not a felony. The darker the suit, the more severe the offense. The darkest was a dark green. These inmates were always the last to arrive and the fewest in number. Usually there were only five or six of the green suits and those inmates would saunter in together at a slow pace, checking out the other inmates and usually settling into a back row. It reminded me of my regular church experience; every week the newcomers would straggle in last and settle into the last row just in case they wanted to make a hasty exit. That was not the case in jail. Once the green suits entered the room the guards secured and locked the door, so nobody could leave, including me and my associate whom I brought with me to lead the singing and to help minister to the inmates.

I have to admit the first time I experienced being “locked in,” I had second thoughts about this adventure. But I grew to love the experience and to look forward to it. One of the things I loved about the service was that all the inmates wanted to be there. No one forced them to attend. Each there seeking favor from God for his upcoming trial. I have held many services like this and prayed with countless inmates. They all professed they were innocent. Whether or not that was true was not mine to judge and the truth would be revealed in their upcoming court date. But I do believe they all came with a humble, repentant heart. What I learned from that experience is that God will embrace anyone who approaches Him with a humble, contrite heart – even a hardened convict. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

It was customary for us to open the service with my associate, who led worship in my church, leading in several known songs from the hymnals that were furnished by the jail’s chaplain. All were glad to join in the singing. For those who spoke another native language a fellow

inmate would sit next to them and translate. They too would be effectively engaged in the service. Language was not a barrier to experience the spirit of the service. There is something moving about thirty-plus men singing their hearts out a cappella. The walls were made out of cinder block and the singing would bounce around the large room with echoes and a life that was unmatched in most regular church services that I have attended.

After an intense time of worship, I would announce we were now ready to take an offering and ask if they brought their money with them. That would always crack them up and even the green suits by this time were laughing and getting into the service. I would then describe the several types of Old Testament offerings that we could use in place of taking money. I would then ask them if they knew what the universal sign of surrender was? This would bring a second round of laughter for they all knew what it was they did when they were initially arrested. Immediately almost every hand in the room shot up in the air in the universal sign of surrender, both hands raised over their heads. So, then I explained we were going to stand and first clap, then shout, then lift our hands and surrender to God just like we were being arrested. The only difference was that this time we were going to do it together so no one would feel left out. I would then instruct them to stand and that we were going to behave as though we were at a football game. Every time every man stood, shouted, clapped, yelled his heart out, with his arms raised to God in surrender! It was one of the most powerful moments of unity of faith that I have ever experienced, and it happened every time I led a service in the jail.

The ironic part of my jail experiences is that this type of unity of faith was hardly ever experienced in the church I pastored every Sunday, no matter how much I encouraged it. I learned it had nothing to do with who was leading the service, but it had everything to do with

what was in the heart of those attending the service. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart.” Whenever the people of God approach the God of their faith with a heart that is humble and sincere, it attracts the presence of God. Why? Because we are offering the sacrifices of God to God. I believe if the people of faith come together with the sacrifices of God, then the divisions will be healed. It is a healing that is desperately needed in the people of faith for the sake of a divided nation to be healed. This writing is dedicated to that point.

A THOUGHT FROM MY HEART TO YOURS

I would like to close this introduction with a writing that came to me while I was traveling across the country. Such times of reading and reflection often birth thoughts that seem to well up from the bottom my soul and pour out of me as fast as I can write them down on any piece of paper available to me at the moment. I recently came across this writing that I had hastily scratched down on the inside of the book cover which I was reading at the time. I hope it is as meaningful for you reading it as it was for me to write it.

It occurs to me that we go through life facing each circumstance that comes at us. Often these circumstances are sudden, unexpected and we find ourselves unprepared for them. We make it through the circumstances of life summoning all the resources we have within to negotiate our way through the events as best we can. Usually, our intent is not to hurt anyone while we have these experiences, but quite often we do. *Age tends to cast a shadow over a lifetime of these events, and it is hard to clearly see the details at this time. But every once in a while, a divine flashlight will illuminate and suddenly things unseen before are now clearly in view. In my case it has not been the things said, but more the things that have gone unsaid. Those things that have not been talked about, discussed, and brought from the shaded areas*

of our heart into the light of God. I have had such discussions recently. They have been wonderfully healing moments in some of my closest relationships. However, there are more discussions to be had. A lifetime of missed opportunities that haunts. Now as God gives me grace each year to continue my life journey, more of such events come into view. Here is the wonderful news. As we act on those opportunities, we feel ourselves growing in the grace of God. We sense His presence unlike before. And when He is in proximity to us, He speaks, gently and quietly to our souls. That place deep inside each of us that is reserved to commune with the God of our creation, the God of our understanding, the God of our faith. I find that I spend less time doing God things and more time thinking about God and searching for His presence. It is a beautiful thing. So, what does one do with this kind of interaction with the God of the Universe? We act on it. We reach out in love and grace to those who have a heart to listen and watch what God does.

My heart's desire is that these pages and all that follow will be read by those who have a heart to listen, a mind that is open and a willingness to grow in faith. My prayer is that perhaps in some way this writing will stir reflection and self-examination that will help many of us to identify issues that have been hidden in the shadows of time. That these hidden things will be exposed and brought into the marvelous light provided by our faith and facilitate a healing of our nation. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him *who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*, who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10). Moreover, my hope is that going through this new discovery, a new journey with the light of God's understanding on your life, you will embrace a new faith - a "Faith for the Times."

