Soaring with Eagles

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Introduction

I have always loved to be outdoors. I suppose it is part of my eastern Kentucky heritage, as part of a family that loved the natural world and recognized it as God’s creation.

As I have traveled across the country and around the world, I have been privileged to see God’s grandeur magnificently displayed again and again. I am always amazed at the splendor of a lofty mountain range, a great river or a mighty ocean. Even small things, such as the symmetry of a spider’s web or the thrumming of a
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dragonfly’s wings testify of a powerful, yet graceful Creator.

Those who wrote the Bible’s books under the influence of the Holy Spirit gave numerous examples of how God’s purposes can be seen in the natural forces and creatures He imagined and then set in order. One example that captured my attention was the eagle.

These birds of prey have held the interest of men throughout history. From the time of Moses, they have been used to show us a portion of the nature and character of God. God spoke to me
about Himself by means of the eagle. I want to share that revelation with you.
Chapter One

God Alone

The time of his departure was at hand. Moses had faithfully led his people all the way from Egypt to the border of their possession, and he would see it, but not enter into it. That would be Joshua’s responsibility.

But before he left them, Moses had one more task to fulfill. He received a word from God that he gave them in a prophetic song that rehearsed God’s faithfulness in contrast to Israel’s faithlessness during their wilderness wanderings. Moses not only wrote it and spoke it, he instructed his people to memorize it and re-
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hear it to their children, so they would not forget what happened to them during the journey from slavery to sufficiency.

The song is recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 32, and I want to point out some truths from verses 11 and 12, from the Amplified Bible:

“As an eagle that stirs up her nest, that flutters over her young, He spread abroad His wings and He took them, He bore them on His pinions. So the Lord alone led him; there was no foreign god with Him.”

There is a corollary passage in Psalm 81:9:
“There shall be no strange god among you; neither shall you bow down to any strange god.”

God made it clear that it was He alone that delivered them from the bondage of slavery, and He warned His people over and over again that they should steadfastly avoid aligning themselves with idols. It was not a stone image that bested the might of Egypt. It was not a piece of carved wood that overthrew Pharaoh’s armies.

It was God and God alone who delivered them, and they should never, ever forget it. No other God set them free, so no other God was worthy of their worship.
That’s good advice for us now, as well. The government didn’t save you from disaster – that was God’s doing. The doctor was as helpful as he could be, but in the end, it was God’s healing power that delivered you from that chronic condition. Your family loves you, but there was a time when they couldn’t help you – but there has never been a time when God could not or would not bring help when you needed it most.

The Activity of the Eagle

During his decades in the wilderness, Moses observed the habits of eagles. Their behavior was not a mystery to him. It was not a shock or surprise to him that
he would be able to use the example of eagles to illustrate God’s relationship to His people. It speaks of vulnerability as well as violence; tenderness and toughness; sensitivity, but also strength. It tells of the passion, the power and the purpose of God.

I want to back up just a bit to observe this illustration broadly. In verse 11, we see the activity of the eagle. First there is stirring and fluttering, or brooding, and then there is spreading and bearing. These things are specifically noted.

What is not mentioned is the purpose of the eagle. But in verse 12, we see, not the activity of God, or the method He used, but we see His purpose. God led –
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that is, He brought His people out of their constraints and brought them into freedom.

This is an illustration of the government of God. God leads by stirring up, by brooding, by spreading and by carrying. We know that God is represented by the eagle, since the eagle is often used in the Scriptures as a symbol of deity.

The Nature of God

Ezekiel’s vision included a being with four faces – a lion, representing authority; an ox, representing service; a man, the apex of creation; and an eagle, representing deity, with piercing eyes and mighty wings, able to go to depths
and heights beyond human ability. John, exiled on the island of Patmos, saw the same four visages in his prophetic vision.

This aligns with the four aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that we see in the four gospels. In Matthew, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; in Mark, He is the Servant (the ox); in Luke, He is the perfect Man; and in John, He is God.

