

# FROM ETERNITY TO HERE

REDISCOVERING THE AGELESS PURPOSE OF GOD

**FRANK VIOLA**

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## DIGGING DEEPER

### INTRODUCTION DISCLOSING THE DIVINE STORY

1. What do you think about the three grand themes or narratives that this book will be exploring? What is your initial reaction to each of them?
2. If you grew up in a Christian setting, did you ever hear anyone identify the grand narrative of the Bible? If so, what did they teach you about it?
3. As you begin this book, take this test: On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being “very exciting” and 1 being “terribly boring”), how would you rate the following terms: “Bride of Christ,” “House of God,” “Body of Christ,” “Family of God”?

## CHAPTER 1 THE HIDDEN ROMANCE OF THE BIBLE

1. Why has the story of the Lord's quest for a bride been so neglected in Christian teaching and literature? Explain.
2. What stories or pictures in the Old Testament can you think of that give us glimpses of the bridegroom theme? Explain.
3. What movies or films have you seen that appear to echo the love story found in the Bible? Explain.
4. You are just beginning to dig in to this book. So right now, how would you define God's eternal purpose and grand mission?

## CHAPTER 2 A WOMAN INSIDE OF A MAN

1. Explain how “alone” Adam must have felt as he came to realize that he was the only one of God’s creatures without a counterpart.
2. What parallels do you see between Eve’s natural response to love her husband and our relationship with the Lord?
3. What touched you the most from this chapter? Explain.

## CHAPTER 3 A CLOSE-UP OF THE FIRST EVE

1. Why do you suppose that Eve stands as such a pivotal figure in the unfolding drama of the Bible? Explain.
2. What characteristic of Eve was most surprising to you—one that you had not noticed or considered before? Explain.
3. Paul talked a lot about the “mystery” in his letters. What do you suppose that means? Explain.

## CHAPTER 4 THE MYSTERY OF THE AGES

1. Many philosophers believe that history is just a series of random events. What does God's "eternal purpose in Christ" tell us about the historical process? Explain.
2. "God created everything for His Son to have a counterpart, a helpmate, a bride." How will taking this statement seriously affect your reading of the Bible and your Christian life? Explain.
3. Do you think that the traditional evangelical emphasis on "soul-winning" ends up distracting us from the ultimate purpose of God to create a "new humanity" that expresses the fullness of His Son? Explain.
4. Have you ever before connected the passion of a bridegroom seeking the love of his bride with the Lord Jesus Christ's love for His church? Explain.
5. What new quality of God did you learn about in this chapter? Explain.
6. What touched you the most in this chapter? Explain.

## CHAPTER 5 A CLOSE-UP OF THE SECOND EVE

1. Which parallels between the first Eve and the New Eve are the most striking to you? Explain.
2. How does the biblical revelation that you are holy and without blame in the eyes of God make you feel? Explain.
3. Traditionally, theologians have tried to capture the essence of our relationship to the Son with the phrase “union with Christ.” How do the points about the New Eve deepen, broaden, and express the reality of your “union with Christ”? Explain.
4. Ephesians 1:22 exclaims that Christ is “to be head over everything for the *ekklesia*.” How does this amplify the glorious fact that the church is “the most beautiful girl in the world”? Explain.
5. How has this chapter changed your view of the Lord Jesus Christ? Explain.



## CHAPTER 6 THE DIVINE FRUSTRATION

1. Have you ever poured yourself into gaining the affection of another person, only to have your heart broken by their rejection of your overtures? How did this feel? And what does it tell you about God? Explain.
2. Many of us are acutely aware of our failures and shortcomings. In this light, how do you react when you hear that God the Father views you just as spotless and blameless as He does His firstborn Son? Explain.
3. Have you ever been affected by performance-based religion in which you found yourself “never doing enough”? How did this approach to God detract from the love and beauty of the Lord Jesus?
4. What are some of the lies that the Evil One has flooded the church with in order to cloud and distract her from her total acceptance in the Beloved? Give some examples of your own experiences of this. What lies have you been told? Explain.
5. What would a local church look like if she accepted the radical and liberating truth that she is “the righteousness of God”? What changes would this make? Explain.
6. How will things be different in your life now that you know how God views you? Explain.

