



# BERNIE TORRENCE NESTOR OCHOA

## Special Edition for

#### THE GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURS INSTITUTE

This E BOOK PDF can be downloaded and copied for all those interested in the GEI training that will develop business and social entrepreneurs around the world.. It is a great way to understand the true story of personal transformation. As a student you will be exposed to the powerful advantage of values and the principles of the La Red Business Network. This book will help you to understand the methodology and focus of Values Based Leadership. It chronicles the message of La Red Founder John Schrock and the original first followers of his message. John had the ability to see people not as they were but as they could be. The truths in this book are the bedrock foundation for the message that is impacting the world. When you complete this reading you can apply for admission to the GEI and begin your own journey of transformation.

Dr. David Migliore
Dean of Students
Global Entrepreneurs Institute

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## You Are Invited



## To Change the World

## THE GATHERING OF EAGLES

This very special invitation is being given to you

I have a dream to establish the true pillars of success and to help people build thier lives from the inside out rather than simply create an illusion of confidence.

I have a dream to learn and proclaim God's principles for success.

I have a dream to develop a Universal Training Center that will train and deploy a new breed of leader.

By attending this Gathering you will find that success is not necessarily measured in riches or fame, but in peace of mind and in fulfillment.

If you truly desire the gift of wisdom and if God has prepared your heart to receive this invitation, please attend.

Your life may be changed forever.

## PROLOGUE

#### Bolivar, Ohio:

The final board meeting just ended for a very unique corporation in the Midwestern part of the United States. Fifteen years have passed since this group of seven men began a single publication in Ohio. In the years that followed the company had grown to the largest publisher of its kind in the United States. An impressive accomplishment considering the obstacles that had to be overcome by each of the seven owners.

"Well men," John asserted, in his direct to the point style. "This is our final meeting as a company. Tomorrow the documents will be finalized to complete our one year transition commitment."

"And what a year this has been," said Ernie, a smooth, polished marketing director who had become a legend in the industry. "Last year when we sold out it was 'blue skies' for us all, but I've surely found out that money isn't everything."

"I agree," Bob added. "It just isn't the same when you're not doing things 'on purpose'."

"Any outstanding business yet to be done before we adjourn?" asked John.

Bernie rose from the large round table in the middle of the conference room and stood before the men. "Yes. I have one last thing." He left the room for a moment and returned with a large black trunk. "This conference room has served us well over the years. It's a spiritual place. We've laughed here, cried here, prayed here, and received most of our corporate strategies right around this table. Look at these walls." Bernie opened the trunk and placed it in the center of the round table. "These walls speak to us through the plaques, awards, and letters gathered these last fifteen years together as a team; a covenant team."

Bernie was always like a raw nerve ending for this group of entrepreneurs. They began with nothing and sold their company one year ago for millions of dollars. All the men were now millionaires before the age of forty. All of them, that is, except for John, who acted as the father figure of the team, the elder statesman.

"What's up?" John asked.

"My friends, I believe we should have a funeral for our company today. This past year we have all struggled because of the different management style of the new owners. There's a big difference," Bernie continued, as he looked around at each of his partners. "Piece by piece we are dismembering the principles that made us a success. Our story is not a philosophy of management, it is about life! Our company was alive, it breathed, it was our identity, and now it is dead. We sold it, and now it will live no more. Let's end this chapter of our lives and bury the last fifteen years with the dignity this wonderful organization deserves." Bernie began to remove the various plaques and awards from the board room wall, and he wrapped them in plastic and placed them carefully in the velvet lined trunk. "Look, Ernie," he said as he took the last frame from the wall, "This is the original invitation you sent each one of us fifteen years ago."

The enclosed invitation read, "The Gathering of Eagles."

Ernie's eyes moistened as he removed the invitation from the frame. A simple piece of paper that invited him to remember the beginnings. Ernie read aloud the fading print, "'You are invited to change your world...' Oh God," Ernie said. "What change we've seen; rags to riches. I love you guys. Thanks for coming to that meeting fifteen years ago. I will never be the same."

"Neither will I," Bernie added, taking the invitation and placing it inside the black trunk. "Wisdom has built a palace on seven pillars, and we have all become pillars of strength for each other. We did exploits together in the past and only God knows what the future holds. I have a gift for each of you." Bernie was always spiritualizing things, making everyone slow down and seize the moment. His partners knew this about him and loved him for it. "Last week, I was thinking about our lives together. We started out with nothing but each other. I know it will never be the same for me without you guys, and I began to think of what each of your lives have meant to me over the years. I am a product of your influence, and the blessing of God." Bernie walked around the table embracing each of his business partners as a brother and giving them a box. Inside of each box was a golden pillar.

"We were the pillars of success. God used us incredibly as a team. We recognized fifteen years ago how much we needed each other. You accepted my strengths and forgave my weaknesses. Each of you has a special gift of character that changed my life. Thank you for sharing your gift with me."

The seven men understood the weight of this moment. With the finality of an era, they stood and hugged each other knowing that their lives were about to go through another transition. John closed the meeting in prayer as he had for so many years.

"Lord," John began, "Little did we know fifteen years ago when we received the invitation for the Gathering of Eagles how our lives would be blessed. We are thankful that you have given us a great gift. Each other. Thank you God for these men."

As this final meeting adjourned, Ernie helped Bernie carry the trunk outside. "Who knows," Ernie delivered with a boyish smile. "Maybe someday in the future, we'll gather again as Eagles and change the world!"

John prophetically added, "Always be ready. God has used us as a team once. Maybe he will again in the future."

#### Medellin, Colombia

Nestor Ochoa nervously pressed the "L" button several times even though it was already illuminated. The elevator doors slowly closed surrounding him within a wall of mirrors. As the elevator descended, Nestor stared at his own reflection and straightened his tie. A distinct bell-ringing sound cut through the silence as he passed each floor. "It will be different" Nestor said out loud in the empty elevator. Ding. The bell rang out like a quiz show contestant pressed for time. "It WILL be different" he repeated staring intensely at himself in the mirror. Ding. The bell interrupted again like a language listening tape forcing him to repeat and relearn the meaning of a simple phrase. "It will..." Nestor stopped, stared into his own eyes, exhaled and wiped the sweat from his brow before continuing. Ding. "Be different." Nestor continued to repeat his mantra into the elevator mirror hoping to convince himself that what he was saying might be true. Ding. "It will BE different." Frustrated he shook his head, loosened his neck tie and began to tie it again. Ding. "It will be DIFFERENT." He took another deep breath and exhaled slowly. Satisfied with the new clean knot of his tie, a final ding rang out and Nestor watched the elevator doors split open taking his own reflection

with him.

The elevator opened revealing the brightly lit lobby of the Dan Carlton Hotel in Medellin, Colombia. The morning sun poured in through the windows and bounced off of the marble floors of the lobby. The room was buzzing with the noise of people. Nestor was no longer alone.

"Nestor!" Federico Victoria the founder of the television network LifeDesign TV waived at him from across the lobby. Dodging stacks of luggage and coffee trays they met in the middle of the room. "Good Evening! We are looking forward to your talk today. Ready to be inspired!"

"Yes! Good to see you!" Nestor shook his hand attempted to smile convincingly. The sweat on Nestor's brow began to bead up again. "Thank you for inviting me to speak."

"Well, our audience is waiting! Nothing less from the world's premiere voice of success training!" Federico laughed and patted Nestor on the back as they walked toward the hotel's convention center. "Today is the day we cast our vision. Soon all of Latin America will know that a true system for living exists. This is a landmark day for all of us. We're teaching people how life works!"

"It's a simple system for success. You just have to follow it." Nestor's voice cracked.

"Worked for you!" Federico offered his words with admiration. Nestor forced an even bigger smile and wiped his sweat. The two men continued walking through the lobby toward the conference wing. Nestor picked up a bagel from one of the hospitality tray tables lining the hallway. He put it in his suit pocket and kept walking while Federico gave him a run down of that evening's schedule. But Federico's voice dinned in Nestor's ears as they moved across the ornate carpet. The hallway

sprawled before them under a buzz of chandelier light. Nestor gripped the crumbling bagel in his pocket and his mind raced through a slide show of haunting images from the past twelve months of his life; his wife packing their belongings as they moved out of their million dollar home and back to Colombia, the horrified expression on her face when he told her that he was closing all three companies, the stern cold faces of the men from the bank who repossessed both of their cars. Nestor's jaw clenched as his mind's eye recalled his gentle mother's encouraging embrace after he was forced to move her out of the dream apartment he had purchased for her to live out the remainder of her years in. It was only a matter of time before his personal financial disaster caught up to his public image. Nestor's stomach tightened with remorse. He was a man holding on by a string. Removing the bagel from his pocket, he abandoned it beside the courtesy phone on the table just outside the doors to the banquet hall.

"We're on!" Federico smiled and opened the doors to a room full of smiling faces and studio lighting. Cameras filmed the roar of applause as Nestor walked through the crowd smiling and shaking hands with people. He made his way to the center stage where the podium and microphone awaited him. He took a deep breath and stood there under the blinding gaze of all those lights centered and exposed directly on him. Every face in the crowd now silent and staring with great expectation. Nestor's throat felt swollen and thick. He wiped his brow with one hand and with the other hand he groped for the fabric knot of his perfect neck tie. He took another nauseated breath and managed to lean forward to say, "I'm living proof that success is possible." The microphone amplified his voice throughout the conference center echoing all the way back into the marble lobby. From his delivery it was unclear whether that was a question or a statement. Nestor paused. Gathered his strength and stared down the audience like a wounded animal ready to pounce. "Whatever you want. Whatever it is that you think you need." Nestor paused again. His eyes empty and expression blank. And then suddenly a movie star grin flashed

across his face "You just have to reach out and take it! Life has a design!" The room erupted with a deafening applause.

Outside the conference room in the hotel's empty hallway, a telephone was ringing. Beside Nestor's abandoned bread, the lights on the courtesy phone were flashing and ringing. Over and over again. Ringing. Like a persistent alarm. Someone was calling. But no one, including Nestor, was there to answer it.

Nestor's speech was filled with heartfelt moving stories and motivational aphorisms about working hard and dreaming big. He shared his life story about how he had lived the American dream in the United States. At thirteen years old, Nestor had immigrated to New Jersey with a sheer determination to work hard and make a fortune. He had started off washing cars, cleaning bathrooms, working as a waiter and then eventually selling cars. Within a short time he became an assistant manager with the second-largest Toyota dealership in the nation. From there he became certified in Microsoft systems and changed locations to take advantage of the opportunity in high-tech. When the real estate boom came into Florida, Nestor was one of the first to begin sharing the new gospel of success... home ownership in the United States. The audience in that banquet room at the Dan Carlton Hotel drank each word in. Nestor had sold them his dream and with it managed to inspire them even though internally he was struggling with the hardest disappointments of his life. It was clear to Nestor that he understood how success can work but what he couldn't tell the audience was that he no longer understood why success works. And by only telling part of the story, Nestor knew it was all a lie. It felt to him like a huge lie that he couldn't set straight.

Nestor finished his speech with the crowd chanting along with him "You CAN have it! You CAN have it!"

As he sat down in the front row to the roar of applause, Nestor put

his hand in his empty coat pocket. He searched around until his fingertips found the broken bread crumbs that still remained there unclaimed. He counted each crumb. Twirled them between his fingertips as if by habit. And instead of wiping anything away, he just sat there expressionless allowing his brow to sweat.

Federico took the stage and introduced the next speaker from an organization called La Red, a North American business man named Jerry Anderson. The crowd politely quieted down as a handsome man with a tan face, broad smile and kind eyes took the stage. But instead of shouting or waving, he humbly stood there for a moment taking in the room. Jerry was friendly but more reserved almost thoughtful before he spoke, "I can't promise you an easy life." Nestor looked up confused because Jerry had actually said those words with a smile. "I don't have any chants or catchy phrases that will solve your problems. My story is not one of just success. My story is one of many failures and struggles and hard lessons. My story is one where I pursued wealth, riches and power, thinking that those things would make me happy. But those are merely things. I'm here today to tell you that hope exists and it is the key to success. And that being a businessman has changed my heart because I learned not only from my successes but from my failures as well. I know that people want hope, and I know how important hope is for an individual, for an organization or for a country who is desperate for truth and change."

For the first time, Nestor's heart calmed as if his internal storm of emotions dispersed. Nestor leaned forward. This was the message he needed. And he couldn't understand how some man from the United States who couldn't even speak Spanish could talk with such authority and insight into the climate of a country where he was not even a citizen. Jerry was just a visitor, but everything in Nestor's being leaned forward and breathed the word "Yes." This was true motivation.

Jerry continued, "Is there anyone in this room who is not a success?

Is anyone here today a failure? I am. I fail every day. Is there anyone here in this room that does not have all the answers? Are you desperate for a change in your life, desperate for a change in your family. Is there anyone here who is desperate?" The room was silent. Jerry stood there with an ease and a simple authority that lacked gestures and exclamation points. As if the pauses and silence between his simple phrases were somehow equally powerful with substance. Something was moving. Something was stirring each heart in the room.

Nestor removed his hand from his pocket and stared at the few bread crumbs matted to his fingertips. And it was as if a shock of electricity moved through him and through the room. "I am desperate" Nestor muttered. "I am" Nestor said it again out loud and loud enough so that the entire room that he had just wowed with his story heard him. At that moment, every dream and every missed opportunity and every success and every failed action merged into his heart with a collision so intense that the emotional residue was an energized hope. A burden was lifted and amidst all of his failures, Nestor saw the promise of hope for a solution. This was inspiration. This was a guide post toward peace.