Part 1:

A Nation Divided

(Faith from the Shadows)

My favorite hat when I was a boy was a replica of Davey Crocket's coonskin cap complete with fuzzy tail tracing down the back of my head. I wore that hat everywhere in all its elegance proudly stating my allegiance to Davey Crocket, "King of the Wild Frontier." How did I come to that knowledge? Through the visual encyclopedia produced by Walt Disney that aired every Sunday evening. I had no idea what kind of king I had in my mind at the time or even what frontier was involved, but it didn't matter. He was part of my childhood, in which the American experience was celebrated in its entirety. Even the infamous Civil War was treated with a sense of reverence; it was never intimated that there was a good or bad side to the war, it was just a part of our history, without apology. I remember my only discrimination about the war as a child was that I was on the "Yankee" side because I lived in the north, and northerners had the same name as my favorite baseball team.

I look at my grandchildren today and see that they are blessed with so many more opportunities in life than we were as children. One of them is not yet ten and the other is just barely past her first decade of living. But both have been to Europe, Florida, and several other east coast destinations which is more than my childhood travel experiences, being an occasional drive to the Delaware Water Gap. Both have traveled more miles by air at their young tender ages than I had when I took my first commercial airline trip as a government employee in my mid-twenties. It gives my heart great joy to know they are growing up in an environment of opportunity, to have experiences in their lifetimes

that my generation very seldom knew. But that joy is mixed with serious trepidation over my concern with the current state of the union of these severely divided states of America.

I believe the division in our nation exists in several ways, but I try to generalize them into three areas of political, social, and civil. Combined with these divisions, and what I believe is the most alarming is the divide in the communities of faith in our nation. Throughout my faith journey there have always been divisions between types of faith and there have been many conflicts between them throughout history. But it seems from my perspective that since the turn of the century, beginning with the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York City, that conflicts among some of the major faiths such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have escalated. What's more, with the accelerated political polarization of the Evangelical Christian community, divides between denominations of the Evangelical church have grown.

In the first part of this writing, I attempt to combine the dividing of our nation and the role faith has played in that division. I will attempt to do so by first discussing what I call the "shadows of faith" and how they are expressed as political, social, and civil expressions of our living. My intent with Part 1 of this writing is to expose the complexity of the divide in our nation and how faith interacts with that divide.

In Part 2 I will address how to close the divide by faith. I hope you will persevere with me in this discussion, and it will encourage your faith. My prayer is that as a result of this reading you will enter a new faith journey, a "Faith for the Times."

Chapter 1:

The Shadows of Faith

(How we see the world)

My wife was born in Washington D.C. and lived in the D.C. area until she was a little more than three years old. For approximately the next eight years of her life she lived in three different countries covering three different continents before returning to live in the United States. Approximately every three years her father, who was in the Foreign Service, would receive a new assignment and the family would be uprooted first to Europe, then the West Indies, followed by Canada then finally returning to the United States. Although she was very young at the time, she has some memories of living in Stuttgart and Koblenz, Germany. She has recounted several stories to me about her childhood in Trinidad, an island country off the coast of Venezuela. She still corresponds with a childhood friend from those days. She remembers most vividly her days in Vancouver, Canada because there she said goodbye to the woman who had been a critical part of her early childcare who had traveled with the family up until that time. The divorce of her parents required her to return to the states with her mother and brother to Stockton, New Jersey. They took up residence in a remote area of Hunterdon County at the end of a mile long unfinished, dirt driveway in a small farmhouse with no electricity, telephone, or water. It was there in that remote county of New Jersey a few years later that we would meet in a high school physics class.

I was born in Philadelphia and moved to Hunterdon County, New Jersey a few miles away from my birthplace. When I met my wife, I had lived in the same house most of my life. The farthest I had ever ventured from it was to Virginia with my parents to visit my brother in

college. My wife and I had two completely different worldviews when we met. She had traveled the world and yearned for the stability of growing up in the same place with the same surroundings. I couldn't wait to move away.

But each of us enters into life with a different worldview. Richard Rohr writes "Each of us operates out of an implicit worldview, a set of assumptions that are usually not conscious, and therefore are difficult to observe, much less evaluate. Your worldview is not what you look at. It is what you *look out from or look through*. It is thus taken for granted, largely unconscious, and in great part it determines what you see – and what you don't see at all."¹

My wife's world view had been enriched with a perspective that was different from mine. She was looking out from the experience of living in different environments and through the lens of different cultures which gives different dimensions and depths than one without those experiences. Mine was quite different, limited in scope and more focused. One view is not better or worse than the other, they just are what they are.

Rohr continues "If your implicit worldview is that there is only external, material universe, you will quite naturally see things that way without any ability to critique it. If your worldview is exclusively that of a Methodist Christian, you will overlay that Methodism on everything without realizing it – which might benefit your full experience but also might limit it."² Rohr is alluding to his belief that worldviews can be categorized into different areas, a subject that I will touch on later in this writing. Rohr believes these worldview categories are defined based on how our experiences blend with our views of

¹ "The Universal Christ" by Richard Rohr, P. 237, Convergent Books, 2019.