## CHAPTER 7 **FALLEN YET CHERISHED**

1. Do you think that one central reason we struggle to accept God's electing love for us is because we are all too acquainted with the depth of our fallenness? Explain.
2. What practical ill-effects result when Bible teachers and preachers constantly parade believers' sins in front of them? Explain.
3. In light of this chapter, does Paul's phrase "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more" take on fresh meaning? Explain.
4. Why do you suppose that so many professing Christians are functioning out of fear instead of freedom driven by love for the Lord? Explain.
5. After reading this chapter, has the love of God in Christ Jesus more fully gripped your heart and captured your being? Explain.

## CHAPTER 8 LOVING EXTRAVAGANTLY

1. During much of church history, women were ignored, silenced, and viewed as second-class Christians. How does the extravagant love that Mary displayed for Jesus reveal that there is something seriously wrong with that long-standing practice? Explain.
2. What in your past corresponds to Mary's seven demons? What in your life can help you relate to her outpouring of love to Jesus? (You don't have to get too personal if you're uncomfortable doing so. It's something to at least ponder.)
3. What do you think it was about Jesus that made "sinners" feel comfortable around Him? Explain.
4. Is avoiding a judgmental and self-righteous spirit a top priority in your life? Has this chapter changed your attitude in this area at all? Explain.
5. What do you think were some of the key reasons why the onlookers in Simon's home were beside themselves when they saw Mary's love-driven actions? Explain.
6. Given Mary's unapologetic display of love, are you now more emboldened to lavish your Lord with love? Explain.

## CHAPTER 9 THE PREPARATION OF THE BRIDE

1. List the broad parallels between Sarah giving birth to Isaac and Mary giving birth to Jesus.
2. What aspects of the story of Abraham sending his servant to find a bride for Isaac are most gripping to you? Explain.
3. What does Rebekah's extended camel ride tell you about the desire of the bride-to-be for her unseen Bridegroom? Explain.
4. What touched you the most about this chapter? Explain.

## CHAPTER 10 THE ULTIMATE WEDDING

1. Does this chapter open up any new dimensions of Ephesians 3:10—“through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”? Explain.
2. What aspects of the Jewish wedding procedure moved you the most? Explain.
3. Can you think of some important implications flowing from the truth that while the word *bride* is singular, Christ’s bride is corporate—she’s a body with many parts? Explain.

## CHAPTER 11 THE WIFE OF GOD

1. What thoughts rise in your heart as you consider that the King loves both the totality of the maiden as well as each of her parts? Explain.
2. What did you find the most encouraging about Jesus' actions at the wedding in Cana? Explain.
3. Explain your reactions to the way this chapter describes Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.
4. What in this chapter ministered the most to your heart? Explain.

## CHAPTER 12 THE STORY OF A HOMELESS GOD

1. What else does “home” mean to you that is not listed in this chapter? Explain.
2. What comes to your mind when you think of God wanting a home in which to dwell? Explain.
3. Does this chapter give you a new perspective on the phrase “the house of God”? Explain.

## CHAPTER 13 GOD'S QUEST FROM ADAM TO JACOB

1. What significance do you see in the fact that not only is there a marriage at the beginning and end of Scripture, but also a tree of life and a flowing river? Explain.
2. How does the “altar and tent” theme speak to your heart? Explain.
3. How does Jacob’s anointing of a stone prefigure us becoming a new covenant dwelling place for God? Explain.



## CHAPTER 14 GOD'S QUEST FROM MOSES TO SOLOMON

1. We have rightly focused on Moses' tabernacle as a place where sin was dealt with, but have we given enough space to it as the dwelling of God with His people? Explain.
2. How would you compare the tabernacle of Moses in Gibeon with many religious organizations that call themselves "churches" today? Explain.
3. Can you believe that God opened up forty years of unfettered worship with no blood sacrifices and no special priesthood? Explain your reaction to that.
4. What touched you the most in the discussion on the tabernacle of David?
5. Have you listened to the CD by the author on this subject (see page 149)? If so, what were your thoughts and reactions to it?