Jerry continued and gave a personal testimony about his faith. Nestor was expecting insight into business strategies, but Jerry spoke about his life with personal honesty and vulnerability. It was surprising and undeniably relatable. He shared about how to navigate the struggles that stand in opposition to our success. As he finished his speech, Jerry offered a final question for everyone in the room to ask themselves, "When faced with a problem or an opportunity or any transition in your life, ask yourself which of the following answers you will use in the face of adversity? These are your options: 'What should happen. What could happen. Or. What will happen. Thank you for letting me share with you today."

Jerry walked off the stage and joined the empty seat beside Nestor

in the front row. Nestor extended his arm to shake Jerry's hand and managed to mutter the words, "I want what you have." Jerry smiled at Nestor. And as Federico took the stage to introduce the next speaker to the crowd Jerry responded "There's a difference between wanting the things that I have and wanting who I am."

"Yes. That is clear." Nestor nodded with a smile.

Jerry handed Nestor a business card, "We'll talk."

The next morning in his hotel room, Nestor woke up to the sound of his telephone ringing. "Yes?"

"Hello, Nestor. This is Federico. Do you remember Jerry from yesterday?"

"Of course" Nestor responded still groggy from sleep and sitting up in bed.

"Well, he is having a small group over to his home in West Palm Beach. I think you should go. The Founder from La Red is coming in from Ohio and you would have a chance to meet them. They're planning on doing some training. I think it would be wonderful if you could translate some of their material into Spanish for us. We would love to do a program on ethics and leadership and you would be perfect."

"The meeting is special, and you would understand them better than me. We need to learn how to merge business with the principles of God."

Those last words were meant to touch a nerve that Nestor left exposed among his colleagues. Nestor's attitude changed with this possibility; perhaps it would be the change of pace he needed... and if anything it would be a new perspective. "I would be honored to represent you and LifeDesign TV, Federico."

"That's good. Because Jerry specifically asked for you. He said he

sees something in you. A real potential. So I want you to go but I also want to send you as a representative for LifeDesign TV. When you return, I want you to do a weekly TV Program. Part of the Global Priority plan the government is pushing. You'll need to get enough material to launch a new movement. We might hit it from that angle of the principles, but be sure to get me ideas on values, Nestor, not religion."

"I sure will."

A week later Nestor found himself heading to the United States for what would become a most eventful experience. He had begun his journey on the path of God's will one year before, and this was to be another divine appointment. The missing part of a transforming faith.

Taking out a beautiful leather journal he bought in Medellin, Nestor ran his fingers over the embossed cover. This had been no ordinary purchase. It was very expensive and was the product of true Colombian leather craftsmen who had created a masterpiece of detail and design. The journal had a large brass hinge that provided closure to this heirloom. The pages were high quality parchment paper. This was the kind of journal that the sea captains or military leaders would have used for a permanent record of their voyages and missions. He had no idea of the treasure these pages would contain. A priceless eternal message that could affect generations. Just as life begins with a blank sheet of paper, Nestor opened the brass latch and began to write:

# CHAPTER 1 A NEW BEGINNING

I've decided to treat this trip as a new beginning. My life has been belabored these past months with confusion, many doubts and questions. I am going to quit avoiding, hiding, and putting these questions aside. This is no longer my fighting tactic. I will clench tightly to these questions of mine until I have found the answer. I will attempt to leave my failures behind me, and I will let a new hope consume me. I know that if there is truth to be found, I will search until I find it. I need to appropriate the power that brings transformation. I know what it is to be conformed to this world and now I want to be transformed. He laid aside his pen.

When I arrived at the airport, the traffic was light. Not at all like it will be in two hours when the eight o'clock traffic begins and the people flood our highways, disobeying the laws and being insensitive to the needs of others. I did not always think this way, but my feelings have changed this past year. I am so aware of our nation and our people. We are working so hard, yet achieving so little. Fighting not only the pressures of business, but also the corruption of government and man. My hope is found in this day, this present moment is eternal. My actions and decisions are made now, and I hope today to find another key that will help me understand my destiny... our destiny... the future of Latin America.

As I made my way into the airport terminal, a familiar voice arose from behind me, "Hello, my brother!" My friend Paul wrapped his arms around me with a father like embrace. We had met at the LifeDesign meetings and our relationship was one I valued. "Where are you going?" He questioned.

"Today, I am going to West Palm Beach."

"Home of the rich and famous."

"Actually, I'm hoping to find some answers for my business or better yet our nation."

"Nestor, this is wonderful. I will pray that God teaches you."

"Thank you, I am believing he is going to teach us what to do with what we know."

Paul paused for a moment and grabbed my shoulder, "Nestor, today is the day of your destiny. I can feel it. Let me pray for you." We stepped away from the flow of moving people, and Paul spoke these words, "Oh, God... protect Nestor while he is searching for truth. Direct his steps, Lord and trust him with your plan for the future. Walk with him through the next days of searching; give him a teachable spirit, a student's mind, and open his ears to your lessons, Amen."

I thanked Paul and we went our separate ways. As I made my way to the plane, I felt a renewed sense of anticipation for this meeting with Jerry and his team.

## West Palm Beach

Every time I enter the United States of America I am overcome, once again by the little details of order and civility. The organization of the airport for instance. The fact that there is a respect for little things like 'no parking' signs. I envy these small blessings that exist in this society. I must admit to myself that I also do not understand the differences in the way our two countries conduct business. The United States seems to be blessed by God in spite of their actions. What is it that makes our cultures so different? Some of the North American people seem ignorant to our needs in Latin America, but even more they are blind to our strengths.

When I arrived at Jerry's condominium complex in Juno Beach, I was escorted into an expansive meeting room overlooking the ocean. The plaque on the door read "Executive Library." Inside there was a intimate conference room with less than twenty people seated around it. Jerry greeted me and invited me to sit. The leader of La Red, John Schrock, was the first to speak. John was a man in his seventies. His focus was intense but his demeanor was kind and approachable. He welcomed us to the meeting and talked about the importance of honesty and integrity in business.

"My first major success in business was learning that there is a difference between being a man of principle and a man of value."

I was intrigued by these words. John spoke with the perfect balance between authority and warmth.

John continued, "One of my first jobs was at a gas station. I introduced myself to the owner and told him I would like a job. He told me they weren't hiring. So, I told the owner I would like to work for free," John's eyes twinkled as if laughing, "So for thirty days I agreed to work for free. And he let me! I knew that I was a man of many principles. Principles that guided my work ethic and character. And that these principles elevated my actions. When the mind and the heart are aligned, the work of the hands are valued. After thirty days of working for free, I had proven myself as a valuable employee and I was hired. I knew my value. I was confident

that who I was brought value to the company. The world needs men and women of value. God is bringing up a people who are wise and working under the application of principles. Principles that provide answers for business, politics and nations. If you live and work under the application of God's principles, then be confident that you are a valuable commodity." Then John said these words, "IT IS TIME...God is working in the world and God is going to do it with you or without you!!!"

John's message and presence was electrifying. Bernie Torrence stood up and shared about the history of La Red and the nations that are receiving the message.

"We're in 71 nations but by far the most impact is happening in Latin America, specifically Guatemala and Colombia. We believe there will be trainers that will be rising up and will be declaring this new message of values and principles. There is a revolution taking place in Latin America... it is spiritual, economic, and political... and we believe it will be replicated in the United States."

This was amazing. I had come to this meeting with a nervous excitement to meet these successful men and I couldn't believe that they were so humble and welcoming. After the meeting closed Jerry greeted me with a warm embrace.

"Nestor! I'm so glad you made it all the way from Colombia. Thank you for coming!"

"Thank you for inviting me."

"I really believe that there is something special that will come from LifeDesign TV. You know, one of my gifts is recognizing potential in people. I have dedicated my life to training the next generation of leaders. I think that you have a hook in your mouth and are being drawn to this movement. You should spend some time with Bernie and learn what La Red is all about."

"I will set up a meeting for you and Bernie tomorrow morning for coffee." Jerry waived his arm trying to get Bernie's attention from across the room. "Who knows, you may be one of those international trainers that we have been looking for."

The next morning, I met Bernie for coffee.

"It was great seeing you last night." Bernie began. "I love Latin American culture and history. Our countries and continents of North and South America should share a vision for our entire hemisphere." Bernie continued, "Often citizens of the United States refer to ourselves as 'Americans' but there is more to the Americas than just the United States. I believe God times our destiny perfectly."

"What exactly do you mean when you say the word destiny?"

"Well," Bernie replied. "England wanted to colonize for profit but the Pilgrims and the separatists wanted to advance the Kingdom of God. They wanted to create a place of freedom to trust God and honor his principles."

"What principles?" I asked.

The principles. The rules of life. The Kingdom," Bernie continued trying to clarify his jargon. "The problem with most churches is they are great at teaching the word of God, but not the ways of God. When you understand God's ways, you walk and act differently."

I instantly remembered my struggles back at home in the office, with my family, and among my friends. I know that my honest desires are to walk and to act out my faith, but a child needs to be taught to take steps and an actor needs to be given a script.

For the next two hours, Bernie discussed what he called 'The Pillars

of Success', and he shared how he applies these truths daily to his life.

"Not only does God want to give us eternal life but he wants to give us life right here. When you met Jerry Anderson in Colombia you saw his success and influence. There is something else that you should know. Jerry was the first person who took the Pillars and created a business empire. He employs almost a thousand people and he runs everything based on the 7 Pillars. That is the message that he is taking to the nations. He is a walking, talking, living testimony that the system of Gods principles and values work. We built our businesses on God's principles and they have flourished. Nestor, you should come with me to Ohio and I'll introduce you to some friends that will change your life."

I had sat there for the last two hours listening to his stories, and at that moment in time my mind didn't stop to consider anything. Before I could think about my plane ticket or Federico's report I heard myself saying, "Yes, I want that." I know the experience was beyond normal logic or reasoning. It was a moment meant to be grabbed and clenched in one's fists or one to ignore, miss, and regret. I understand it only to say it was God. I had only the world to gain, and with my nation's heart thirsting for blessing and prosperity, I followed and listened. I changed my ticket that morning. I was ready to follow this story wherever it led me.

### <u>Ohio</u>

When I arrived in Ohio, I drove to Bernie's office in Bolivar. A small town nestled between hills and farmland, but how interesting that the town's sign declared its heritage to be named after the Latin American liberator, Simon Bolivar. Liberations today are few and far between. Bernie's office was full of artifacts from around the world. As I glanced over the world map hanging beside his desk, I listened to Bernie's

voice, "Our community was built on small businesses. Timken, Diebold, Hoover, they all started out small, right in this area, but today, they are international. Our company started out humbly, but we should not despise small beginnings."

"Bernie, I was sent to the states to report on applicable values in business, but now I feel that I have come in order to hear what God has spoken about how the world is changing."

"Our story of success was an absolute miracle from God. We give him the glory. Success can be measured in different ways. Our company employed over nine hundred people, covered twelve states, and was the largest publisher of its kind in the country. We sold it a few years ago," Bernie faced a framed photograph of seven men, seated around a large round table.

"Do you miss it?" I questioned.

"The people yes, but it was time to pass the baton. Jerry and I have been working together since 1993 and we are convinced that this is our calling. Jerry has picked up where we left off. We have all been together since we were young. There are many callings in life. We believe God is preparing to move across the nations of the world. You know Jerry but let me introduce you to the others." Pointing toward the photograph of his business partners, Bernie continued, "Starting on the left is Bob. He headed up our distribution, and is one of the nicest people you'll ever meet. Then there's Ernie, a real competitor, and truly a legendary salesman. Next to me is JR...He handled our collection department. Then there's Dennis and Ed, who played a part in our original team, but now live in California."

"And then there is John Schrock. You heard him speak in West Palm Beach. He is one of the wisest men you'll ever meet. Not only did he have the ability to harness our gifts and put us in the right direction, but he helped us establish the Pillars of Success. Do you understand my phase 'Pillars of Success?'" I shook my head no.

"Our company had seven owners and each of the owners had a gift that allowed them to establish one of the pillars of success. We built our lives upon those pillars, and John led the way for us. We didn't really understand business until we met John. He was the son of an Amish Bishop, and was required to quit school in the eighth grade. But he focused our eyes on the important things, and we learned a new meaning to the word 'success'."

Bernie walked over to a large black trunk sitting in the corner of his office. The hinges were tight, but he managed to release the aging clasps one by one. Watching the lid open, I felt as if I was witnessing the resurrection of a time capsule, the discovery of a personal treasure kept hidden from harm. As Bernie began to delicately handle the plaques, letters, and photographs, his voice spoke in reverence, "Years ago I was convinced that the story of this company would be shared with the world, and I feel you may be a part of that Nestor."

Bernie held out an envelope sealed with the marks of aging time and treasured contents. "This is the invitation to the 'Gathering of Eagles'. This envelope will get you an interview with John Schrock. Did you get a chance to talk to him after the meeting?"

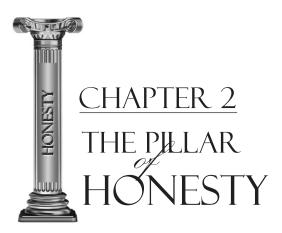
"No, I wanted to. But to be honest I was intimidated."

"John is the most approachable successful man you will ever meet. But he is also a very driven and busy businessman. I know he had several appointments scheduled in Florida but I also know that he wants to meet you."