The eagle is also an illustration of the parenthood of God. We see the duality of God’s nature in the activity of the eagle. God is both tender and tough – He demonstrates characteristics of both the mother and the father eagle. In verse 11, the eagle is referred to as
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“she.” She stirs her nest; she flutters over her young, or broods over them. But in verse 12, the eagle is referred to as “he.” He spreads his wings; he carries his little ones.

Genesis 1:26-27 makes it clear that we are created in God’s image and after His likeness. Eaglets reflect the nature of eagles. They are the objects of the eagles’ care, watchfulness and provision.

In the same way, we reflect the nature of God, and are the objects of God’s love, protection and provision. God shows us how He loves us and leads us by showing us the activity of the eagles as they care for their young.
Gentleness Is Not Weakness

This illustration is also an example of God’s strength. The eagle is strong, just as God is strong. The eaglet, on the other hand, is weak, depending on the eagle for everything, just as we depend upon God for everything. The eagles’ strength is the eaglet’s security. Our security comes from God’s strength, and not our own.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul said God spoke to Him, saying, “...my strength is made perfect in weakness.” The children’s song Jesus Loves Me says it even more simply: “They are weak, but He is strong.”
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The eagles’ wings are symbols of their strength. When a storm rages, the eagle can use the fierce winds to rise to new heights. They use their mighty wings to beat back any foes that would try to harm them. But even though their wings are so strong, they still use them to protect the eaglets by covering them with their feathers.

Gentleness is not weakness; it is strength under restraint. I once knew a man who at one time rode with the Hell’s Angels motorcycle gang. He was gloriously saved and filled with the Spirit, and God called him into the ministry. His hands were huge, and in his past life he had used them to beat men senseless. But those same hands,
now in God’s service, are being used to console those who are hurting.

Finally, the illustration of the eagle is a demonstration of the actual methods that God uses to lead us out of bondage and into blessing. There are four of them, and I want to describe each of them to you.
Chapter Two

Awaken and Arise!

As we observe the activity of the eagle in Deuteronomy 32:11-12, we see four things that they do with their young that reflect God’s activity in leading us out of where we have been and into where He wants us to be.

As we go through these activities, we must keep in mind that God’s purpose is always for our good, even though it may seem at times that our lives are in turmoil. We will see each of these four actions as God prompts us to overcome new challenges and experience new victories.
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First, the eagle stirs her nest. The baby eaglets are totally dependent upon their parents. They need fed continually because their growth rate is so fast – it has to be, because before the summer is over they have to begin flying and fending for themselves.

So the eaglets are well fed before the nest is disturbed. Most of the first few weeks of their lives consist of not much more than eating and sleeping. But there comes a time when they are no longer able to do only the things that they are accustomed to do and are comfortable doing. They must wake up to accomplish their purpose.
Awaken and Arise!

Remember, the activity of the eagle reveals to us the purpose of God – and that purpose is to lead us into a greater measure of His abundant life than we could have ever imagined. Just as the eagle stirs her nest, God, too, will cause us to awaken to our purpose. He will divinely disturb us, and remind us that He refuses to leave us as He found us. He will never create a life for us that makes Him unnecessary.

A life that is undisturbed by God is dying. If we never move, our physical bodies will eventually atrophy and waste away – and eventually we will be incapable of performing even the simplest tasks.
A Divine Disturbance

One of the problems with the modern church is that nobody is disturbed. In many local churches, nobody wants to be disturbed – the people there want to be assured that they are faultless, that they have no need of introspection, that they are right and everyone else is wrong.

They are like family members on the sofa after a big holiday meal – somnolent and slumbering, heedless of anything but their own comfort, and critical of anyone who would suggest there is more for them to do. Like those baby eaglets, they are well fed and sleeping, because slumber always accompanies overeating.
Awaken and Arise!

Don’t Misunderstand the Disturbance

When God stirs your life, He makes it clear that you must walk by faith, not by sight. Don’t misunderstand the disturbances in your life. God doesn’t want you to be comfortable all the time.

He wants you to examine your assumptions and evaluate your convictions. He wants you to learn, to grow and to change. It is imperative that you do, because the time is coming when you will need to do things that you can’t do right now. God brings us out of lethargy into reality. He contradicts our carefully crafted plans for how our lives ought to be and makes us walk through the cir-
cumstances that we thought were designed to kill us.