² "The Universal Christ" by Richard Rohr, P. 237, Convergent Books, 2019.

spiritual matters. In other words, our worldview depends on how our experiences blend with our views on faith.

FAITH AFFECTS HOW WE SEE OUR WORLD

What is faith? The author of the book of Hebrews states “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). I call it God working behind the scenes if you will, covertly, silently declaring his willing involvement in each of our lives. I also describe faith as the intersection of natural and supernatural events. These intersections of the natural with the supernatural cannot be seen with the naked eye – but there is evidence left behind that they have happened. Relationships are repaired, behaviors changed, joy returned to a drained and empty soul are all evidence of an event that happens unseen to the naked eye. This is the type of faith that I believe the author of Hebrews is talking about. But we also exercise faith every day in different ways. Every time we step on a bus, train, or airplane we are placing our faith in the individual who controls that vehicle to bring us safely to our destination. Every time we sit in a chair, we put our faith in that chair to keep us off the floor. Every time we submit to surgery, we put our faith in the skills of that surgeon. Every time we elect a president of our country, we put our faith in that president to preserve and protect the constitution of our nation. So, faith can be viewed in different ways, in different contexts that can vary with each person.

We evangelicals identify our faith by a set of common core beliefs that mostly have their basis in scripture. Looking further into the various faith communities these core beliefs are translated into doctrines that guide the behaviors of that faith community. Any apparent conflict and/or contradiction among evangelical communities is a result of different interpretations of scriptural meaning, context, or

application. For example, I had the experience of reading the same scriptures as a Baptist and a Pentecostal and understanding them differently according to the community to which I belonged at the time. These liberties should be allowed according to each person's measure and application of faith. However, these allowances will produce different views of the same faith. Much like our phones are all equipped to take pictures with this feature of adding a filter. We are able to scroll through the various filters and produce the same picture that seems different based on the filter that is selected. My phone is equipped with such choices as cream, cozy, sunshine, or grayscale, with the ability to select based on the circumstance or mood I am in at the moment of the picture. It is the same with our individual faith experience. We select different filters, consciously or not, that cause our faith to be changed in ways more pleasing and acceptable to us individually. Let me illustrate once again from one of my experiences as a pastor.

Prior to opening my church, I was a part of a black evangelical community for about six months. My responsibilities were varied, teaching and ministering under the auspices of the head pastor who was a neighborhood friend who offered to help me launch my church after a season of ministering with him. One morning at an early men's group I was the only white man in a group of approximately 20 men. That day, as often was the case, discussions became informal, and the discussion turned to struggles some of the men were having with the "white man" in the workplace.

Initially I thought I was included in the discussion as one of those "white men" that was challenging them in some way and I was waiting to be drawn into the discussion as part of the problem. After a while of not being included in the discussion, I began to feel like I had somehow become invisible. I then realized that I had become so accepted in the group that they no longer saw me as a "white man."

At the time I took this as a compliment, and they saw me as an equal. I now realize it spoke to the superficial nature of our relationship. That is, I was not integrally involved in their lives and not particularly interested in being anything more. Apparently, they felt the same way because I can't remember any initiative from any member of that group or that church, except the pastor, who expressed an interest in me. Sadly, I learned nothing from this experience as was evident in my pastoring of my own church.

Through the course of the seven years I pastored, I had several black families come as part of the life of my church, but they would all eventually leave, except for one. This was a family with two young daughters who were faithful in every aspect of my church. They regularly attended, gave of their time and resources, and volunteered for various responsibilities and ministries. They were a joy to be around. However, during that entire time, I confess now I never felt close to them and sensed they were still a little uneasy around me for some reason.

It wasn't until years later that I realized it was because I hadn't learned the lesson from being part of that black church prior to pastoring. I didn't learn to really "see this family." I wasn't interested in having more than a superficial relationship and I believe they sensed that in me as well, but they were too kind to express it to me.

The point of the story is that this was "the lens" through which I viewed these members of my church. My view was that they were an important part of my church, just not important enough to invest my time in a deeper relationship. I acknowledge that as pastor of a small church who was still working a full-time job, extra time to invest in relationship building was scarce. I get that. But my issue is that it never even occurred to me as something to be concerned about. Perhaps it wouldn't have made a bit of difference in the daily life of my church,

but perhaps it would have affected the “lens” of my faith and I would have become a better pastor and minister but more importantly a better person.

Many years after I closed my church, I remembered having a discussion with a woman about the Martin Luther King Holiday which had recently occurred at the time of my discussion with her. I was lamenting the fact that I didn’t even acknowledge the holiday in church. I finally realized the battle Martin Luther King fought was not only a social battle, but a spiritual battle as well. Leading social reform involves a battle of the heart, soul, and mind to affect change of thinking and behaviors. This is not accomplished simply by lecture. It takes a rebirth in the soul, which causes a reorientation of one’s perspectives and a reconstruction of thoughts and behaviors. In some cases, where thoughts and behaviors are so deeply ingrained it takes a form of spiritual warfare to affect any change in outcome.