Bernie's hands leafed through the trunk again and removed a piece of white marble. "I had this made years ago, as a foundation for the Pillars of Success. Each of my partners possesses a pillar that will complete the monument." My hand reached out and grasped the smooth mount, and I felt my breathing almost stop as I read the engraving,

"Wisdom has built a palace supported on seven pillars, and has prepared a great banquet, mixed the wines, and sent forth her maidens to invite all to attend. A seat has been reserved for all who are simple and desire the gift of sound wisdom and judgment. Leave behind your foolishness and begin to live a life of wisdom. Learn to be wise."

Bernie sealed the lid once again and stared into my eyes. "Each partner will share a truth with you; simple and profound. This is an invitation to receive eternal truth," he said glancing at the yellowed envelope. These words both engraved and spoken were so indirect, and looking back I wonder how I was able to comprehend the events that were surrounding me. I knew that my desire to learn was driving me forward. It is true that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. Bernie gave me the keys to a company car complete with a GPS and sent me to meet John to discover the insight into the first pillar.



Driving through Holmes County, Ohio was like entering a painting. The gently rolling hills surrounded by manicured farms made each turn a new portrait in a gallery. I had limited experience in these small towns that I was passing through. I knew that the Amish people who lived there did not believe in the use of tractors, electricity, and cars, but to actually be driving alongside horse drawn carriages and buggies on the roadside was like slipping back in time a hundred years. I found myself standing before a large gray sign that read, "Schrock's Amish Farm." I fumbled in my pocket for the number Bernie had given me to call John.

"Hello, is John Schrock there?"

"May I ask who is calling?"

"My name is Nestor, I'm from Latin America."

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No, not really." I said.

She set one for me at 6.

According to my watch it was only 5:00p.m., I decided to explore a little. I had read a few articles about the Amish communities in America, but this was so intriguing to experience their lifestyle first hand. A bearded man was hitching his horse to a rail as a woman stepped out of his buggy and made her way into the building. Her face was concealed by the covering on her head; she walked with a sense of meekness, moving quietly, unnoticed by the others. I decided to approach this man and hoped to learn more about this unique place.

"Excuse me sir. Do you have a minute?" I asked.

"Sure do. How can I help ya?"

"My name is Nestor, do you work here?"

"No, my daughter does. She takes care of the flowers and helps in the gift shop,"

"Have you ever met the man that owns this complex?"

He finished wrapping the last leather clip around his horse's harness and looked me in the eyes. "Sure, everyone knows John. His dad was the bishop in our church. John gets a lot of his common sense from his dad. He's a real businessman."

"I bet his dad is proud of him."

"I imagine he would be, but John's dad passed away years ago. That was long before he could see John was all right. His parents were upset when he left the Amish, by the way, my name is Jonas." He methodically stroked the gray beard hanging from his chin.

"What happened? Why did he leave?"

"John left because of religious reasons. He was about 22, when one of his cousins, who had already left the Amish, asked John out to a revival meeting with one of those tent preachers.

I'll tell you this though; John sure did change after that. He quit smoking, quit drinking, and started to read his Bible."

"Didn't his parents see all this change as good?"

"Well, we Amish had high hopes for John. We thought he'd be a preacher like his dad. His dad was one of the best preachers around. When John left the church, we had to reject him. Those of our faith would not talk to him or do business with him, buying or selling."

"That sounds almost cruel." I remarked.

"Maybe so, but we believe that the family is very important. You shouldn't want worldly things, they snare you. We believe the Bible says, be not conformed to this world."

I could feel my brow wrinkle giving away my disbelief. "I can't imagine how difficult it would be to have your church, your family, and your friends disown you. Did they ever make amends?"

"Never did. When John's mom and dad died, John couldn't even sit with his family. He had to eat in the basement. But I think his parents were proud of him, because they spoke highly of him and were pleased at his stand. We all thought for sure he'd be back but he kept going too far."

My eyes widened with curiosity. "Too far?"

Jonas leaned forward and lowered his voice. "I only know what I've heard, but they say he started preaching about the Holy 'Spirit.' When John believes something, he really believes it! John claimed he was called of God, and was made a preacher. They gave him a little church out in the valley over there. Boy, he became the talk of the town. We used to sneak out and peek through the windows. Some of the church leaders were concerned he was preaching things that were not supposed to be

preached. His reaction was really bold. He handed those men a Bible and said, 'If you don't want me to preach from the whole Bible, then you tear out the pages that don't belong!'" An ornery smirk glided onto Jonas' face as he leaned against the hitching post and folded his arms. "Soon after, John was asked to leave."

"What did he do next? Find another church that would take him?"

"Nope, he started his own little church, and it grew. People from all over started going there. A lot of the local people were opposed to the new church, but God must have had big plans for John, cause he's certainly done some big things," with a quick tug on the knotted reigns Jonas was turning his horse around. "Sorry mister, but I need to get to my work."

"Good to talk with you Jonas," I waved and watched as his buggy merged into the busy intersection among the tourist filled cars. As the distinct sound of wagon wheels and horse hoofs faded, I was even more anxious to meet this John again.

A young Amish girl welcomed me and gave me a cup of coffee. I gave her the invitation and decided to take a seat at one of the tables to wait for a reply. A few minutes later, I looked up from my coffee and saw the doors swing open. "Nestor where did you get this?" John's intense eyes searched the different tables and his clenched fist raised high, waving the envelope containing the invitation.

"I got it from Bernie. He told me to contact you in order to receive your Pillar of Success."

As John took steps toward my table, I noticed my bold voice withering. Standing over me with his eyes on the envelope in his hand, it was obvious that his mind was focused and wrestling with some idea, gears churning and pistons firing. His expression was on the border of either total concentration or boiling over. Of course, I was hoping it was

not the latter. The uncomfortable moment of silence ended when John's eyes snapped back into focus and he told me, "I'm in the middle of a meeting now and I have another one at eight, but if you can wait fifteen minutes, I'll make time to sit with you."

"Sure thing," I replied as John disappeared again.

Sarah came back with some more coffee and I asked if John was always this busy. "He sure is," she smiled. "John is either here or traveling and teaching." Sarah continued, "His plate is full. Can I get you something else while you wait?"

"Coffee is fine, thanks."

I sat there for another half an hour and began to worry that I was going to be wasting John's time. Through the window out on the hill an Amish man, who looked similar to Jonas, was fighting to control the horses pulling him through the field. Struggling to hold tight to the reigns, the man kept driving the team as the plow began to rip open the earth. The path in front of him was a terrain of rocks and weeds, but directly behind, he was leaving a single blanket of fresh brown soil, exposed, and now prepared for seeds. His skillful control over those horses kept them looking forward directly at the untamed earth. I wondered if he knew how well groomed the results were that followed.

"Hello, Nestor. Sorry I took so long," John's words jolted me into reality.

"I apologize for not having an appointment." I said.

"No problem. I will make time for this", he placed his hand on the invitation envelope. "So Nestor, are you ready to change your world? I remember you now from West Palm Beach."

"My world needs change. I'm interested in the 'know how,' something

to put into action. In Florida I heard about your 'vision,' but I'm not sure I even know what a vision is."

It seemed as if John was carefully choosing each word when he spoke to me, "I saw something in my mind. I'm sure you've had them too, except you might call them ideas, or imaginations. Everyone gets them, some people act on them and expect the blessing of God. God loves to bless his people. I had an open vision right after the seven of us decided to sell our company."

"How long were you guys in business together?"

"Fifteen years. It was a miracle business. The timing was right from the beginning all the way through the selling process. I found myself sitting on the top floor of the Hartz Mountain building on Madison Avenue in New York talking with Leonard Stern!" John's eyes darted directly at me with that same intense expression. "We were talking about success and philosophy when Mr. Stern leaned across the desk and asked, 'John, what makes you tick?' One of the world's wealthiest men was asking me, an Amish man with eight years of education, what makes me tick."

"What did you say?"

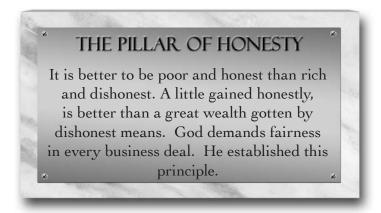
"I leaned across his desk and said, 'Leonard, do you really want to know?' He said, 'Yes,' and I said, 'I'm a believer in God'. He just sat back in his chair and said, 'I thought so.'" The intensity on John's face dissolved into a smile, and he shook his head in disbelief, as if to explain it was something out of his control.

It was difficult to process, because I was expecting for him to reveal exactly how he has controlled the events of his life, but he acted as though he was amazed at his success. It was evident that the credit was due to something bigger than himself. I was speechless. This trip was truly becoming one of the most intense trips of my life. Dreams, visions, and

God's blessings, now he's telling me this type of thinking is recognized by Leonard Stern, one of the top businessmen in the world. I had almost forgotten exactly why Bernie had sent me.

"Listen, John, when I was with Bernie this morning, he gave me this," I took the marble monument from my briefcase and placed it on the table beside the invitation.

"Well," John's presence was confident. "This must be the beginning of the gathering. Bernie was right; our company's story will be told." Without another word John stood and marched back through the kitchen doors. I sat wondering if that was my cue to leave or if he had just forgotten something. Before I came to my conclusions, he was returning with a box in his hands. He removed a miniature golden pillar from the case, and fitted it perfectly into place on the marble. The word "Honesty" was etched into the column. John made sure I was prepared to write each word in detail before he declared the meaning of this pillar. His words were carefully spoken from the core of his being as if they too were somehow engraved in his mind unable to be erased or weathered.



"Life is made up of two types of values Nestor. Some are negotiable and some are not negotiable. There are some things about me that are not for sale; my non-negotiables. One of them is honesty. True success begins with an honest heart.

I remember one day, specifically. I had gone to a bank to cash my pay check. An error was made and the bank employee gave me not only my cash but returned my paycheck as well. Instantly, I recognized this as one of God's test commands, these are little tests that he puts in my life to measure my current integrity." John lifted his hand pointing his finger in the air. "I corrected the error immediately, returned my paycheck to the employee, and she thanked me for my honesty. Returning that day to the office, I called a meeting and told the team of the scenario. I explained that at one time I had not only my check back but also the banks money. Immediately, one of the guys, said, 'Wonderful John! The best of both worlds. You can have your cake and eat it too!' 'That's what I was afraid of,' I said. How can we expect God's blessing if we have dishonest hearts. God has to trust you with success, and if you are not stable, success will destroy you." John waited, allowing my mind and pen to keep pace. "Money will only make you more of what you already are. If you are a drinker, money will make you a drunk. If your problem is women, then money will make you an adulterer. If you are dishonest, money will make you a thief."

"Oh, John," I said. "I've seen that first hand."

"Nestor, listen to God, dishonest gain brings no lasting happiness. That is the principle of honesty. It is that simple." John paused and asked if I had ever heard the story of Joshua.

"Joshua was a great leader. His job was leading people and developing their faith in God. Every time God performed a miracle, Joshua built a monument. It was a reminder of the moment when only God had the answer. That's the story of our company. God used ordinary simple people to develop an organization. We built it on His Pillars of Success and not on the ideas of man. This Pillar of Honesty was first established when we started the business and quickly found ourselves facing threatening times." John was smiling at the thought of their meager beginnings. "Here we were six wild salespeople and an Amish man attempting to start a publishing business on \$7,000. No capital, no experience, I couldn't even spell that well, but we did have guts and enthusiasm." By now he was laughing and I couldn't keep myself from joining in with him. "I stopped in the office one morning and Bob was in a state of panic. 'John!' Bob said, 'the phone company just called and they're gonna turn off the phones if we don't pay the bill, and we have no money.' Bob called an emergency meeting. All seven of us found out that we were unable to pay most of our bills. Furniture, rent, and phone bills were piling up and all these guys were broke."

"What did you do?' Did you give them the money?"

"I did what I do every time I am faced with a problem bigger than me. I called on God. I walked over to close the office door, and it was like the spirit of God was with us in that room. I asked the men three questions, 'Have any of you guys done anything dishonest?' They answered no. 'Have you acted immorally or been unfaithful?' They said no. 'Are you willing to work hard until we pull through?' They all agreed. So, I called each company we owed money to and explained our situation and asked for a period of grace. All of our bills were extended." Tears were in John's eyes as he finished. "And it was not by my smooth talking or authority. God was working with us. It was His favor." John picked up the crumbling edge of the aging envelope. "I remember when this invitation was written. We've prayed for the next gathering of eagles. Nestor, this could be it."

My doubt gnawed once again at my mind's thoughts. "John, I can't see how my nation could ever be blessed."

"Let me ask you something and don't answer with your mind, answer with your heart. Are you happy?"

"Sometimes." I answered.

"Do you believe God is directing your path?"

"Right now more than ever before in my life."

"Good, then listen to me. There are two ways to run a business, your life, or your nation for that matter. God's way or your way. You have been chosen to hear this message. Begin applying it to your life. Take it to your country, because these truths will change the lives of people regardless of what they have believed in the past. These principles help people through the pressure of changing times."

"That has been my dream since I was young and able to dream."

"Truth is eternal, Nestor. Our success was based on it." John ran his fingers over the chiseled lettering in the base of the marble, "Desire to be wise."

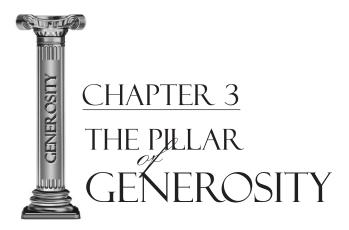
"Who wrote that inscription?"

"The wisest businessman who ever lived...King Solomon. People came from all over just to meet him. When you engraft these pillars into your heart and into your nation, be careful not to profane or defile what God has done." John's words were like a commission full of expectation and without doubt. He told me to be responsible, valuable, and to operate in true integrity. I was to meet Bob next in order to receive his pillar. I parted from John as a friend. In the past hours of talking, our relationship grew from mere acquaintance into the realm of true brotherhood.