Here is what we must realize – it’s not the storm that’s going to kill you. It is not the fire that’s going to burn you. It’s not the problem that’s going to bury you. It’s not the attack that’s going to deny you. What will short-circuit your effectiveness and kill your influence is that spirit of slumber that tries to overtake you. Sleep and death are twin brothers – and this is no time to sleep. It’s time to awaken and arise.

God is not disturbing you to cause you to suffer and go through pain and loss. He is disturbing you so that you will move from good to better, and from
better to best. Elijah was doing fine by the brook Cherith, as long as there was water in the brook and the ravens brought him food twice a day. He would have stayed there longer, but God moved him by disturbing his comfortable circumstances.

The brook dried up and the ravens forgot his address. He had to move or starve. But God had a plan that not only involved Elijah, but a widow woman and her son as well. God wanted all of them to go from not enough to more than enough – in the middle of a famine. There was chaos all around, but the ones who truly trusted God were kept safe through it all.
Rejoice in the Midst of Your Trial

God will allow some uncomfortable things in your life. He may not just allow them, He may cause them. But when He does, you should rejoice, because your life is about to get better.

The pressure, the trial, the struggle will prove whether or not you have enough of God’s Word in you and enough of the Holy Spirit’s influence upon you to stand when the winds of adversity blow.

1 Peter 5:10 says:

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace [Who imparts all blessing and
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favor], Who has called you to His [own] eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you” (Amplified).

Hebrews 12:26-27 says:

“Then [at Mount Sinai] His voice shook the earth, but now He has given a promise: Yet once more I will shake and make tremble not only the earth but also the [starry] heavens. Now this expression, Yet once more, indicates the final removal and transformation of all [that can be] shaken – that is, of that which has been created
— in order that what cannot be shaken may remain and continue” (Amplified).

Job lost everything that he had, and yet, God blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning. It may look bad right now, but it’s not over yet.

When something is stolen from you, don’t mourn. Begin to rejoice, and start calculating how much is coming back into your life. Don’t write your newspaper column about Jesus on Friday night. Wait until Sunday morning to print that headline. When adversity comes, don’t quit. God is about to promote you. You may not know exactly what is happening while you are on the potter’s
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wheel, but the important thing is that you know the Potter. As long as His hands are upon you, everything will turn out just as it should.
Chapter Three

God Is Always Near

As you can imagine, after the mother eagle stirs her nest, the eaglets are dismayed and confused. Their comfortable surroundings have become uncomfortable, and all that was familiar has been rearranged.

What the eagle does next is very important. She flutters over her young. A better way to say it is she broods over them. She hovers over them and draws near to them so that they are reassured. She brings those baby eaglets close to her, and her presence is enough for them. They don’t know why the disturbance happened, but
they don’t need to know. Her presence calms them and lets them know that her care for them has not changed.

You may not understand the disruption that has occurred in your life. You may try to find a reason for it, but you can’t make the connection between what has happened and what God has planned. Much of the time, God does not tell us what His purpose is, but we really don’t need to know His purpose as much as we need to acknowledge His presence.

What we really need in times of turmoil and trouble is not a lot of reasons – we need Him. Love always assures those that have
been disturbed that it is still active and operative, personally present in the middle of the difficulty.

**Jehovah Shammah**

God has promised that He would never leave us nor forsake us. We are not orphans, wondering whether we will have a place to sleep or food to eat. God is our loving heavenly Father, and He watches over us and cares for us daily. When He is present, I am at peace. I’m not abandoned. I have hope. If God is for me, who can be against me?

One of the redemptive names by which God was known to His people in the Old Testament was Jehovah Shammah. The term
shammah means that God is personally present. It is a continual reminder that He is not some far-off deity who is not in touch with our needs or concerns.

He is with us and will always respond to us when we call upon Him in faith. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He sees us in our weakness and responds by demonstrating His strength on our behalf.

