

## De-Clutter Bedazzled Minds to Make Room for God's Gems

### One Year Wisdom Challenge #2

Have you ever used one of those Bedazzle tools? Anything can be transformed from plain to rhinestone-covered splendor. Recently, God spoke to me in a brief vision, using the bedazzling idea to help me understand something about wisdom. He showed me my soul as if it was a room. From the doorway, I could see that every surface in the room was covered with jewels. When I walked in, I accidentally brushed against a wall. Many jewels fell off and I could see that they were cheap, stick-ons from a Bedazzle tool.

I understood that much of the room was covered in fake gems. I also noticed that scattered around were some real jewels, firmly cemented into the walls and floor. Rubies, diamonds, emeralds, aquamarines, and such were noticeably different than the fakes.

This world and our enemy want the hearts and minds of pastors and their wives to be filled with ideas, emotions and beliefs that are contrary to God's kingdom, Word, and character. Additionally, Satan sneakily engages us with ministry ideas and patterns that God has not chosen for our individual church. He bedazzles our minds and hearts with success stories and protocols from other ministries to entice us to listen to men's ideas more than God's voice uniquely speaking to us and our churches.

Look at how many Christians can be led astray if a pastor or his wife can be sidetracked or deceived. How much money and time can be wasted if the enemy tricks us into using plans in our churches that aren't God's best plan for our congregation?

I believe many of us in leadership struggle to access and rightly hear and use God's wisdom because of bedazzled souls filled with other's ideas instead of God's. I talked last week about the dangers of trying to reproduce someone else's successes into our own church without carefully consulting God. This is not to say that we cannot learn from the wisdom and experiences of other ministries. Of course God wants us to do that but what I've seen in my own life and other leader's is a subtle distortion of that process. Here's how I see it play out.

We as leaders struggle with a problem in our church. Let's use the obvious one of church growth and attendance as our example. When my husband and I were up against this wall, we started out well by praying with our leadership first. God showed us some unique ways to reach into the unchurched of our community. We began to grow with new believers and added a second service.

Our growth stalled out after a couple of years and we plateaued. (A very normal and good thing in the life of a church, but we didn't know that.) Looking back, I think God wanted to stabilize us and create more mature disciples to prepare for the next influx of new believers. Instead of going straight back to God, who would have told us the above, Ken, my husband and I, and our leaders, started looking outward.

We became bedazzled by flyers and brochures to attend conferences and seminars at other, larger churches who touted their church growth plans as winning ones. These ideas were wildly

successful for those places because I suspect they were God's plans for THEM. I'm not so sure they were God's plans for US.

We began attending conferences on church growth. We came home bedazzled with excitement and methods. I'm sad to admit that we ran with several of these plans with mere nods to seeking God and his ideas for ourselves. After all, these were godly, successful people who heard from God. Surely what worked for them would work for us, right?

Not so much. We wasted years and money trying to execute God's plans for another's church. Our church didn't authentically grow again until we returned to seeking God for ourselves.

Sweet ones, many of us are missing God's specific wisdom for our ministries. This is part of why I'm challenging you to a yearlong study of the book of Proverbs with me. We need to declutter our souls. We need to know and apply God's wisdom for our specific people. Our bedazzled minds and hearts, filled with other people's ideas, are greatly affecting our approach to ministry. Another ministry's diamond can often be but a rhinestone in our church.

Repeatedly, God tells us in Proverbs that his wisdom is more precious than jewels and worth the hunt to find for ourselves. Please read these: Prov. 2:3, 3:14-15, 8:10-11, 19, 16:16, 20:5b. I suspect many of you are like me. You've got wisdom jewels which God has deposited in your brain. Right now, though, they are hard to access because of all the bedazzle of other people's ideas.

Let's declutter together. I'd like to tell you that Ken and I left that pattern behind completely, but we still fell into that bedazzle mindset a little when we started up a new ministry for the Baby Boomers in our church. And, as before, other folks' great ideas flopped in our situation. Fortunately, they were small flops. A warning and a reminder from God to seek him first, always.

Here's some soul decluttering ideas for you, your husband, and your ministries.

1. Admit the areas of ministry where we've tried to apply outside ideas and it's just not working. Be honest and humble in dialogue with your people. You led them here and you need to make this right.
2. Repent of placing higher value on other's words and ideas more than hearing from and dialoguing with God yourself for you and your people. We are their Moses, their Joshua. We need to behave that way.
3. Recognize those places in our minds where conference speakers and other pastor's words are unintentionally making us feel like failures. That's not God. That's Satan's bedazzle mocking you and your ability to hear from God yourself and create fresh, new things perfectly suited to your church. Better a few precious jewels glittering and attracting the lost to Christ than a church full of bedazzle programs.
4. Shut down the things that are barely staying on the rails in our churches that are clearly not God's plans for our situation. Remember how quickly Moses shut down that golden calf mess? If we are honest, some of us are allowing rhinestone programs to continue to run because we're afraid of the reaction when we shut them down. God will give us

courage and the right way of doing that so we can make room for the precious jewel ideas God's designed for our churches.

5. Set times and places for regular prayer where you and your leaders seek God together, perhaps at the beginning of a year or in the fall for the next year. Before Covid, we were meeting every other month for meetings like this with leadership. Read his Word together. Be quiet before him and listen together. Write down what you hear together. Then, only then, figure out the mechanics of how to execute the vision and dreams God shares. For example, he may not want you to grow numerically right now. He might want you to grow deeper for a while, as disciples of Christ. After you know what God wants you to do, there's wisdom in checking out other ministries to gain some ideas for logistics and such.

Let's memorize this verse together this week so the Holy Spirit can use it in the future when we are tempted by someone else's dazzle.

**“Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels...” Proverbs 8:10-11.**