Before going to bed that night, I took out my notes and journal. Running my fingers over the written words that had soaked into the paper, I prayed to God that through these writings His voice would be

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heard. Taking out the marble base with the single golden pillar of honesty, I sat repeating those words in my mind and out loud. I was attempting to take the artist's chisel and engrave in my very being those words and principles. I wanted my soul to be like the ivory marble prepared for God's wisdom.

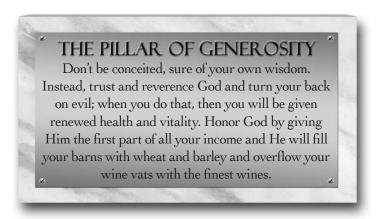


The front desk had a message from John that my appointment with Bob was to be at 10:00 AM. I swerved through town, making the passing alley streets appear like cracks in a huge concrete wall. Down these crevice streets I caught glimpses of some homeless people picking through the dumpsters and sitting lifeless against the wall. Observing this made me aware of a similarity between our countries: there will always be people who are in need.

Arriving at Bob's office building, I was greeted at the door by his secretary who led me down the meandering hallways. The magnitude of this organization amazed me. The woman informed me that we were entering the marketing department, and then she opened the door to a large conference room. "Bob, Nestor is here to see you."

I was then greeted by Bob's friendly face and a warm welcome into his office. He asked me to sit with him in front of his desk. "John called yesterday and said that you had received the invitation." I reached into my briefcase and removed the marble monument along with the precious envelope. Bob smiled and opened a drawer to his desk removing the same kind of box that John had carried out of the kitchen. "I have this to offer you my friend," Bob said as he removed his golden pillar and placed

it beside the Pillar of Honesty. The engraved letters created the word "Generosity." Bob nodded his head as if he was agreeing with something the two pillars had said. "Generosity is the second pillar of choice.' While he continued, I removed my pen and began writing.



Bob paused in order to make sure I had every word correctly written, and then continued. "John taught us that a seed will lie dormant until it is placed in the right environment. The Pillars of Success are nuggets of truth that help create that environment; an environment for ideas to grow. This second Pillar deals with developing a teachable spirit and learning to let go."

"Bob, you are talking about environments, but how does one begin to try and control the environment of a whole nation?"

"You begin with the individual, starting with yourself." replied Bob.

"I know I often get frustrated with my accomplishments. I'm tired of just doing 'OK."

"I can really relate to that," Bob nodded. "It's like you plant much but harvest little, your income disappears as though you were putting it into pockets filled with holes."

"Here's what that passage goes on to say, 'You hope for much and

get little. And when you bring it home, I blow it away. It doesn't last at all. Why? Because my temple lies in ruin. And you don't care. Your only concern is your own fine homes.' That's how my Pillar was built. I was college educated, yet snared by the cares of life and the deceitfulness of riches. I had to turn my back on my desires and learn to depend on more than just my head knowledge. Then God was free to build my faith and trust in Him. I traded my knowledge for His wisdom and I lost my own conceit and trusted in him."

I immediately thought of my experiences in school where I was so ready to figure out exactly how to solve all the problems of the world. I was sure that once I had taken enough classes, studied enough books, and listened to enough lectures, that I would then be prepared to personally take on my task; alone and self reliant. Experience taught me otherwise.

"So do you disregard all that you have learned," I questioned?

"No, but you first need to acknowledge God's wisdom and ways as superior, no matter how ridiculous they may seem to your logic and reason. Use your mind and your knowledge from experience and education as a contribution to what God is teaching you. But it must be in that order, all things stemming first from the source of God. It's like when you are writing a paper. You are first required to define an overall framework, and then gather materials that support that framework. Let God be your overall framework and any other sources should be viewed as contributing factors. If something you have learned or experienced does not serve as supporting material in your overall framework, then throw it out and begin to gather new contributing material."

I looked down over my scribbled notes and saw so clearly one of the obstacles that had caused me to stumble so often in my life. "Bob, I think these past few years of my life have been spent scrambling to acquire enough knowledge to feed my prideful appetite."

"Desiring knowledge isn't wrong, Nestor. It becomes wrong when we fall into the illusion of playing God, attempting to be in complete control of our lives and believing the deception that we need only ourselves to be whole."

"I know that I 'feasted daily on my own conceit' and no matter how many aspects of work, relationships and life that I managed to tackle, there was always some area out of my control. I was finding out that my mind could not take on the overwhelming task of solving all the problems of the world and that drove me into despair."

"Despair can be a good place to end up because God does not lack in extending generosity toward his children." Bob reached out and patted me on the shoulder. "When I laid down my conceit I was free to establish the second part of the pillar, 'Honor God by giving Him the first part of all your income, and He will fill your barns with wheat and barley and over-flow your wine vats with the finest wines."

As Bob spoke, I felt my soul brimming over with thoughts and convictions. I knew at that moment that I needed to give up my conceit and allow God to be in complete control. Bob continued, "It is better to give than get. Most people believe success is external but in reality it's internal. Success is knowing that you are part of something bigger than yourself. Generosity is at the root of that transaction. Our company taught us to give first. Does a stove say 'Give me wood and I'll give you heat?' No, when you give wood then you are able to receive heat. That is the principle of giving."

"These sound like such simple ideas."

"They are Nestor, and don't allow your mind to tell your heart otherwise." Bob crossed the room and pulled a book down from the shelf. "This is the documented growth of our company. Look at these graphs. They never declined. God prospered us from the moment we honored him with all of our First Parts."

"So, I should begin by giving money?"

"Not just money. Give your whole life. We became living sacrifices. We made God the head of our company. All of our decisions were based upon God's principles. We learned the most profound truths imaginable. We gave God the first part of our week. Every Monday we tried to meet and plan our exploits, counting on God to direct us. Praying for our customers, asking God to bless them and opening every meeting in prayer, humility and no strife. We offered God the first part of our talents. Each one of the owners was free to pursue a personal ministry to those in need; many times during company hours. The first part of our profits was put into God's hands. Every year our company would disburse money to our chosen charities. Each of the men was free to channel corporate resources into areas of need. After that we honored God by giving him the first part of our incomes. Having said all that, are you able to understand that God does not take, he gives?" I looked up from my note pad and nodded in agreement. "Look at our growth," Bob held out a chart showing the steady incline of the fifteen years rising toward a peak. "First we were in cities, then states, then the nation. Our phone lines received calls from every state in the country. We became a household word and I believe I know when God specifically honored our faithfulness. He gave us test commands."

"What is a test command?"

"It's a fragile moment of faith. Usually an opportunity for you to place your personal desires before God's plan."

"And you had opportunities to trade your inheritance?"

"Absolutely, God is doing a work and when you latch into His purposes He blesses; not the men but the mission. God's mission is for us to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom...His Kingdom, not ours."

Standing up Bob placed the annual reports back onto the shelf, bridging the gap and establishing order to the long row of books again. "Bob, were you always so bold in your beliefs?"

As Bob sat back down he moved his chair closer to mine and leaned forward. "No, I wasn't, but I love to serve; to be part of a team. Hours mean nothing when you are driven by purpose. My early life was spent trying to figure out who I was. I know I was seeking for truth, and an Amish man, like John, showed me how a person and business should be run."

"Sounds like all one needs to do is become an Amish man."

Bob laughed, "It would seem so. The Amish are honest people who work very hard and those two characteristics are a part of success. The name of the man I spoke of was Abner, and he received a letter from a woman in a town nearby. She was asking Abner for money.

"A total stranger that he had never met before?"

"A total stranger in need, Nestor. God had blessed Abner financially and he could have very easily sent her some money but instead he decided to visit her personally. He asked me to ride along. As we drove that night I asked him many questions about his business and success. He saw things so simply without struggling. There I was, caught on the minor issues of faith. Battling the principles of evolution and creation, I was so busy fitting God into my mind that I was missing the larger issues. To Abner, things were kept simple, he was able to flow with God's plan. We drove over an hour and finally pulled up in front of an old shack that was teetering on its foundation like a house of cards. The woman invited us in; her eyes apologized for her environment. At the kitchen table her granddaughter was sitting and eating what little dinner they had, not on plates but out of the can. My heart ached for these people. Abner

handed the woman an envelope with money and told her to use it to get through the winter. Then he did something very amazing to me. He invited the woman to be his guest at a dinner. Can you imagine that? A multimillionaire not just giving his money but also his time, his wisdom, and willingness to be identified among his peers with someone in such need."

I sat there in Bob's office amazed and touched. My nation is no stranger to women like this. "How do you attain such unconditional love?"

"Abner told me when we were driving back that we were all like that woman. We are all people of need. He said, 'I did for her what was done for me. I shared the love of God.' I told Abner that I wanted to be just like him. We prayed together and his simple words and actions that evening spoke volumes to my heart. This marked my new beginning. I'm not bold Nestor. I'm just convinced. Convinced of what God has done, can do, and will do when we burn our bridges and trust in Him. I've had many successes in my life but nothing matches the experience of seeing God's love touch the needy hearts of His people." Bob picked up the marble monument and rubbed his fingers across the engraving. "When we think of God first and exercise the Pillar of Generosity, He is faithful. Success is not knowledge. It is a by-product of right living."

These words of wisdom spoke to me with clarity but there were still some questions that needed answers. "Why isn't everyone successful then?"

"Remember Nestor. There are Seven Pillars of Success to our story. The next man you'll meet will answer that question for you. Most people can plan things but never do them. Many people pray for help but never act fully upon those prayers. A person needs to actively be practicing and working at all times. Bob called his secretary into the room and asked if there was any word from Ernie's office.

"He is in town this evening and can meet with Nestor at his home at 6:00."

"Will that work for you Nestor? I don't want to burn you out physically."

I objected to his precautions, "We work very hard in Latin America. Time means nothing when we see opportunity, especially for truth."

"Good, because you are about to meet one of the hardest working individuals in the world."

Bob handed me the monument and the invitation. "God's blessing to you Nestor. I know you are meant to be exposed to the Pillars."

"Thank you for your time and wisdom, Bob." We shook hands and the secretary led me once again through the corridors. As I drove back to the hotel I figured there was no better time to begin some practical changes in my life so I ventured into the alley streets that I saw on my way to Bob's office. Spending that afternoon with the homeless people showed me so clearly the role of this second pillar of generosity. It is a truth well documented. 'The rich and poor have this in common: God is the maker of them all.'



As creaming came I found myself once again driving, but instead of looking out at back alley ways and dumpsters, I had entered a new world surrounded by large estates with lawns manicured to perfection. These mansion homes demanded the awe one feels when entering a cathedral. In Latin America these types of homes are quite common, sitting like an oasis of wealth, but here there are no walls of security and no guards standing watch. The cab slowed down in order to find the correct address. As we moved up the driveway, Ernie's beautiful home spread before me with a courtyard and a circular brick turnaround. Perched on a hill overlooking the other homes below, Ernie's home sat as a king would sit upon a throne; truly magnificent!

As I approached the front door I was not expecting to be greeted by a man dressed in a casual sweater and a pair of jeans, but there Ernie was with the young face and friendly smile I recognized from Bernie's office picture. He held out his hand saying, "Hello Nestor. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"Thank you for seeing me Ernie. You have a beautiful home."

"Would you like to see it?" Ernie asked.

I eagerly accepted the invitation and Ernie led me through his

vaulted foyer into a living room. The bay windows captured the green colors of the garden sitting like a hidden Eden. Opening the doors on the far side of this living room Ernie advanced to the next section of his home, "This is the recreation wing." We were standing on an indoor balcony that overlooked a stunning three story atrium including a whirlpool, sauna, and indoor swimming pool.

"Ernie, this one room is bigger than most homes!"

"We entertain a lot of guests here. It is for my family and friends to enjoy. I think it makes the statement that America is still the land of opportunity and that idea really motivates me."

"It looks as though you have experienced opportunity, a 'self made' success before the age of forty."

"Oh, no Nestor. If that is what you are learning then you are missing the whole story. None of us are self made. We grew and developed together. Success is a real team effort."

"How did you get into the business?" I asked as we traveled down the staircase closer to the pool.

"When I was twenty two I began buying investment property. My philosophy was simple: people must have a place to live. It's a basic need and I learned that if you help people get what they want they will help you get what you want. Come on into my library." Ernie walked me into a room with walls of books. I found myself inspired once again by the magnitude of these rooms. Ernie must have recognized the expression on my face because he added, "I have always believed that a man should have a place he wants to come home to. This is the most important room in my home. It is my 'wisdom room." We sat down in a pair of leather chairs and he continued, "This is a place where I can get away to pray, read, think, dream, plan, and develop." He spoke each word with clear distinction and importance.

"I agree there is something to be said about having a corner of the world marked as your own. Since I was young I often longed for a well lit place where I could step into an environment of solitude. This is where I come to believe... believing that God will do what He says. I often spend time in this environment, because it reminds me of what God has done in my life. I need to remind myself of what He can do and then believe that He will do what He says. Fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. One of the most important truths I've ever learned. We should be making plans but believing God will direct us. Do you agree?"

"Yes, I want to learn more about knowing God's direction so that I can gain confidence and walk under His protection."

"Do you have the monument and invitation with you Nestor?" I opened my briefcase and removed the monument. "They sound like simple concepts, don't they?"

"Simple yes, easy no," I added.