**Imitate Your Father**

At this point, the narrative in Deuteronomy 32 changes from the perspective of the female eagle to the male. Suddenly, Moses is no longer talking about the mother eagle, but of the father eagle,
which is a symbol of the Father God.

As the eaglets are disturbed by the mother eagle stirring the nest, and then comforted by her presence, the father eagle spreads his mighty wings. He’s not doing it to try to prove anything, or just to show off – he already knows what he is. He is demonstrating to those little eaglets what they shall be.

It is his purpose to provoke them to imitation. They are not like him right now, but they shall become like him. They see in him a vision of their future as he sits on the edge of the nest and spreads those wings.

And something begins to stir in those eaglets’ hearts. They have
been through the disturbance and have been comforted. But they realize that there is more to being an eagle than sitting in the nest. And something instinctive begins to move them to sit up and to spread their undeveloped wings as well.

They only resemble the father eagle in the most rudimentary ways. They are still only half as big, and they still have down sticking out from under their growing feathers. They are uncoordinated and uncomely. But they, too, begin to spread their wings in imitation of their eagle father.

If other birds had been nearby when this first happened, they would no doubt have begun to
laugh and mock the little eaglets. There will always be someone telling you that you can’t fly. It may be that way for others, but it will never be that way for you.

That job is not for you. That home is not for you. That blessing will never be yours. You’ll never have joy, or children, or enough, or...the lies just go on and on. “Look at you!” they will say with disgust. And you can look right back at them and say, “I’m not looking at myself. I’m looking at my Father!”

**You Will Soar**

When the world tells you, and when your friends tell you, and even when your family tells you
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that you can’t, there is something – something almost instinctive inside you – that says, “You can. And you will.”

The Bible is full of encouragement about what you are and what you will become. Here is one example: Ephesians 5:1 says:

“Therefore be imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father]” (Amplified).

You can laugh at me all you want when I’m flapping my wings, but I’m imitating my heavenly Father. I just want to be like Him.

Let others laugh at you if they will. Let them call you names and
say that you’re too uncoordinated, or too young, or too weak, or whatever else they want to say about you. The time will come when you will fly, and that will prove them wrong without you having to say anything in your defense.

When we imitate God, we must realize that it involves not so much how we look on the outside as how we think on the inside. God has never had a bad day. He is never worried or concerned about tomorrow. He isn’t rude or arrogant or bad-tempered.

Our imitation of Him must involve more than how we look or how we act – it must also include how we think and how we believe
– about ourselves and about others. But in all of these things – what we believe, our estimation of ourselves, how we act – we must trust in Him as our source of strength and supply.

If we will trust Him, He will bring us to a place of maturity, where the character of God is developed in us to such a degree that others will see it. And when people see our lives, they won’t be in awe of us, but they will give glory to God who can perform such a transformation in lives that were formerly in disarray.
Chapter Four

A Leap of Faith

As the eaglets continue to grow, they also continue to imitate their father. They hop up and down on the nest and try their wings. As they gain more experience, they climb out on branches around the nest and flap their wings, and at times hover in the wind over the nest or the surrounding branches.

As they do this, they are losing body fat, strengthening their wing muscles and developing the confidence and coordination that is necessary for flight. Their feathers continue to grow, replacing the down that covered them when
they were smaller. They begin to look more like adult eagles.

Eventually the day comes when they launch themselves off the nest. They are not so much flying as they are falling. But they begin to use their wings. Even though at first they may not be fully in control of their movements, they are out of the nest and well on their way to becoming adult eagles that will be able to do what all the other eagles do. The only way for those young eagles to soar is to take a step of faith.

Falling Is Not Failing

Let your accusers say you’re uncoordinated. Let them say you’ll never do it. Let them laugh and
mock as much as they want. Just as those young eagles keep their eyes on their father as an example, we keep our eyes on our Father as our example. We have been created to do what He does. And when we take a step of faith, it may seem as though we are failing, but we are only falling. Falling is not failing.

On the windy night when Jesus came to His disciples in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, Peter got out of the boat. But when he saw the wind and the waves, he began to sink. Matthew 14:31 says, “Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him…”

Jesus caught Peter when he was sinking, and He will catch you
when you are falling. He won’t let you crash into the rocks. You may fall, but He will hold His everlasting arms under you to keep you from failing.