## CHAPTER 15 GOD'S QUEST FROM JESUS TO JOHN

1. What vital implications do you see arising from the fact that the reality of “God’s house” from the outset was to be found in a Person and not located in a place? Explain.
2. Why can it be said that Jesus could “build” his *ekklesia* only after His resurrection? Explain.
3. Eve was brought forth from Adam’s side on the eighth day. In what sense are believers “in Christ” brought forth as a “new humanity” on the eighth day—the day of resurrection (Rom. 6:3–7)? Explain.
4. From what you know of church history, in what ways was the simplicity of God’s house lost in the post-apostolic age? Explain.
5. In what practical ways have you been challenged to turn from a lone ranger mentality in order to spend your energy, gifts, and resources as a living stone abiding with other living stones to build the house of God? Explain.
6. Read the free download called “Bethany” (see page 159) and share your thoughts on it.

## CHAPTER 16 FLEEING THE CITY OF BONDAGE

1. What do you think of the metaphor of “habitats” to describe the Christian life? Can you think of some other examples that would fit in with that metaphor? Explain.
2. In what ways has Egypt—the world system—infected your life? Explain.
3. In what ways has Egypt infected the way you’ve seen church done? Explain.

## CHAPTER 17 LEAVING THE CITY OF RELIGION

1. Can you think of some ways the City of Religion causes confusion among Christians and non-Christians? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Based on this chapter, why is it a mistake of monumental proportions to hold up the Jewish synagogue as a model for Christian gatherings? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How does the outward stability of Babylon contribute to the difficulty of God's people exiting it? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why is the City of Religion such a lousy environment for building God's true house? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Have you ever lived in Babylon? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. When the Lord's remnant started rebuilding the temple, they faced stern opposition from their enemies. What does that tell you about what you may face as you pursue the building of God's house today? Explain.

## CHAPTER 18 EXITING THE DESERT OF WASTE

1. Have you had a wilderness experience? Are you still in one? If so, what do you plan to do about it? Explain.
2. Which of the wilderness lessons resonated the most with you? Explain.
3. Have you reached that point in your life where you are ready to cast your lot in with spiritual Jerusalem? If so, what will that cost you? What practical changes will you have to make? Explain.

## CHAPTER 19 GOD'S BUILDING SITE

1. In what crucial ways does Canaan differ from Egypt, Babylon, and the wilderness? Explain.
2. Are you living in Canaan with other believers right now? If not, what are you willing to do to live there? Explain.
3. What do you think about the statement that the Christian life can be boiled down to “learning to live by divine life” and “partaking of Christ”? Explain.
4. In light of this chapter, what does John 6:53 mean to you now? Explain.
5. What blessed you the most in this chapter? Explain.

## CHAPTER 20 GOD FINDS HIS HOME

1. Would you agree that the trials and sufferings of Christians have been isolated from their vital connection to the ultimate dwelling place of God? Explain.
2. What heat has the Lord brought into your own life to produce gold in you? Explain.
3. Has any permanent irritation entered your life that has resulted in a beautiful pearl being formed? Explain.
4. Have you yet experienced the crucible of true community, which is designed to turn you into a precious stone for God's building? Explain.
5. Has this chapter changed anything for you in terms of the kind of church life you will now seek to have? Explain.
6. Have you read *Reimagining Church* by the same author? If so, explain how the practical message of *Reimagining* goes along with the spiritual message of *From Eternity to Here*.

## CHAPTER 21 INVASION FROM ANOTHER UNIVERSE

1. What do you think about the way the Lord Jesus is portrayed in this chapter? Explain.
2. In what unique and fresh ways does this chapter reveal Jesus, in contrast to the typical ways we hear Him presented by modern preachers? Explain.
3. Has the visible church really displayed the fact that it is an alien colony from another realm, or has it noticeably and comfortably merged into the contours of the world system? Explain.



## CHAPTER 22 THE NEW SPECIES IN THE GOSPELS

1. How has the New Testament meaning of *ekklesia* opened up new insights and perspectives for you? Explain.
2. Have you ever experienced deep misunderstandings concerning the meaning of “church” in conversations with friends? Explain.
3. People who see the Son also see the Father. In the same way, when people see the *ekklesia*, they should see the Son. How does this impact your heart and your thinking when it comes to church? Explain.
4. How does thinking of “church” as expressing the Son through the *ekklesia* put “church” in a whole new light? Explain.
5. Taking your cue from this chapter, list the ways that Jesus identifies Himself with the church. Elaborate on each one.