"Nestor, my pillar has everything to do with the concept of hard work and stewardship. You can do anything with God's blessing." After removing the third pillar from it's resting place Ernie began to share the insight he had been given:

## THE PILLAR OF HARD WORK

Ill gotten gain brings no lasting happiness; right living does. Do you know a hard working man? He shall be successful and stand before kings. Lazy men are soon poor; hard workers get rich. Work harder and become a leader; be lazy and never succeed. A wise youth makes hay while the sun shines, but what a shame to see a lad who sleeps away his hour of opportunity.

I wrote carefully each word making up this third pillar and when Ernie was finished I asked him, "How did the attribute of hard work become a part of your character?"

"When I was young my family lived on a farm in New York. I had older brothers and sisters who teased me because of my size. I got pushed around quite a bit. My father did not own the farm, we just worked it and I mean worked it! My dad taught me two great lessons as I grew up: how to be a hard worker and how to be a loyal employee. I remember one day the land owner came and interrupted our dinner to ask my father for a favor. Being the youngest, I always wanted to spend time with my dad so I followed him to the owner's house. The man's car had broken down and my father had a lot of mechanical knowledge so we spent the next hour repairing this man's new car. I thought it was new just because it still had a back seat and two shiny mirrors on the side. Unable to understand why the man just didn't fix it himself. I began complaining to my father about how hard he works and how he should be allowed to enjoy a warm meal in peace. My father, in his patience, wiped his brow and said to me, "Son, when you work for a man, work for him. Don't talk about him, work for him." My dad worked that farm like he owned it."

As Ernie shared the intimate memories of his childhood, I could not help but feel honored and trusted by all these men so willing and confident to share their fears, mistakes, and victories with me. It was knowledge that I found value in.

Ernie's face took on the expression one has when recalling a memory. The eyes become fixed, the body sits motionless, and the mind sees so clearly what no one else can. The slightest movement might break the spell, sealing the pictures in the attic of one's mind.

"When I was young we had a red pick-up truck. During the summer we'd all get in it to go swimming in the pond over the hill. That was about our only form of entertainment. We loved that truck. With mom and dad in the front and all of us kids in the truck bed, it was like our chariot, taking us to the places of our dreams. I believed that truck could carry us anywhere in the world. It took us to town where we would window shop, it took us to our relatives, and it took us to the swimming hole." Ernie's voice was calm and gentle. "One day, two men dressed in suits came out to the farm, I figured they were friends of the land owner since they looked and talked like him. Next thing I knew they were driving away in our truck. Dad tried to explain to us that they weren't stealing it. He said they were from the bank and that he had to give it back because we couldn't pay for it. I begged him to go get it, "Dad, it's all we've got. It's ours, we worked for it. It's all we have!" He just hugged me and tried to comfort me. That's when we moved. We needed a new start." By now tears had surfaced in Ernie's eyes. "I wasn't the biggest or the smartest but I made up my mind that no one would ever take away my truck again. I believed from that point on that money would take care of anything. So I set my goal to be rich."

"Did that really solve all your problems?" I asked.

"No, I learned about the paradox of riches. I worked all through school and saved money. I tried to be the fastest and hardest worker wherever I went. I worked two jobs and started selling real estate. Then one day someone told me I could get rich quick. I believed that philosophy and was destroyed. That is when I learned the first key to my monument; 'Ill gotten gain brings no lasting happiness; right living does.' There is no such thing as instant success or get rich quick. If you are getting rich quick then most likely someone else is getting poor quick due to you. It is a process. Success will go through you before it comes to you. Then I learned the second key, 'Do you know a hard working man? He shall be successful and stand before kings.' At that point in my life, I was really down and out. I moved into an apartment with no bathroom. But I refused

to give up. I got a sales job that required public speaking. It scared me to think about getting up in front of people but I wouldn't quit. This consuming desire to succeed was driving me forward. It was right then that I met John Schrock." Ernie handed me a framed photograph, it said John, Bernie and Ernie. It was aged. They all had younger faces and out of date hair styles. The three stood like brothers. "That was our first office building. John met me in the midst of my desperation and he invited me to move into his home. I watched how his family worked. He told me that I was experiencing a time of growth and then shared with me the law of sowing and reaping."

"Words of a farmer."

"Yes, God's farmer! John introduced me to other men who had been blessed of God by living right. Then he introduced me to men who had a lot of money but lost it because of laziness."

"Were you a believer?" I asked.

"No, not at first, but one day we were in John's garage. It was my moment. I said, 'John, I want what you have. I need the peace that you have, I need a foundation.' John prayed with me and I surrendered my life. It was then that I learned how God will bless your effort if you go forth in His name. Lazy men are soon poor; hard workers get rich.

I believed in that principle of God and my sky began to clear. I became one of the top ten salespeople for my company and developed a love for speaking and training. When I entered our own business my eyes were focused on a mission. The goal was to go nationwide with our magazines. By this time I was recognizing the fourth part of the pillar; A wise youth makes hay while the sun shines but what a shame to see a lad sleep away his hour of opportunity. The Gathering of Eagles had begun!"

"What exactly is meant when you say gathering?"

"I believed that our company could change the hearts of men. It could offer opportunity to people based upon desire not just education. At that time I didn't realize the importance of building everything on the Principles of God. This became so crucial. We've learned that God loves to bless His people. I've seen Him do miracles for us. I was on the front lines. I know how serious business can be. Nestor, success is seasonal. We often don't understand the principles of a harvest any longer. There's a time to sow and a time to weed, a time to water and a time to reap. That is why the Gathering of Eagles is so important." Ernie picked up the sealed invitation. "The contents of this envelope are a part of the timing of God."

"It sounds almost mystical."

"Sacred is a better word. God reveals only what we can be trusted with. I've seen His work, I've tasted the fruits, and I believe. Take care of this envelope."

"It is obvious to me that you have been chosen Nestor." Ernie handed me the marble monument. "These pillars are built in a precise order. Beginning with an honest heart one learns how to give and then achieves a willingness to work hard. When you meet JR you'll be meeting a Pillar of Humility. JR has a desire to serve people. He is now working on a special project. We've always known his heart for the elderly and now his purpose seems to be actualizing. I'll make some calls tonight and let you know when and where you can meet him." Ernie walked me through his gardens. He told me to begin setting goals today and then believe that God will help me achieve my plans.

Meditating on the first three pillars that evening, I sat down to process my notes and I wrote this passage in my journal:

Honesty, Generosity, and Hard Work, three pillars of success, three pillars of choice. These pillars are not to be inserted into the minds of men but grafted into the hearts of men. God has given us the choice. Without

a moral code, a business will open itself up to problems.

Perhaps that is what is plaguing our country, our political arenas and our business world.

What a mess to clean up. I want to be a man of action and values. These principles were part of the United States and it seems as if they are choosing to leave them behind. Could it be God's will to use Latin America to pick up where the United States is failing?

I went to sleep that evening praying that God would continue to surprise me with His truths. Thanking him for the honor of seeing His spirit work.



Early the next morning I received a call from Ernie and by ten o'clock I was standing on the construction site of a large building project. The wooden frame of the main building was covered with Amish workers. The sight of about fifty men hammering, hoisting, and drilling in unison was like watching orchestrated movement. Each man was contributing individually as the whole group worked in sequence. As soon as one man lifted the boards, two more adjusted the placement while a fourth moved in to secure the nails. I watched a few minutes until an older man approached me.

"Are you Nestor?" He spoke with the same accent of Jonas, but he did not have a gray beard hanging from his chin.

"Yes, I'm here to see JR

"My name is Henry. JR is my son-in-law," he turned his head to one of the workers and spoke using strange words that did not sound like English, I could only recognize JR's name in the sentence. The Amish boy moved quickly into the building structure.

"Are you the supervisor on this project?" I asked.

"Yes, we started building a year ago and hope to be finished here in

a few months. My team really knows how to work."

"I can see that; it's like watching an artistic performance." The Amish boy returned and spoke to Henry. Henry smiled and said something back. "What language are you speaking?"

"Pennsylvania Dutch. The Amish speak both English and German. They brought it over with them to America, but now it has evolved."

"He said that JR was in the back room. Let's go."

"So Henry, JR is married to your daughter?"

"Yes, it has been wonderful watching them grow together. After they got married I began to have some doubts about him. He kept experimenting with different churches, trying New Age and meditation. It seemed like every week they were attending a new church." We walked through the framed structure and into a finished wing of the building. "JR has a real love for music. I think he can play about fifteen different instruments. Entering into the office area, Henry stopped to pick up some scattered nails and lumber pieces. We found JR in the back office, alone, reading a devotional book.

"Hey JR. Nestor is here to see you."

JR put his book down and stood to shake my hand. "Welcome Nestor. It is really good to meet you. Henry did you show him around the place?"

"Just through this wing JR, it looks like we'll be ready for those electricians to come in by the week's end, even with the set back. I'm gonna get back to the crew. Good talking with you Nestor."

"Let me show you around a bit. We're nearing the final phase of this building project and it has really been amazing."

"So, this will be a retirement center?"

"Yes, we are going to create an environment where elderly people can have their physical needs met, but even more important we want to offer the spiritual guidance and assurance that we all need."

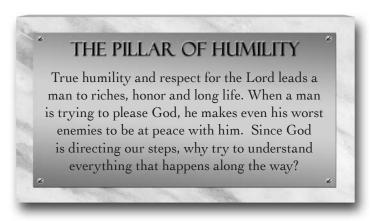
Since the project is being completed in sections, the overall complex revealed the process involved in finishing a new building. We were standing in the finished wing complete with the final touches, furnishings of wall paper, fixtures on the doors and windows, and carpeting. But when we walked through the next section these details faded as the essential structure revealed its skeleton. The white walls surrounded the bare wooden floors and the electrical sockets were blooming with The most dramatic change occurred when we entered the last division of the project that had just begun construction. It was an exact duplicate of JR's wing of finished rooms, only it was stripped down to the bare frame and cement foundation. JR stood beside a large solid beam. "This is our foundation beam. About a week ago Henry noticed that some of the measurements were off and the support beams were in need of adjustments. When he looked deeper into the problem it was right here. That beam was off. We had to disassemble the whole frame and uproot this foundation in order to correct it. That meant starting from scratch because you can't correct a weak foundation by covering it with a support network. Somewhere it will always give."

"Sounds a lot like the concept of your Pillars of Success."

"You're right, it does. The Pillars have to be solid and upright if anything is to be built upon them, because the whole weight rests so heavily on the support of those Pillars."

"JR, your partners have given me three pillars. Each one involves specific choices that must be made in order to follow them. My honest desire is to see our businesses and nation be blessed by God."

"My pillar has a lot to do with how one is to handle the blessings of God, and like the others, it involves a dedication to making the right choices." JR handed me his pillar.



JR held out his arm and leaned against the foundation beam. "It's the principle of submission. That's why the Pillars mean so much. It is a slow process, but God is consistent in His ways. When we, as a company, made the decision in our boardroom to serve God, it was evident to all that God would bless our lives." I followed JR as he started to walk back toward the finished offices.

"What was your function in the company?" I asked.

"I handled collection."

This was a little confusing. "You established the Pillar of Humility and were the one to collect the bills? That sounds like two conflicting roles."

"Not necessarily. I believe that, 'It is better to be poor and humble than proud and rich.' Because the man who wants to do right will get a rich reward, but the man who wants to get rich quick will fail."

"The only bill collectors I have ever known have been merciless."

"Well, I would say that they are going about their job all

wrong! When our business was growing we lived through three economic recessions. God blessed us tremendously in the midst of each of them. We recognized that in order to be effective we were going to have to work with our customers. My job was to build a relationship with our customers while maintaining the cash flow of the company. It was a little tricky at times, but I always viewed it as a ministry."

"Collecting money from people as a ministry?" This concept was difficult to understand.

JR patiently explained, "You bet it is. When a person is hurting and can't pay their bills they are vulnerable. That makes them very open for the touch of God in their lives. Let me tell you a story. In our town we had a large account. The owner had a lot of ambition but when the recession came, the company was really struggling to make ends meet. His account became past due so I went over to meet with him. Before I could even say hello he stopped me saying 'JR, things are tight, there's no sense in you coming around. I'm doing the best I can. My stomach is in knots about this. The man opened his desk drawer showing me a bunch of pills.' He said, 'Please don't add to my pressures because these pills aren't helping as it is." JR raised his arms in the air as if to say he was surrendering empty handed and continued, "A sense of compassion came over me. I shared with him that I wasn't there just to collect money. First I wanted him to know that he was a valuable customer and client to our company and then I mentioned that I knew someone who could relieve his pressures. He asked for the doctor's name so I told him about a man that taught me that a burden could be light. I explained that we were making more money through the recession than we had in the prosperous times but only because God is our supplier and is meeting our needs. We prayed together that day and a miracle took place. He and his wife began to have dreams at night. They learned how to hire people and how to make contacts with valuable customers. Not only did he make it through the

recession but that company has grown phenomenally. He gives God the credit for doing the impossible. We are called to serve and that is why humility is important."

It was easy to feel JR's passion about serving and his commitment to functioning in humility. He spoke from his heart. I took out the monument that Bernie had given me and JR exchanged with me the Pillar of Humility. "It is beginning to look a little more balanced now."

"This is the final pillar of choice. I hope it serves you well."

"I believe it will JR. I live in a country that is crying out for character ethics. We have certainly had enough talk about government, society and changes. I want to begin to function with a strong foundation."

"It's just like the foundational beam. Everything you build relies on the foundation to support it. If your old pillars are cracked or off center you need to replace them. It's not easy to restructure and begin again, but it is worth it.

"So, which partner of yours should I call on next?"

"Bernie has made arrangements for a flight to California. You are going to meet Ed and Dennis. They are living examples of the decisions we make at the crossroads in life."

"California?"

"Yes, it will only be for two days, will that work out for you?"