Scripture refers to the “pulling down strongholds” and “casting down arguments” as spiritual battles to be won through our faith. (2 Corinthians 10:4,5) Failure to recognize the spiritual aspect of MLK’s legacy and the battle he fought was a pastoral dereliction of duty. This lady was too kind to say that to me. She just agreed it was a shame I didn’t mention the day. Sad to say, during the seven years of pastoring I ignored MLK Day seven times. I am ashamed to say I thought it was a “black” holiday. I do not believe I am a racist, but that kind of thinking gets one on the path to acting like one.

I have spent a lot of years in a lot of evangelical churches, all being predominately white congregations. In all those years, I can only remember MLK day being mentioned in a casual manner at best, if at all. Perhaps the day was acknowledged, and it made no impression on me. That would have been the result of the “lens” of my faith. But I wouldn’t be surprised if it was only casually mentioned in my

predominately white church. That would have been a result of the corporate “lens” of faith for the entire church.

SHADOWS OF FAITH

For the purposes of this writing, I am using the metaphor “shadows of faith” to describe experiences such as the one given in the preceding example. David states in Psalm 17:8 “Hide me in the shadow of Your wings, from the wicked who oppress me” and then in Psalm 23:4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.” Both are metaphors in which David is soliciting the comfort and protection from God during various trials of his life. In both these verses he solicits use of the word “shadow” to illustrate a spiritual dynamic. The first reference uses “shadow” to describe the security provided to us with God’s presence. The second use of the word “shadow” describes the fear when death is near. For the purposes of this writing, I would like to borrow from David the metaphorical use of the word “shadow” to describe the division in the communities of faith which we are experiencing today.

“Shadows of faith” are the beliefs, set by a combination of our faith community’s doctrinal positions and our general life experiences, which affect the views of our faith and their related actions. The “shadows of faith” cause a different view of our faith from its initial or purest form. I am not suggesting that some sort of dark cloud descends on our souls, and we turn into something we are not. Neither am I suggesting that we fall into some cultic trance and have some sort of out of body experience. What I am suggesting is that teachings, customs, and the subtleties of wanting to be accepted as part of a community can shape our view of faith in different ways.

What I am suggesting may be counter intuitive because light and darkness cannot coexist. But they can, not to the same extent as

darkness but in the form of shadows. That is, I believe once we are enlightened by the grace of God in His ways through faith, I do not believe it is possible for our souls and spirits to be “darkened” as they once were. The threat of darkness is much more subtle than that. It arrives in the forms of “shadows,” not blocking out the light of God from our lives, but a lessening of clarity. Let me explain.

In scripture light has been used as a symbol of holiness, goodness, wisdom, grace, hope, and God’s revelation. The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of transitioning from a life of darkness to a life of light to represent the change from a life of unbelief to a life of faith in God. “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” Paul continues his exhortation to continue to walk in that light of faith and to avoid the darkness of our previous state of unbelief. He goes on to emphatically warn us not to have “fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” (Ephesians 5:8-11)

In other words, Paul is saying be careful as we continue in our journey of faith that we do not become complacent and return to some of our old habits, our old behaviors, and our old ways of thinking. The prescription to resist this complacency is to expose these things that are not true, not good nor righteous, when they come into our lives according to Paul’s advice.

However, the effects of our particular doctrinal teachings, customs of worship and particular subtleties of our faith communities produce divisions in the evangelical communities of faith. These divisions in some cases become rigid, non-flexible boundaries that encumber the unity of faith in the overall body of believers. Divisions that can be so great that common discourse between the two factions becomes difficult. Let me illustrate this with a recent experience of my wife in our local community.

My wife attends a weekly, non-denominational bible study hosted by a local church that conducts a methodical study of the books of the bible. On this particular occasion during a group discussion a participant referred to our current president as “evil Biden.” My wife, who is not particularly political, was embarrassed by the comment because it showed a great disrespect for our sitting president. She felt like running out of the room when that happened, but she didn’t and kept her composure enough to refrain from comment. After the study, my wife mentioned to the group leader how the comment unsettled her for the rest of the study. I am glad to say the leader agreed and took appropriate steps to correct the action prior to the next meeting.

Of course, inappropriate comments are made often in groups like this, but the point here is that it was a highly emotionally charged political comment about our president without consideration that there would be a dissenting position in the room of approximately twenty ladies. In other words, that person assumed that all the ladies in this group were of the same political disposition as she was, and comfortable enough to make her comment even though in the rules of the meeting political discussions were not allowed.

I find this type of assumption to be alarming in the sense it violates so many tenets of the faith that are common to bible believing Christian communities of faith. It violates the mandate to honor all authority because it comes from God (Romans 13:1). It violates the concept of speaking with grace (Colossians 4:6). It violates the principle of having the mind of Christ always having a concern for others rather than self (Philippians 2:4), just to name a few.

Of course, this one anecdote in a faith-related community setting is not meant to be a comprehensive judgement on all evangelical communities of faith by any means. But the concern is that the boldness demonstrated by speaking in a setting such as this one is symptomatic

of the extreme emotional divisions in our nation's political and social perspectives in the evangelical communities of faith. What is more alarming is that if this type of boldness is exhibited in those that represent the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Mathew 5:13-16) what does that indicate about the rest of the people in our nation?

To illustrate the extent of division that exists in our nation, let me refer to an excerpt from a recent writing by Representative Jamie Raskin, member of the House of Representatives from the state of Maryland. "The enormous violence that shook the Capitol on January 6 was political in nature, unlike, for example, a barroom brawl, a sexual assault, or a Mob hit against a rival criminal gang. It drew upon and activated deep racial enmity and hostility."