Eagles will never learn to fly until they fall. And they will never fall until they take a leap of faith that gets them out of their nest. It’s comfortable in the nest. It is safe there. It is familiar. But if the eagles stay there, they will never learn how to fly.

A ship in a harbor is safe – but ships were not made to stay in harbors. Eagles were not created to stay in nests. You were not created to always stay in a safe space that is familiar and comfortable, where your faith is never chal-
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lenged and your wings are never tested.

The activity of the eagles is to enable the eaglets to develop into eagles. The purpose of God is to produce godliness in our lives – so that His character and nature can be reproduced in us. God intends to end weakness in our lives. He wants us to be able to imitate Him, just as those young eagles imitate their father by leaving the nest and learning to fly.

Strength Comes Through Struggle

Strength only comes through struggle. In the early days of the space program, astronauts were confined to their seats for most of
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the time they were in orbit. Physiologists studied them top to bottom when they returned to earth.

They found that the body mass and bone density of the astronauts decreased remarkably while they were in space. Part of the reason for this was due to weightlessness, and part of it was because they had limited movement while they were up there. Scientists realized that if men were going to stay in a zero gravity atmosphere for any length of time, they had to develop a way for them to do exercises that supplied resistance, so their bones and muscles would not waste away.
To be removed from all conflict means certain death to the believer. The struggle does not come to you to destroy you, but to develop you. The eagle must use its wings to fulfill its purpose. You must use your faith to fulfill your purpose.

A boy found a butterfly cocoon. He was sure the butterfly inside was trapped, and would surely die if he did not help it. He took his mother’s scissors and cut the cocoon open, and waited for the butterfly to unfold its wings and fly away. But he didn’t know that the same cocoon that protected that butterfly while it was growing also was the means the developing insect used to strengthen its
wings. Without the proper resistance, the butterfly’s flight muscles would never become strong enough to enable it to flit and flutter across the landscape. Instead of flying, the butterfly was dying.

If we are released from all conflict, the spiritual strength God intends to form in us will never develop, and instead of flying we will be failing. Don’t be concerned when your life becomes uncomfortable. When that happens, God will brood over you and let you know He is near. He will show you His mighty wings, and say, “Be like me. Do what I do.”

When you take that leap of faith and feel as though you’re fall-
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ing, don’t be afraid. He will not let you fail. Rejoice even in the midst of the struggle. Spread those wings of faith and fly to new heights in God.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rod Parsley began his ministry as an energetic 19-year-old in the backyard of his parents’ Ohio home. The fresh, “old-time gospel” approach of Parsley’s delivery immediately attracted a hungry, God-seeking audience. From the 17 people who attended Parsley’s first 1977 backyard meeting, the crowds rapidly grew.

Today, as the pastor of Columbus, Ohio’s 5,200-seat World Harvest Church, Parsley oversees Harvest Preparatory School; Valor Christian College; Bridge of Hope missions and outreach; a second campus in Elkhart; Ind.; the Center for Moral Clarity, a non-partisan Christian grassroots
advocacy organization; World Harvest Ministerial Alliance; and four television programs:

- *Breakthrough*, a daily and weekly television broadcast airing six days a week on multiple networks and cable outlets;
- *120 Live With Rod Parsley*, a monthly interview and ministry program on Word Network;
- *World Harvest Alive*, a weekly program featuring the congregation of World Harvest Church; and
- *Seriously?! With Ashton Parsley*, a weekly program airing on Word Network
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and featuring Pastor Rod and Mrs. Joni Parsley’s daughter.

Pastor Parsley’s message to “Raise the Standard” of spiritual intensity, moral integrity and physical purity not only extends across North America, but also spans the globe to nearly every nation via television and shortwave radio.

Thousands in arenas across the country and around the world experience the saving, healing and delivering message of Jesus Christ as Pastor Parsley calls people back to Bible basics.
About the Author

Rod Parsley currently resides in Pickerington, Ohio, with his wife, Joni, and their two young adult children, Ashton and Austin.
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