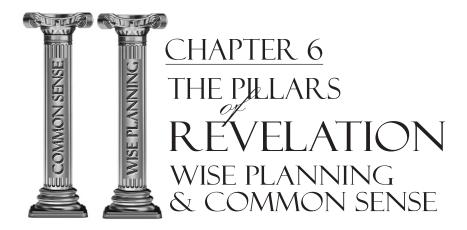
"Yes." I answered.

JR put his arm around my shoulder saying, "God, I lift this servant up to you. I know he is here on a mission. Allow him to understand the depth of these truths; the sacredness of the Pillars. Give him traveling mercies on his way to California. In your name, Amen."

I gathered up my monument and embraced JR. With the Amish workers still swarming over the wooden frame, I drove out of the construction site. I sat in a state of joy and overwhelming thanks. My heart was aching because of the awesome amount of love I felt from God. I, so undeserving and small, felt so safe in the embracing arms of my Teacher. My voice was lost somewhere in my throat and my lips could only quiver. I offered my thanks to God through the blurring tears that filled my eyes.

That night I sat down to write in my journal:

Since God is directing my steps why try to understand everything that happens along the way; what wisdom to behold. How much of our lives do we waste with statements like, "What if" or "I should have." True humility is recognizing it is God who directs our paths. We are to give him the glory. Never once have I heard these men say, Look what I have done." No, they always say, "Look what God has done through me." God is definitely on the throne of this man's life and it is obvious that humility is an important part of true character.



The next morning my bags were packed and I had checked out of the hotel. I began to mentally prepare myself for the trip I was about to take. The front desk informed me that I had a call. I picked up one of the house phones wondering if it would be Federico responding to my emails.

"Hello, this is Nestor."

"Nestor!" Jerry's friendly voice sounded out. "How are you my friend?"

"Very good. Intense and emotional, but very good."

"I thought it would be. Have you received the flight ticket and information Bernie sent you?"

"Yes, last night. Thank you. I'm not sure if I can ever totally let you know the impact you have had on my life Jerry. Since our meeting in Florida this journey has been nonstop. I had no idea the depth of relationship that you have with this team of people. I knew La Red had a philosophy. I never recognized how it is based and proven in the marketplace. Bernie said that you were the first fruit of these pillars. What does that mean?"

"Nestor, it is God's work. It's very simple. I was the first that had the opportunity to watch the giftedness of that team. I always wanted to have a team like that but I learned that God had something different in store for me. I'm just being obedient. I bought their first franchise in California. When you get out there and meet Dennis and Ed give me a call and I will fill you in on some very important details. Just keep listening to God and learning. Your trip to California is the next step in your journey. Bernie always teaches that the first four pillars are pillars of choice and now you are about to understand the Pillars of Revelation. These are essential pillars of leadership."

"OK, you said that these first four pillars involve daily choices of being active in my beliefs."

"Right Nestor. They are the pillars that develop vital character traits. That's how I began the roundtable. When I learned that there was an operating system that involved choices, I made up my mind to change the way that I think. Your mind is like a computer, if you program it correctly then you will be programmed for success. The next key is to pass that knowledge on to your inner circle, watching them change is incredible. I have learned that companies are like kingdoms and it is important to rule with justice. Honesty, generosity, hard work, and humility are the values important for blessing, but the Pillars of Revelation will magnify a person's values and allow them to grow. They are keys for management and leadership. People will model what they respect; good or bad, and it is important to be able to plan and respond. These are pillars that embody the core of what is needed to lead people...Plan and Respond."

"So, these are the pillars that continue the transformation from employee to leader, from what is good and functional into what is an inspiring spectacle of greatness?"

"Right, these pillars bridge the transition from good to great. As

a leader you must exercise judgment and discernment in order to handle people and situations correctly. Decision making is a skill and judgment is a gift. When you arrive in California you'll be meeting Dennis and Ed, two more of the initial seven men of the company. These two pillars are key because they had to learn them the hard way, and they will be the first to tell you how important it is to hear from God. Their insight into the need for personal growth and accountability is vital to these principles."

"Are there only two pillars of revelation?" I asked.

"Yes, and then comes the final pillar. Bernie will give that pillar when you return to Ohio. Enjoy these next two days Nestor. I'll be believing that God will continue to reveal these truths to your heart, mind and soul. I felt something very special when I met you in West Palm Beach."

"Thank you, Jerry." Hanging up the phone I stood in order to take my first steps into the next phase of my journey.

## California

Stepping out of the airplane, the warmth of the California sun rolled across my face like the comfort of a quilt. In some ways it was like returning home where the sun rays are like daily companions greeting you in the morning and spending the day reliably by your side. I took a deep breath and searched the crowd for Ed and Dennis. There was a uniformed man holding a sign that read, 'Buenos Dias, Nestor!' I wasn't sure if this was a common name in the state of California so I approached the man with some reluctance. "Excuse me, I am Nestor Ochoa."

"Yes, Mr. Ochoa. Allow me to gather your things and escort you to the meeting." The chauffeur held out his white gloved hands to take my bags and proceeded to open the door of a sparkling Rolls Royce. My senses were on overdrive and I was a little embarrassed to be treated as royalty. We drove through the modern bustling downtown and then edged

our way into old Sacramento. With each new intersection crossed, the streets were becoming worn out. The blanketing black top was scattered with holes revealing the former brick roads that crumbled underneath. The white Rolls had entered a territory I'm sure it had never been acquainted with before. Pulling up in front of an abandoned shopping center the only business in sight was a small twenty four hour restaurant about the size of a garage. The vacant parking lot rested quietly with cracks that spread out in every direction allowing the weeds to crawl forth from their hiding places. The car stopped and the chauffeur opened my door for me to step out into this deserted wasteland. My face was draped in an uneasy expression looking around for some sign of the meeting. The tiny restaurant was wedged between the empty store houses and eventually two men came out of the door and walked toward the car. I was relieved to see one of them lift his hand waving to me as they approached. The white Rolls pulled away as if suddenly driven by an instinct telling it to seek familiar surroundings.

"Hello Nestor!" The waving man was now jogging up to me with a smiling face tanned by the sun. "Welcome to California. I'm Ed. Did you like the Rolls Royce?" He spoke very quickly, stringing his words together one following very closely after the other. Before I could respond with an answer he continued, "I learned it from Ernie. I always try to surprise my friends when they come to see me. Sort of knocks them off balance." He gave me a quick pat on the shoulder. "I'm sure you've seen Ernie's house. That guy is always challenging me, a step ahead every time. The only time I ever caught him speechless was when I picked him up from the airport in one of those rented Rolls Royce's. He thought I'd struck gold out here in California." Ed started laughing, very amused. But I was struggling to follow his words and quick comments.

"Hello Nestor. I'm Dennis." A calming voice interrupted the laughter, "You'll have to excuse Ed. He's got a lot of enthusiasm. We met you here because we thought you might like to see where we opened the California operation 25 years ago. Ed and I moved out here and attempted to expand the company on the west coast, beginning right here in this old shopping center." We walked through the parking lot toward the street where their car was parked. "We really thought we could duplicate our company anywhere in the states, but I found out it's tough to be a team when you are two thousand miles apart."

Ed interjected, "We put a lot of work into it. Bob and John helped us open. I was out here for about a year developing the management team. It never grew though, at least not like we thought it would."

"We learned the hard way that everything we do must be blessed of God," Dennis confided.

As we drove out to Ed's home I could sense that what these two men had learned was going to be the words of experience offered from the gathered remains of what goes wrong if you ignore any of the pillars. During the drive Ed continued to chatter, "We almost killed ourselves trying to make this work out here. Ernie came out and taught us how to open new business. We set goals and saw some of our efforts rewarded. I believe that when you can sell people, things happen. We were selling to customers and salespeople like us..."

Dennis interrupted, "Ed, you make it sound like it was easy. This area was rough. We worked hard and are thankful for any success we have had. But it did not come easy. We were not working with the full team. Nestor, my mind was filled by several different techniques to be tried out. In the end I decided not to do business like the home office. I felt I found a new answer and I was wrong." There was a moment of lulling silence as the car steadily moved down the road. "I'll never forget one of our last board meetings in Ohio. I was so sure we were right, but John was convinced otherwise. Things got hot and I argued then

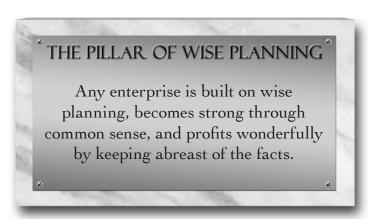
exploded. So we decided to part as friends. Ed and I traded our stock in Ohio for the California operation."

"Were you content?" I asked.

"Yes and No. We still maintained a strong alliance but it was obvious that we were no longer a covenant team. I know I did not realize the importance of structure. It keeps you accountable and develops your character."

Ed pulled up in the front of a nice home in the shining suburbs of California. We all gathered around the dining room table. Dennis continued.

"When we first opened the company our two strengths were in the areas of sales and the development of people. I found out both skills were needed. We were working within the framework of honesty, generosity, hard work, and humility but it was obvious that something needed to push us even further along." Dennis reached into his suit coat pocket removing the first Pillar of Revelation. "Nestor, this was the key that was needed to support my desire. It is a foundational part of management.



Dennis continued, "It was a concept that we learned when we were back in Ohio working with the team, but somehow in the move to California and the voices of different advisors, our ability to discern the facts was shadowed. I needed a secure foundation with wise planning,

common sense and keeping abreast of the facts." Dennis continued and Ed stood to get us something to drink from the kitchen.

"There was one experience that we had in Ohio. It was during the early years when we were all working as a team, all trying to get the company off the ground. This experience has stood out to me profoundly. The activation of skillful planning and closely gathering and watching the facts had been the key to our success. We had just opened a new area and had been working day and night to try and make a profit. Just when things were beginning to pay off, one of our competitors came on the scene. They offered a similar service. John called an emergency meeting and gave us one of his 'addresses'."

"What do you mean address?" I asked.

"I mean a speech. He spoke like President Lincoln or a great statesman would have; short, concise and to the point. John said, 'Gentlemen, I can quit and lose money as easy as anyone else can but I feel if we commit our efforts to God, we will win. I have an idea and a plan.' John then shared his strategy. Each of us was assigned a task and after we all prayed, John sent us into battle. It was so simple and direct, but it was a plan, thought through and set into action. John taught us to plan from the end to the beginning; to begin with the end in mind."

"Tell him what crazy tactic John thought up in order to get to know our competitors," Ed called out making his way back from the kitchen.

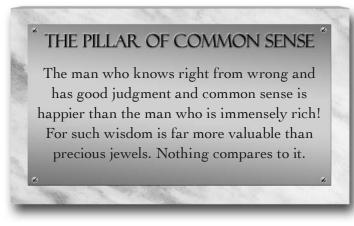
"John went to our competitor and became a customer. John believed he could make a friend with these people. So we became a cash flow for our competition. They didn't want to damage us because we had built a relationship. We stayed with them till they went out of business. It was amazing."

Dennis added, "At the same time we started a system that we called 'Operation Yardstick'. Bernie and I developed a plan to monitor the

vital signs of how our company was doing. We identified and tried to strengthen our weak areas. That's where we learned to keep abreast of the facts by managing the vital signs. It's like when you go to the hospital and they check your vital signs. They can quickly monitor your health by checking your temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, height, weight, and reflexes. Every business should have daily checks of its vital signs so you can catch symptoms of corporate illness long before a financial report identifies it."

"It was truly a skillful example of team work and wise planning. When we moved here we just didn't have the resources or a concise plan of action. Everyone was reinventing the vital signs. When you take time to sit down and prayerfully consider the plan of action, asking God to reveal to you any points of hardships and troubles, then growth is automatic. We were acting through our own strength of selling and not the art of management. We thought all the knowledge was somehow packaged. Somehow we began to think we were the source. We found out the hard way that our resources lie beyond ourselves. Looking back it's easy to see how much we needed to be working within a balanced framework; I'm not sure what we were thinking."

Ed reached behind him on the cabinet dresser where he had put the tray from the kitchen. "That is where my pillar comes into play." Ed handed me the sixth pillar;



I attached Ed's pillar to the monument. "Common sense should be called 'uncommon sense'. We've all but lost it. The pillar of common sense is developed when we choose God as our source. That's where I fell. I considered God to be a relic instead of a resource. I forgot about this gift of revelation. I have learned that there are two kinds of knowledge: Sense knowledge and Revelation knowledge. Sense knowledge is the voice of experience including what we learn through formal education. It is validated truth. But there is a higher form of knowledge to be found... revelation knowledge. It is the mother of all invention found through the inspiration and creativity that God has programmed us with. I call it quantum faith. We are born with this ability but seem to lose it in our quest for 'sense' knowledge. We learn to rely on memorization and not inspiration. The gift of revelation is released when we have eyes to see and ears to hear. We see a plan of action and hear the voice of wisdom to respond with common sense and good judgment."

"Where did you go wrong?" I asked.

"My life was spent memorizing presentations, closes, and word tracts. I was good, one of the best at selling a product. But wise planning needs to be teamed up with common sense. I am very impulsive by nature," Ed said passing a glass of water to me. "On the other hand, Dennis is such a perfectionist, wanting to plan everything. Common sense is the inner voice that becomes our navigator, a voice of timing, adjustments, and creativity. Let me give you an example. When we planned to open an operation in another city two hours away we were heading into an area that was already heavily guarded by a competing company. We felt we could override this by being local and focusing on service. We were not lacking in the planning area. However, right when we were about to open, a call came in from our distribution network that our competitor had contacted them in order to begin distribution in our home area. They were coming to our town. We had awakened a sleeping giant. This

competitor had the resources to cut prices, threatening not only our new markets but our existing markets as well. We met, prayed, and felt that we should back off. Closing our new office was hard because we were really humbled. However, this bit of common sense allowed us to sit down and concentrate on the planning of new strategies. We were planning wisely but needed to hear the voice of common sense; not the voice of fear but the voice of common sense."