Raskin describes the experiences that day of two of his constituents, both Capitol Hill Policemen. One of them an African American, states he had never been called the N-word before that day. The other a U.S. Army veteran and a naturalized citizen from the Dominican Republic was physically beaten and taunted as a "traitor," a "foreigner," and "not even a real American." Raskin continues to describe the actions of the mob that day as having gone "even beyond the deep pools of racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and immigrant bashing." That in fact they "had converged on Washington to destroy corrupt politicians of both parties, traitorous police officers, lying media and other sinister shadowy forces identified by conspiracy theorists."³

Representative Raskin's description is a firsthand account of how deeply divided our citizens can be. When political differences rise to this extreme, something is terribly wrong, and the problem is pervasive. To suggest I have a great understanding of this national dynamic and a

³ Unthinkable by Jamie Raskin, P. 259, Harper Collins Publishers 2022

solution for it would be pure folly. But my general purpose with this writing is to shine a light on some critical issues that need to be addressed in the communities of faith during our current times. It has been my experience in more than thirty years of being part of the evangelical community of faith that the important contemporary issues of our lives are hardly ever mentioned in our churches. It was the prevailing thought that church on Sunday was about God, the bible and “spiritual issues” only. The church was no place for civic discussions about race, politics, or social programs.

Ryan Burge, a social scientist, and a pastor, cites the results of surveys he took in 2019. Each were administered to 500 nondenominational Protestants and 500 denominational Protestants. The first survey indicated that thirty percent of the respondents indicated that they had not heard their pastor discuss social issues at all. The second survey resulted in over half of respondents (fifty-five percent) indicating they had heard either one or no social issues addressed from the pulpit in the prior year. About eighty-three percent of Protestant Christians said that they had heard three or fewer social issues during sermons.⁴ This illustrates how little social issues are discussed in the church environment.

In my mind all social issues are “spiritual” issues. I believe the evidence of that is that the divisions of the various faith communities throughout our nation have grown wider each year. Of course, social issues involve physical challenges like guns, medical procedures, and jobs. However, the spiritual aspect of these divisions involves attitudes, behaviors, and the stubbornness of mind that causes individuals to be fixed in one position or one view that discussion of compromise is

⁴ 20 Myths about Religion and Politics in America by Ryan P. Burge; P. 223-225, Fortress Press, 2022.

prohibited. Once sides are “dug in” to a fixed way, tempers flare, arguments turn ugly, and violence often follows.

GOD COMMUNICATING THROUGH THE SHADOWS

So, if things are getting progressively worse and our nation is on the verge of calamity, shouldn't we expect some kind of warning from God to the people of God? Perhaps God is speaking, and we are just not hearing. Or perhaps He is speaking in a manner and method that is different from the day when Moses went up on the mount and came down with inscribed tablets. It is a point worth mentioning.

The Old Testament of the Bible has large portions of it dedicated to the words and actions of the prophets. These individuals were typecasted by God in different times and circumstances to bring specific messages to the people of God. My favorite is Elijah because he did great things for God but often showed his vulnerabilities. Gods' interaction with Elijah teaches us much about God and how He deals with us. For example, when Elijah was going through a time of serious doubt in himself and his faith he is confronted by God as described in 1 Kings 19:11-13. “Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And suddenly a voice came to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”” The literal translation in this reference is “a delicate whispering voice.”

Have you ever heard such a voice? Maybe in a moment of despair when you were at the end of your proverbial rope? I believe I have. In

those moments that are larger than life, when things are changing all around, these are the events that I call the intersection of the natural with the supernatural. In those moments I believe our faith is activated through the experience, often in a delicate whispering voice. A voice that begins requiring some reflection and self-examination. A voice that then speaks comfort to our soul, wisdom for the moment and direction for the time. I believe the people of God today need a similar experience with God. One that gives comfort, wisdom, and direction as well. Maybe God is speaking today, and we are just not listening.

But prophecy in the New Testament is approached differently. The gift of prophecy is included in the list of operating gifts in the church and the Apostle Paul teaches about it in his epistles, but there are no large portions of text dedicated to specific prophets in the New Testament. The exception being of course Jesus Christ as the Prophet of all time.

For the most part in the evangelical communities of faith the prophetic gifts are recognized but are slightly different in definition and application depending on the doctrinal positions of the denomination. Some churches recognize prophecy as a general gift to certain members of the congregation with some formally assigning the title of prophet. Some churches require strict discipline in the exercising of the gift while others have a more casual approach and let the gift flow freely amongst the members.

Certainly, one can google “prophecy of the day” and find any number of individuals claiming the gift and offering prophetic utterances for public consumption. Any individual is free to choose the validity of any such prophetic claims offered. I believe the prophetic gifts described in the New Testament are still active today. I believe these prophetic voices can be many and diverse. I also believe they can be and, in some cases, have been exploited and commercialized. It is

left to the faith of each individual to discern what is or what is not appropriate for him or her.

I believe God is able and willing to communicate to us in both sacred and secular channels. I offer the following quote as an example, not necessarily as a prophetic utterance directly from God, but as an opinion offered that can be very helpful to the communities of faith to understand where we are as a nation.