## CHAPTER 23 THE NEW SPECIES IN ACTS

1. Most churches require that a person fill out and sign a form in order to “become a member of a local church.” How does this differ from people “being added to the Lord”? Explain.
2. What do you suppose are some reasons why modern churches generally lack the joy of the early church in their gatherings? Explain.
3. After reading this chapter, how do Jesus’ words to Saul—“Why do you persecute Me?”—impact you now? Explain.
4. What insights in this chapter impacted you the most? Explain.

## CHAPTER 24 THE NEW SPECIES IN GALATIANS AND ROMANS

1. No one ever said, “Abba, Father,” while living under the old covenant. What is it about us being “in Christ” under the new covenant that enables us to have the freedom to utter this childlike phrase of endearment? Explain.
2. The Lord God said about Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Explain why these same words apply to you now.
3. Can you think of some key reasons why so many believers today spend lots of time feeling condemned, living in denial of the truth that “in Christ” there is no condemnation? Explain.
4. Has the church ever really come to grips with the reality of Christ’s experience being our experience too? Have you? Explain.
5. Read the free download called “The Three Gospels” (see page 253) and share your thoughts on it.

## CHAPTER 25 THE NEW SPECIES IN CORINTHIANS

1. How does Paul's approach to the Corinthian problems differ from how most church leaders today would try to resolve such issues? Explain.
2. Why would pointing out to the Corinthians that they were the expression of Christ in that city be effective in bringing resolution to serious breaches of Christian conduct? Explain.
3. If we really believed that division in the body of Christ was "like tearing off a chunk of flesh from our Lord's own body," would it radically change how we treated one another? Explain.
4. How does the inseparability of Christ from His body on earth change the way you see yourself and your fellow Christians? Explain.

## CHAPTER 26 THE NEW SPECIES IN COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

1. In light of the body emphasis in the New Testament—especially in Colossians and Ephesians—what factors do you think have contributed to Christianity becoming so individualistic today? Explain.
2. There is a song that says, “We are his hands; we are his feet.” How has this chapter enlarged your borders regarding those thoughts? Explain.
3. Why do you think it is such a struggle for believers to gather and function around the person of Christ and under His headship? Explain.
4. How would a sense that the kingdom of God is a present reality strengthen and motivate churches today? How would it motivate your Christian life? Explain.
5. How has the modern church tended to relate to those in her midst based on the distinctions of the old creation? Explain.

## CHAPTER 27 WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TODAY?

1. Have you ever experienced the joy and beauty of gathering with other believers in freedom to express the living Christ to each other in an open meeting led by the Holy Spirit? If not, would you like to? Explain.
2. Why do you think that the *ekklesia* living as “countercultural outposts of the future kingdom” has been so generally dulled in our day? Explain.
3. Can you isolate some cultural and historical factors that have contributed to the fading of the church as “family,” and to the rise of the church as “institution”? Explain.
4. What are some of the practical implications of the truth that the church is “carrying on the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ”? Explain.
5. If you attend a church right now, which of the four areas discussed in this chapter (communion, corporate display, community life, commission) is it strong in and which is it weak in?
6. What in this chapter spoke to you the most powerfully? Explain.

## AFTERWORD ONE MAN'S JOURNEY INTO A DEEP ECCLESIOLOGY

1. Almost every church would claim that it desires to “make Christ absolutely central in its life.” Why, then, do you suppose that so many ecclesiastical forms functionally hinder the full expression of the Lord’s centrality and headship? Explain.
2. What church traditions and theological constructs have kept you from seeing the Lord’s “big picture” as unfolded in this book? Explain.
3. How many Christian “its” have you pursued before you realized that Christ is God’s everything? Explain.
4. In what ways has the Evil One worked overtime to distract believers with Christian “things” so that they miss Christ who is the Sum of all spiritual things? Explain.
5. Has the Lord Jesus Christ and God’s eternal plan in Him become more vast and expansive now that you have read this book? Explain.
6. Can you now see why God’s eternal purpose—which is centered on the desire of His heart rather than the needs of humans—should be the governing vision of every Christian and every church? Explain.

7. Now that you have finished this book, take this test: On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being “very exciting” and 1 being “terribly boring”), how would you rate the following terms: “Bride of Christ,” “House of God,” “Body of Christ,” “Family of God”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What will change in your life now and perhaps in regard to your church affiliation as a result of reading this book? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Name five people who you believe will be blessed by reading this book.