Dennis interrupted, "Nestor, when you listen to God's voice within you and do the things that He's doing, you will be blessed."

Ed became very excited, "We need to defeat the spirit of pride. I'm learning that I can't be right all the time. When I'm in the middle of a situation with those business wheels picking up momentum, it's hard to listen when common sense is telling you to back off. My pride says, 'No Way! Keep Moving Forward!' 'Pride precedes a fall.'" Looking at Ed I knew the truth in what he was telling me. His eyes were ablaze with the passion of experience. "So many times I have been hurt financially because of not swallowing my pride and turning back. Millions of dollars are lost every day because of pride, bad timing, and not knowing when to quit."

"Good timing makes millionaires, but bad timing also destroys them." Dennis stated plain and simple. "Plan and respond. Common sense teaches us how to respond...how to react. Schools and consultants can teach us how to act, but only revelation, the voice of common sense will teach us how to react. 'The man who knows right from wrong and has good judgment and common sense is happier than the man who is immensely rich. Effective planning and common sense are the ingredients that compose quality judgment."

A car was pulling up the driveway and Ed stood to meet the visitor at the door. "That is probably Jerry," Said Dennis.

"Jerry? But I just spoke with him yesterday."

"Yes, he called last night and said he was going to fly in especially for this meeting. Ever since he got that new jet he is able to take advantage of all the divine appointments. He said last night that he is convinced God is working in your life and that you are about to experience a divine appointment. Did you know that Jerry worked with us from our start out here in California? He thought he might have some insight to offer on how to incorporate the pillars into your life".

"Jerry ran our first franchise out here in California," Ed added as the two joined us at the table.

"First franchise, right!" Jerry laughed. "Nestor, let me tell you about the 'only' franchise in California."

"We were working hard in this state but things were not developing like they were back in Ohio," explained Dennis. "I asked my other partners if we could open a franchise with Jerry and they agreed. It started slow but boy did it grow."

"It grew, but only after it died and I died with it," said Jerry.

"What do you mean?" I questioned a little confused.

"At the time I was working two jobs because I was trying to make ends meet. I didn't have enough cash flow to make my employee payroll. My accountant told me to sell out. He said I would never make money and I should never have bought the franchise. Everything was in working order but it just wasn't being blessed by God and that is when I died."

I nervously began to laugh, but Jerry's face remained set in his serious expression. "You died?"

"I gave up and died to myself. I cried out to God and I gave him

complete control over my company and I began functioning on the Pillars of Success." Jerry watched me very closely, making sure that I understood what he was telling me. "God will not bless what you're doing until you become a part of what he is doing."

"So you made a change in your lifestyle," I stated more than questioned.

"A complete restructure. God demands a personal relationship and a change of character. He wants to be in business with us."

I remembered the words from a meeting asking if I was desperate and telling me there were solutions.

"Do you know what the 'Good News' is? God wants to be your friend and He has a plan. That's the way it worked in my life. It requires your action though. You have to be willing to act on that belief. It is not a one time experience that changes and zaps your life into perfection, allowing you to just sit back and receive. The process will begin, but every day you are challenged in your faith to make the choices. Sometimes I fall down in front of the pillars, other times I stumble right into them, or at times I have even tried to knock them over deliberately. But they are strong principles and when they are built into your life they share their strength with you."

"How did your business change?" I asked.

"I needed to reset my priorities: God first, family second, business third. I had already restructured my business when I received a call from John. He told me he was flying out here to meet with me about my payments that were past due. I hung up the phone and told my wife that it was over. There wasn't any way we could even make the interest payments on the franchise, let alone the equipment and royalty payments. But instead of agreeing with me, she said 'Jerry, don't give up.' We prayed

together that night and when John came, his visit had been sealed and stamped by God. John told me he had a message from the rest of the owners. Their business in Ohio was growing incredibly. Their realm of influence was growing, and God was blessing them. They had learned that bigger is not necessarily better. Since they no longer were servicing California or my franchise, they were releasing me of my commitments to them and forgiving my debts."

"All debts?" I stammered out.

"Everything was lifted off my shoulders. I cried. God had intervened for me and I owed an eternal debt to Him and the guys. I carry that obligation even today. My commitment to the Pillar of Generosity sky rocketed. I gave as never before. We had been saving for a down payment on a house and I gave that money to help purchase the land our church needed to build on. It was my time to sow what I had into what God was doing."

"It was a new day for him." Dennis smiled.

"One day my accountant called me in and said, 'Jerry, I've been watching your books and I've figured out why your business has turned around. This is incredible because in less than a year you moved from failure to success.' I asked what he thought the reason was and he took out these graphs. 'It's advertising Jerry. Ever since you started advertising your sales have increased. Just look.' The charts graphed the climb of success month by month. But I told him there must be a mistake because we hadn't advertised since we opened. 'Yes you do Jerry.' He pointed out the expense on my monthly financial statements that allotted amounts of money for advertising but I insisted once again that there must be a mistake. So he got on his phone and talked to his bookkeeper. 'Pat, Jerry says he doesn't advertise and yet we have expensed it out?' She answered, 'I've been meaning to ask you. About a year ago Jerry began

giving money to a church and since I didn't know where to classify it I put it under advertising.' My accountant's face turned pale! 'Jerry,' he said, 'Whatever you are doing, keep doing it because this is one of the most dramatic turnarounds I've ever seen.' I was given some real insight into the Pillar of Generosity. I learned to sow money like a farmer sows seed. Selecting the fertile soil and making sure there is water. Nestor, I can speak from experience. These pillars are based on the eternal truths of God and I've seen my life changed."

"My life is already changing but when I return to my country the tests will be great."

Jerry smiled, "My prayer for you is that you will build on the strong foundation, weather the storms, and give God the glory. Then you will be able to share your blessing with others so they will also be inspired to act responsibly."

"You can fly back with me tomorrow. Have you ever flown in the copilot seat of an executive jet? You are about to experience life at 41,000 feet. Things look real different from there."

"Hope you liked your long visit." Ed joked.

Ed drove me to the airport hotel. Since I was going to be flying out early tomorrow I would not have far to go. That evening I sat in my hotel room and I wrote out some thoughts in my journal, "Plan and respond... The pillars of wise planning and common sense. God framed the heavens with his masterful plan and yet will respond to the needs of His children. Oh God, I desire to have ears to hear the voice...your voice of wisdom." I watched the planes rise and fall in front of the sinking California sun. The sky blazed as the angled lights spread out along the horizon. It was a new light that seemed to burn it's brightest on the edge of the night sky. The star speckled darkness followed closely behind and I thought about my need for the new light and the boundaries of darkness

that seemed to surround me back at home, waiting to take over my well lit skies. My mind was at peace with my eyes admiring the dazzling light pressed thinly across the edge of the earth.

The next morning I met Jerry at the executive Airport in Sacramento. We got on his Embraer jet and made the trip in less than four hours. Life is different at 41,000 feet! Jerry explained to me, "There is a jet stream that flows around the world. As a pilot, he can take advantage of that jet stream. His ground speed increases when the headwind is reduced... God is like a tailwind. He gives us an advantage. Nestor this is just the way life works, get into a jet stream of what God is doing and your life will be easier. You have many gifts and abilities but I sense that you've had a lot of headwind lately. I think this is about to change. In the last years, I've been able to take these pillars that you are learning and have been able to build an incredible business. Not only does it employ almost a thousand people, but most importantly it employs my family. You are learning the pillars one by one as you meet the guys, remember that you will be able to utilize all seven of these in your own life. You will experience a land that is flowing with milk and honey. I knew when I met you in Medellin that you had destiny in your life. I spoke with Federico last night and he is sure that what you are learning will impact LifeDesign TV and all of Latin America."



I called Bernie as soon as I landed in Ohio but got his voice mail. I hung up the phone and gathered my baggage from the plane. I was a bit disappointed but only because I felt like I was about to brim over and I wanted to share what I was learning with someone else. Needing so badly to talk with Bernie about Dennis and Ed's story and to learn about the seventh and last pillar, I collected my bag as quickly as possible and stood on the curb side.

"Nestor! Nestor, wait!" I turned around to see Bernie running toward me on the sidewalk. His face was smiling and his arm raised and waving. I picked up my bag and walked toward him.

"Bernie, I just called you!"

"I'm glad I caught you. Good trip?"

"More than good, I've learned a lot. And the flight home with Jerry was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I am about to enter the jet stream!" Bernie reached out to grab my luggage and we got in his car. "Dennis and Ed had a lot to teach me from their experiences. It sounded like they learned the hard way what an asset the pillars are to the business."

"That's the truth. Sometimes the only way for God to teach us is to let us learn from wrong choices," Bernie said, driving onto the expressway. "Nestor, I'm sure you can see now that I was part of a seven man team. The beautiful part of what you are learning from Jerry is that he was able to learn from our experiences. He was able to understand our individual strengths and our weaknesses and then he was able to build all 7 Pillars in his own life. That is the key to his success. Itcan be duplicated! Jerry was able to learn not only why success works but how success works. When a system can be duplicated it can be passed down to employees, families and friends."

Immediately, I remembered my thoughts in Medellin when I first met Jerry. I had learned the laws and why they work but now I was also learning how they worked. That is a huge difference and there is so much wisdom between The Pillars of Wise Planning and Common Sense. I'm recognizing the thin line between wanting to set my goals high and achieve what God is doing and at the same time I want to be able to respond and adjust as God leads me through a change in strategy. I want to learn to be flexible.

"I can only tell you that hearing the voice of wisdom takes some practice. You will learn to finely tune your ears to distinguish between your will and God's will."

"One thing that has really been interesting is to see how different each one of the owners is. It is hard to believe that you all were working as one unit when you each have such different temperaments."

"I think that's the key to developing a team. It takes a lot of blending and focusing of each person's gifts and abilities. We were like engine cylinders firing at the correct time. It really takes an orchestration to develop and include each person. I know that there is nothing lonelier than trying to become something you are not meant to be. Nestor, did

you know that the majority of the working people are doing something that they don't like? There are so many groups of people working together who were never meant to be a team."

"I know the feeling."

Bernie smiled and agreed, "I do too. For years I tried to be something I wasn't. I have a strong gift of exhortation but I am very melancholy as well. I acted out of impulse all the time but was very sensitive to criticism."

"I want my steps to be directed and intentional."

"Remember Nestor, 'The steps of good men are directed by God. He delights in each step they take. If they fall it isn't fatal for God holds them with his hand.' Nestor, don't be afraid to fall. We are going to make mistakes because we are all sheep that need a shepherd. You have a shepherd and although you may feel clueless and lost at times you will never be aimless and misguided."

"Our steps are ordered," I stated, reassuring myself.

"Before I was a believer, I was trapped in a job that I didn't really like. That's where I met Dennis. We were working as salesmen for another company. My life was a total lie. I acted like I was really rich but I was broke. My story is a lot like yours. We both have great wives that will help us and are there to believe in us. I had finished working out of town and was leaving early because I had an interview the next morning. The guys always liked to unwind when we were finished but I needed to go home. At this time in my life I needed a change. Driving home I knew that I was going to run out of gas and I had no money. It was late at night and I felt myself getting tense thinking that I was going to get stranded and miss my interview. The inevitable happened. My car sputtered to the side of the road and I began the long walk home. I couldn't see anything. Tripping through the weeds and loose pavement I

busted the heel off of one of my shoes so I took them both off and walked about three miles in my bare feet. When I got to the exit ramp my feet were aching and I sat down and rested along the roadside. I sat there on the knoll and asked God for help. I didn't know who God was or even if He was. Just then some lights came over the hill. As the car drew nearer I recognized that it was Dennis. I'll never forget his words, 'How are you doing partner?' At that moment I was so humiliated and humbled. Dennis helped me to his car and drove me to get some gas. God was teaching me interdependence. We all want to be independent, but God wants us to be interdependent, dependent on Him and others."

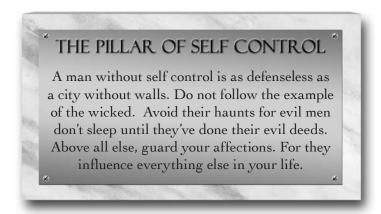
"Sort of like individual pillars all sharing the distributed weight."

"Yes, exactly. When Dennis bought me some gas he took me back to my car and poured it in the tank for me. Some kids passing by honked and called him stupid for running out of gas. Here he was, my friend, bearing my burdens and sharing my shame. He even called me the next morning to make sure I went to the job interview. We do need relationships with one another. There are two types of relationships we experience: optional relationships and providential relationships. Dennis was a providential relationship; a person provided by God to perfect me during a specific season of my life. Providential relationships inspire us towards our destiny and encourage us in moments of change. Think of the providential relationships in your life Nestor. I'm sure you've had many."

I began to think of the many mentors in my life and was immediately reminded of the gift of friendships and encouragement that so many of my friends had given. Many of them I haven't seen or talked to for years, but they were all people God provided to help mold my character. Bernie pulled into the hotel parking lot and he asked me, "Do you have the monument?"

"Yes, it's right here," I said, handing him the pillars.

Here is the seventh and final Pillar:



I opened Bernie's box and placed the last pillar on the marble monument. My mission was nearly over.