Schoen and Cooperman write about “dangerous forces corroding the foundations of democracy in America to include: public loss of trust in democracy; the rise and mobilization of extremism threatening violence; social media, websites, and cable TV news that splinters audiences and creates alternate realities; inequality of opportunity that creates a two-tiered society; and anti-democratic regimes that threaten freedom around the world.”⁵

It does not take a degree in political science or any great understanding about the social dynamic in our nation to recognize that these issues are currently confronting our nation. We may not agree with the degree to which each is a threat to our democracy, but I think we would all agree that they are a threat to some significant degree. The threat of anti-democratic regimes has become abundantly clear over the last months since Russia launched an unprovoked attack on its neighboring country of Ukraine in an attempt to take control of it and expand Russia’s geographical borders to include Ukraine.

Schoen and Cooperman also state “Americans have never been united by a single religious faith, ethnic heritage, or race.... But we have been united throughout most of our history by a Big Idea – an idea that has made it possible for our extraordinary diverse nation to become

⁵ America – Unite or Die by Douglas E. Schoen & Carly Cooperman; p.32, Regan Arts, 2021

what our Latin motto *e pluribus Unum* says we are – “out of many, one.” The big idea is a civic faith that has become America’s secular religion: a faith in democracy and the values it enshrines. A faith that can cast ballots for candidates of our choice, that those ballots will be counted fairly and accurately, and that we will be governed by the men and women we select to lead us at the local, state, and national level. A faith in the stirring words of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these rights, Government are instituted among Men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed.”⁶

The authors of this text go on to state that to stop the civil unrest and violence we are experiencing in our nation today “Americans must come together to support a Great Awakening of our civic faith in American democracy, comparable to the religious revival known as the Great Awakening that swept the British colonies in America in the 1730s and 1740s.”⁷

My purpose is not to dispute the above opinion as to whether or not our nation is given over to a civic faith that has become America’s secular religion. I would instead offer the suggestion that what I call “shadows of faith” have crept into the evangelical communities and have changed the acting out of our faith more and more in a secular way. That is in our faith, outcome has become more important than the method. Results are more important than relationships. Insult has often replaced integrity in the political leadership we support.

⁶ Ibid, p.27

⁷ America – Unite or Die by Douglas E. Schoen & Carly Cooperman; p.30, Regan Arts, 2021

A hypocrisy has been born in evangelicals so that in certain social issues personal rights prevail over the greater good, while in other social issues the universal right prevails over individual rights. For example, many evangelicals support unrestricted gun rights as a second amendment right guaranteed by the constitution for every individual while ignoring the greater good of providing for the safety of every American from mass murder with the legalization of automatic weapons.

Another example of hypocrisy is that a large number of evangelicals support the banning of abortion based on saving the life of the unborn but at the same time fully endorse capital punishment. These are examples of some of the shadows of faith that exist in the evangelical communities.

DISPELLING THE SHADOWS

I do believe the solution to these various shadows of faith is offered in the previously referenced Schoen and Cooperman quote as well. Americans need another Great Awakening to come together, and it should be led by the evangelical communities of faith. I do not believe our great nation is in imminent danger of mass annihilation or starvation. But perhaps we are further along a worse fate in the long run. That is our collective faith has been shadowed in such a fashion that any sense of a united nation seems hopeless. Perhaps this is because our view of faith has taken on a horizontal view instead of a vertical view. That is, we are so focused on each other we have lost sight of God. Our gaze is fixated on the shadow instead of focusing on the light. Of course, we can't get along because we are so absorbed in scrutinizing our brother and sister, we have lost sight of the Father.

One of the privileges I had as a pastor was the opportunity to marry couples. One verse I would always refer to during a wedding ceremony

was Ecclesiastes 4:12 which says in part “A threefold chord is not quickly broken.” I would challenge the couple to have that threefold chord as husband and wife intertwined with God similar to the construct of a strong rope. I think our faith communities are so focused on ourselves that we have lost sight of being a threefold chord with God binding us together.

The psalmist says, “the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him.” Perhaps that is the direction we should focus. Where is God looking or is the question who is He looking for? Is he looking at us or our nation? Or is He looking elsewhere? I guess the answer is implicit in the answer to the question “who or what do we fear?” Do we fear loss of some perceived right more than walking in humility as one under God? Do we seek individual victory or peace through humility to one another? We need a fresh awakening in our faith collectively as a people of faith. We need to unite in our faith to lead our nation in healing.

But how does that happen? How are we to know where to look to learn how to begin such an undertaking as uniting a nation by faith? It begins with God preparing the hearts of His people of faith. “For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7b)

This was the direction given to the high priest Samuel in choosing the next leader for the people of God. That person being described was David who at the time appeared as “ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking.” (1 Samuel 16:12) At the time he was a mere shepherd boy, harpist, worshipper of God in song and dance. This boy turned into a slayer of giants, a warrior, a commander of armies and a king. David writes in the Book of Psalms “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” (Psalm 20:7) David was a warrior and a king. His experience was such that he

had to rely on chariots and horses in the course of battle. But his ultimate security was his faith and his trust in God.

An unknown psalmist writes “No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.” (Psalm 33:16-18) These ancient, time-tested writings tell us to not rest on our own strength and capabilities but to hope and trust in the only One that can rescue from death and famine.

But in addition to that knowledge of God’s sovereignty in all our circumstances, we are to walk in a reverential fear of God which means with humility and respect for each other as we are all under the sight of God. That is unity of faith. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1) The psalmist continues to describe that unity of the brethren is like the precious anointing oil dripping down the head and beard of Aaron. Let’s stop here for a moment and take in what is being said by the psalmist.

Unity of the brethren is being compared to the anointing oil of the high priest (Aaron) that was poured over his head and allowed to drip down through his beard as preparation for entering into the presence of God located in the holiest part of the temple. Bible scholars point out that the Old Testament anointing oil is symbolic of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament believer. So, simply put the unity of the people of faith is the anointing that invites the presence of God in our midst. You can take that as literal or a metaphor, either way it is a pretty powerful endorsement for the unity of the people of faith.

Only God knows what lies in the recesses of a man’s or woman’s heart and their ultimate abilities through their faith in Him. That is why

today the call to all must be summoned to rise up in our faith. So that the leaders of today will come forth from the fields of routine life to lead a nation in faith just like David. If one needs more convincing of the truth of these words other than these scriptural examples, then look at the events of the day.

The overmatched, under equipped Ukraine forces have withstood more than a year of a Russian military onslaught. They have stood strong, unified in their faith in their country, in their leaders, and in each other and by the grace of God are experiencing gradual victories. Minor in comparison to the destruction that has occurred so far by the hundreds of Russian missiles and bombs, but none the less undeterred in their passion and their faith. I have heard them express a willingness to fight until they can fight no more rather than surrender. A passion united as one in purpose is bigger than any individual concern. Every town, city and jurisdiction has lost its individual identity and is united in one faith, the survival of the Ukraine. We need to summon that same passion to preserve our country, to heal the divide, to be a United States of America!

I propose that a re-examination of our faith under additional scriptural light (holiness, goodness, wisdom, grace, hope, and God's revelation) will lead to insight of reconciling the views of people of faith and facilitating a fresh uniting of our nation. I believe if our faith is formulated with additional light of revelation from God it will produce different actions of faith. I believe this process must begin with the communities of faith because we have so many common elements in our faith that the relational gap between evangelicals should be easy to close.

The divide in our country is so great that what is acceptable as civil discourse is no longer clear. In some cases, these divisions result in a confused picture of what is acceptable behavior and a distorted view of

truth. The division in our nation is so advanced and so great in my view that the process of coming together must start somewhere, somehow but soon.

Jon Meacham states “We live in twilight more than we do in clarity. Fundamentalist believers and fundamental atheists would both do well. I think, to acknowledge that literalism may be comforting but is ultimately dangerous, for an uncritical acceptance of one worldview or another (whether in religion or politics) ends more conversations than it begins. Light can neither emanate from, nor enter into a closed mind. And so, for all its limitations, reason – the weighing of evidence, the assessment of likelihood, the capacity to shift one’s opinions in light of thought and experience – remains essential.”⁸

It is time that we all open our minds to a fresh visitation to God’s light. We all need fresh illumination to see through the shadows of our faith and our beliefs sufficiently to close the gap that divides us as a nation.

The intent of this chapter is to describe the metaphor “Shadows of faith” and how it applies to the formulation of different views of faith in the evangelical communities. Let me conclude this chapter with a brief synopsis of how faith evolved in my life experience.

My faith journey began at a very young age. I do not know why that is, only that I know that it happened. From those early childhood days until now, which is that stage of life when one realizes he has lived more in the past than he has left in the future, God has arrested my heart. Have I walked blamelessly in that knowledge all those years? Of course not. Have I lived faithfully in my knowledge of God and His relationship with me at all times? No. Have I had days, months, years when I felt I no longer possessed any knowledge of God and felt that

⁸ The Hope of Glory by Jon Meacham, P.13, Convergent Books, 2020.

His presence was no longer in my life? Of course, I have. But it is a faith that has persisted through all those various seasons. It has been a journey of faith characterized by what I would call different “shadows” based on the doctrines I was taught and believed. It has been a journey filled with learning about God through formal study and a consistent involvement learning about the methods of my beliefs varying with the denomination that I was a part of at the time.

But more importantly it has been a journey formulated in various faith experiences. Faith experiences that varied in frequency and circumstance. Faith experiences that were never being sought, just suddenly revealed based on the openness of my heart to whatever God was doing in my life. These faith experiences are what I refer to as those divine intersections of the natural with the supernatural giving new revelation and new understanding. I characterize those moments in this writing as new light being shed on my current shadows of faith that changed my view and launched me in new directions of faith.

I have had seasons where my faith was rigid and bounded by denominational customs until God decided to reveal something new. What was imparted to me was revelation and understanding needed for the circumstance I was facing at the time. I have had seasons of great freedom and celebration being released from denominational form and customs in worship. I have had such personal intimate times of communion with God that have caused me to weep uncontrollably. Times when I have felt totally exposed to God, basking in His presence, and wishing the experience would never end but realizing it was too intense to withstand for too long. It was during those times that I came to understand Hebrews 12:29 that says, “For our God is a consuming fire.”

It has been my experience that God’s presence purges us from all the issues that so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1). Things like pride,

bitterness, fear disappear like they are being burnt off us as God's presence draws near. What remains is an overwhelming sense of love and acceptance unlike any I have ever experienced. All I know is that these experiences with God created an unquenchable desire in me to experience them again.

My search ended in a resolve to start a church with the explicit intent to raise up a community of faith that cultivated this type of experience in the routine each time we gathered together. Only to realize after seven years of toiling at the effort that I had neither the skill nor the knowledge of how to cultivate in a community of faith what I had experienced personally. This led to a season of despair and a perceived estrangement from God. I say perceived because I only felt estranged. In actuality I was never forsaken by God. He simply was waiting for me to come to the end of myself.

I can honestly say that I have returned to the Faithful One who has never abandoned me and has brought me to a place of relationship with Him that has never been sweeter or more intimate than now. It is a relationship based on His acceptance of me without any conditional requirements of doing, giving, or performing in some fashion. It is a relationship that was settled in eternity long before I even became aware that it existed. It is such a relationship that the only way possible to understand it was to first experience it, then understanding would follow. I can now honestly say that I understand I had to experience faith before I could convince others to pursue the same. That revelation puts a different perspective on a life journey that at times seemed pointless.

Why was I so consumed with my faith? Why did I have to struggle through two marriages? Why did I go through the experience of being a single parent? Why did I have to experience the accidental death of an ex-wife after our divorce? Why did I go through the struggle of a

blended family with three children that had three different fathers only for that marriage to end in divorce after thirty-five years? Why did I feel compelled to start and pastor a church only to be sure it was God's will to close it after seven years? Why did I have to go through several years of self-doubt questioning my faith and questioning everything I knew about God? I can honestly say I can answer each of those questions simply.

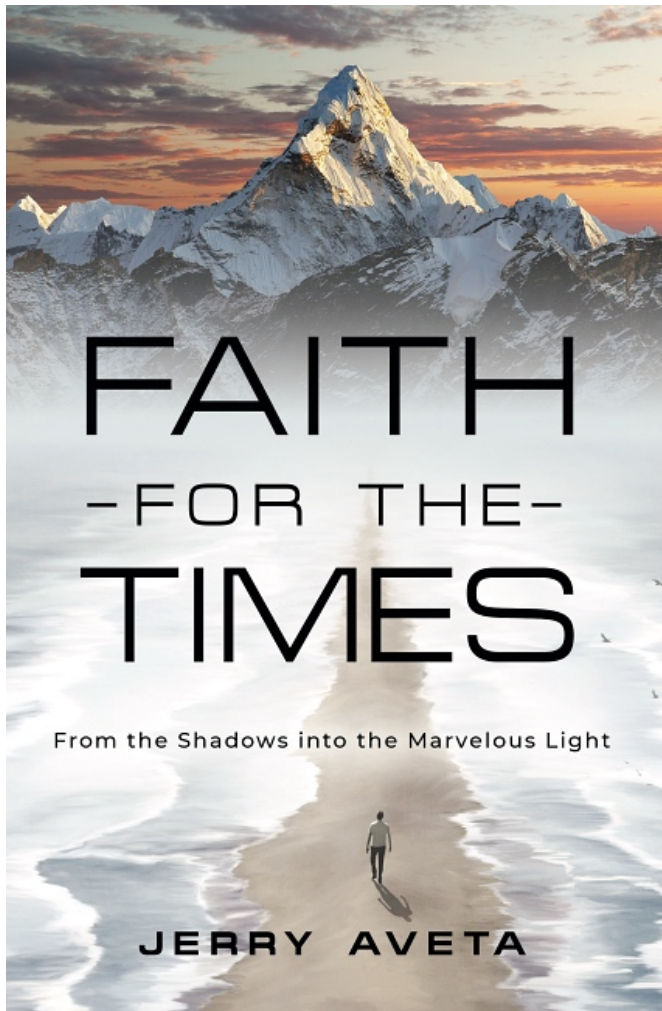
I had to go through each of those experiences to get to my place of faith and the relationship that I have with God today. It is a relationship that has filled me with hope for the future for myself, my family, and the nation that I live in and love. I believe that it is a hope and a faith that is needed by many people in our nation, and I believe our churches are too busy with business as usual to provide the opportunity to experience faith like it.

So, I take great joy in casting forth my arguments on the pages of this document in anticipation that it will stir some thought in our nation to begin seeking God in a different way, with a different lens and with a great expectation of seeing God do something great in our country! I do so with bold confidence because I have come to believe that there are other voices like mine. Voices expressed individually have not much effect. But voices that are in harmony with the same passion and purpose build on each other's confidence and effectiveness.

I believe many voices can produce a chorus with the effectiveness to move a nation and I encourage any similar voice to cry out as well in your own fashion and manner! With many voices God does the harmonizing and gets all the credit and the glory! My hope is that as you make your way through this writing your faith will be strengthened, renewed, and launched to greater heights and experiences with the God of your faith who is pursuing you tirelessly and endlessly as He did me.

Jerry Aveta

And that each who read this document would have a new faith experience, a “Faith for the Times.”



Our nation is currently in a time of political, social, and civil division in our nation's faith communities. This writing describes methods to heal those divides supported by anecdotes of many years of ministry in the Washington D.C. area.

**Faith for the Times:
From the Shadows into the Marvelous Light**

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