"Nestor now I am about to issue a challenge. When you have established the pillar of Self Control you will have set into place a cosmic event. By learning to delay your immediate gratifications, God will give you the desires of your heart. Listen to that truth. He doesn't always give you what you desire but he can actually redefine the desires of your heart. Your heart begins to change, your desires begin to change, and that is why it is so important to guard your affections. That is the essence of the Pillar of Self Control. Guard your affections for they will influence everything in life. Self Control means controlling the tongue. A quick response can ruin everything! That is one of my favourite sayings. Because the world we live in is full of voices, promises, advertisements and arguments. And normally we want to respond immediately to those voices.

Self Control means controlling the tongue. When I find myself struggling, I remember this truth:

A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything - or destroy it!

It only takes a spark to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it...curses and blessing come out of the same mouth!

The two aspects of self control are what you say and what you do. Not only do you need to watch what you say, you must watch your actions as well. We are what we do. Avoid the haunts of the wicked and guard your tongue. That is personal mastery."

"Bernie there is so much wisdom there. I feel like I could teach the world!"

"Don't be in any rush to become a teacher, Nestor. Teaching is highly responsible work. Teachers are held to the strictest standard and none of us is perfectly qualified. We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If you could find someone whose speech is perfectly true, you'd have a perfect person, in perfect control of life."

"Then what am I supposed to do next?"

"Nestor, now I am about to issue you a challenge. I now dare you to be great. I dare you to reach the full potential that God has for your life. I dare you to enter the chrysalis."

"What do you mean the chrysalis?"

"It is a very special place. The place where we stop talking and begin listening. It is the state of transformation. In order for a butterfly to emerge it must experience death to itself. In the chrysalis every cell must experience a breakdown that brings about massive change. In the

chrysalis you literally die to the past. All things must become new. You cannot erase the past... you must displace the past. The chrysalis is where you enter the state of change and transformation. God will do the rest. When a Monarch butterfly is created it begins as an egg. When the egg hatches into a caterpillar it has only one command... Eat! The caterpillar is an eating machine; all that it does is consume. That's the way you were Nestor when you achieved your success. Remember how you consumed, consumed, and consumed... More, more, more... Me, me, me... I want, I want, I want.... That is why you had to die! When you experienced your failure you became teachable again. It is now time for you to experience the chrysalis of total transformation. In ten days a caterpillar will transform into a butterfly. After those ten days the caterpillar will emerge with four new operating systems. New eyes to see differently, an enlarged heart that will move from crawling to flying, a new digestive system that depends on nectar rather than milkweed, and a new reproductive system that will replicate the process and produce a whole new generation. A new creation no longer crawling but now flying! No longer eating weeds but feeding on nectar. No longer living a life of consuming but living a life of pollinating. Your desires are changing because you are changing. That is why this invitation to the Gathering of Eagles is so important. You are to breach the cycle of the old and lead a new group of people that will experience transformation... metamorphosis. You will change from being a consumer to becoming a pollinator. God is moving. I will set the meeting for tonight. Remember to bring the invitation."



That evening I was taken to the international training center where the original Roundtable was placed inside a large turreted room. I was amazed. All of the seven partners were there, John, Bob, Ernie, JR, and Bernie were all sitting at the round conference table. Dennis and Ed had flown in as well. Jerry was also seated. He was the first to speak.

"Well Nestor, when I met you in West Palm Beach I knew that God was doing something special. I told you in California that I was the first fruit of this message. Now I'm sure I know the purpose for your trip"

I was welcomed and asked to join them among the round table. A wave of emotion was inching its way into shore and was about to crash over. John picked up a walnut gavel and brought the meeting to order. "Many years ago we all met together with expectations to change our world as businessmen. That was the first Gathering of Eagles. Now, we have shared our story with Nestor and have been brought together once again to change the world. Nestor, please tell us about this past week."

I paused a moment in order to collect my whirlwind of thoughts. I

thanked each of the men for their insight. I took the invitation from my briefcase and laid it on the table. The outside of the envelope said "You Are Invited to the Gathering of Eagles". It was beginning to make more sense every time that I read it. This was an invitation to change my life.

I reached for my notes. Bernie asked if he could record the meeting so that we would all be able to listen again.

"When I met with each of you this week, I was able to see the strength of each of the seven pillars. Even more I was shown my weaknesses and I met seven enemies that have plagued my soul. Each of the seven pillars shed the light of truth on my heart. Not only did I see how much I needed to know and do; but I could see what I should not do. I now know that I need to experience personal transformation. I need to enter my own personal chrysalis. I have the knowledge in my head but not in my heart. I have seen firsthand that a principle is something that a person recognizes as truth. Now I understand that a value is when they make that truth part of their very being. I need more. I need to drive out the old desires and habits that have plagued me for all these years. I understand how my mind is renewed, but I ask you, how can my heart be renewed? I need transformation! The renewing of my mind and my heart.

John was the next to speak." Nestor, the heart works differently than the mind. The mind is renewed by the power of choice. The heart is renewed by the power of commitment. A covenant must be made between your mind and your heart. When you are truly transformed, your mind and heart produce a new creation, much like the butterfly. You can never again return to the previous state. A butterfly can never go back and become a caterpillar. The heart has changed forever! "

"I see it now!!" Nestor said, "I must make a vow. In Latin America that is the highest form of commitment. We call it a Sacrament. Oh, that is the key. I see it so clearly. I will make each one of these pillars a personal vow in my heart"

"Nestor, what then is your first vow?" John asked.

### "I vow to be honest and resist the enemies of lying, cheating, and stealing."

"Perfect", John said. "Let me now seal this vow. We live in a world of compromise. We are removing absolutes. Lord, please teach Nestor to choose a good name rather than riches. Help him to engraft the pillar of honesty into his heart. Help him never to trade his inheritance for immediate gratification. He knows that you demand fairness in every transaction and that you are keeping score. Give him an honest heart and a sound mind that he might judge fairly and righteously. Help him bring honor to your kingdom by being known as a person of his word. Give him the boldness to make a difference. When he sees dishonesty in his world, help him to influence everyone to understand the blessing that comes with honesty. Let him share this truth with young and old alike. You have placed him in an arena of influence now give him the boldness to share that influence in the lives of many people."

When John had finished, silence and calm smothered the hum of our voices.

Bob then stood and said "Nestor, what is your second vow?"

#### "I vow to be generous and resist the enemy of greed."

Bob looked directly into my eyes and gently spoke each word with sincerity. "Our world has forgotten how to give. I know it, I see it, and I've been there. Nestor, your vow of generosity will open the floodgates of blessing; not only in your life but in the nations. By watering others you will water yourself. Lord, please establish in Nestor the blessing of generosity. Let him give freely because things have freely been given to him. May he collect the harvest from your principle of sowing and

reaping. Multiply his efforts as he learns to let go. Teach Nestor to let go! Teach him what the farmer has learned. Give him the ability to release the seed that he has in his hand. Allow him to sow his time. Make it seem that there are more hours in every day. Allow him to share the principle of the first fruits. By giving to you first his efforts will be multiplied. When he sees the need, release in him the spirit of generosity to meet that need, no matter how small it may seem. Give him eyes to see the needs that are around him every day. Give him ears to hear the cries of the defenseless, the orphans, and the widows. Let every day be a testimony to the pillar of generosity. Drive out of his life any shadow of greed."

Ernie bolted from his seat in a blaze of energy. "Nestor Ochoa, what is your third vow?"

#### "I vow to work hard and resist the enemy of laziness."

Ernie's voice was strong and moving. "Nestor, you must find happiness in serving. The greatest is the servant. This vow of hard work is strong but you must also see the joy that comes from serving. Do the little things that matter."

Ernie then spoke these words, "Thank you Lord for giving Nestor another day to express his gift to the world. And how does he do this? By working hard and making every moment count. Let him choose to be a testimony of hard work and service. Let him choose to give more than what is asked for. Not because he is doing it for man, but because he is doing it to honor your eternal principle. Every day give Nestor the opportunity to serve. Develop in him the reputation of being a servant, someone who is constantly giving more than what is asked for. Give him the opportunity to sweat and labor for your glory. May your blessings manifest as he stands on this truth, hard work and the ability to work hard are both gifts from you. Your kingdom will be made up of productive people like Nestor, who do things heartily as unto the Lord."

Contrasted to Ernie's enthusiasm, JR spoke up through the emotional quaking of his voice, "Nestor, What is your fourth vow?

#### "I vow to be humble and resist the enemy of pride."

JR continued to speak his heart, "pride will destroy you if you don't overthrow it. Pride creeps in unexpectedly. You must stand as an example. Lord, help Nestor exercise the character trait of humility. Help him to make people feel important and loved. Help him to understand this truth: humility is seen only when we compare ourselves to you! You are the creator of all things seen and unseen. You have given Nestor each day so that he can show your unconditional love and concern for all. His eyes have been opened to see the beauty of nature. Let Nestor submit to you and ask you to guide him in every transaction both business and personal. Take your chisel and carve your image into his life. As he vows to be humble, drive out pride which is enemy of humility. Help him transform into your image."

Dennis then walked over and laid his hands on my shoulders. "Nestor, I am an opportunist. That can make me impulsive. What is your fifth yow?"

#### "I vow to plan ahead and resist the enemy of impulsiveness."

"God will help you Nestor. Lord, you have put your plan into action from the foundations of the earth. I recognize that you are the supreme strategist. You understood the plan for mankind, the ages past, and the ages to come. You planned for eternity. Teach Nestor to do the same. Destroy his impulsiveness. Allow him to be effective at governing his life. Teach him to plan. Not only his business dealings but also to plan effectively for the needs of his family. Help him to be known as a person who writes things down and doesn't rely on feeble memory alone. Help him to plan his work and then work his plan. As he begins projects help him to follow through until they are finished. May he hear these words one day, 'well

done my good and faithful servant'. Make him a wise planner as he vows to always plan and never again be impulsive. Enlighten his soul."

These men continued to pour their hearts out for my strength and refinement. forty years of experience. They had all developed quality in their life and yet continued to believe for the Lord to strengthen them. They were imparting these petitions for me and my nation.

Ed then stood up and said "Nestor, what is your 6th vow?"

"I vow to be a man of common sense and resist the enemy of confusion."

Ed then said, "You have chosen a higher way of thinking. Many times our world becomes blurred with areas of compromise and confusion. Lord, please give Nestor a sound mind and the ability to hear your clear concise voice of common sense. Let him see the black and white boundaries that you have staked out before him. May wisdom reign in his heart so he will be able to act and react correctly. Develop his spiritual eyes so that he can see and ears so that he can hear your still, small, voice. Give him the gift of revelation knowledge. Show him that you are the revealer of all things. As this vow of common sense takes control of his life, give him a new resource so that he can judge motives and methods. Give him perception and insight that will allow him to see the motive behind all issues and events. Allow him to judge all things in the light of eternity. Teach him to listen before he speaks. As he becomes a person of common sense allow him to hear your voice of wisdom."

When Ed finished Bernie said, "Men, this is holy ground. You are not just sharing words. These are the oracles of God destroying the enemies. Nestor, what is your final vow?'

"I vow to have self-control and resist the enemy of excess."

"Perfect. It is said that little foxes will spoil the vine. The same can

be said of words, actions, and choices that can destroy your personal constitution. Excess destroys people, families, and nations. The six vows that you have spoken will provide a strong foundation. The seventh vow will protect it! Lord, help Nestor to clearly see the devices of the enemy. May his character be his protection. May self-control continue to be the cornerstone of the way he thinks. Help him to control his words. Restrain his emotions. May he be quick to agree with his adversaries. May his soft answer turn away their wrath. Teach him the power of self-control. Help him to guard his affections. Help him to seek your will and purpose as he faces any obstacle or situation. Thank you for developing in him a constitution built upon your pillars of success. May these seven pillars guide him as a compass and may the seven vows destroy the enemies of promise."

A sacred spell of silence sat among us when Bernie finished. I took out the marble monument with the seven pillars and placed it in the center of the round table.

John declared, "The seven pillars are in place. May they now move from your mind to your heart. Nestor, if you live out these vows that you have spoken then your life will be truly transformed. You have confessed them with your mouth and now you must believe them in your heart. You have found the essence of God's Kingdom. You have discovered the law of value. Anything of value must be preserved, protected, and put to use."

Bernie handed me the recording of this holy encounter.

John then said, "Nestor I want to speak a blessing over you.

Lord, many years ago you began a work in our lives. You have blessed us and gave us riches beyond our imagination. Now we pass this blessing on to Nestor. Let him share this story and touch lives that we will never see. May he influence people and nations that we may never know of or travel to. We release him to share our story. We release now the invitation to wisdom's banquet table. Let people hear these words and be changed. Let them hear the voice of Wisdom. You have confirmed to us that many people are prepared to receive. It is time!"

Bernie then added, "The Pillars of Success are truth. Now your vows will put them in motion. Nestor, share this truth in the business, political and educational areas of Latin America. Restore God's character ethic in your nation. Truth will work every time in every situation. Truth will destroy the seven enemies."

I felt the presence of God. The sensation first came into my stomach and I could feel it begin to rise up. I began to claim these truths as my own:

I now understand the chrysalis.

As I experience transformation in my own life first. I will emerge a new creation.

I will train others to do the same.

It is not my will but it is God's will. God has given me a new will.

I feel it in the core of my being rising up now as I write these words...

A sensation erupted within me. I began to shake as the power of God and true transformation surged through my being. I am emerging, never to return to my old state. A butterfly and no longer a caterpillar; never, ever, returning to my former state. I am experiencing a true transformation; my mind and my heart! Now I understand that in order to sustain change I must be transformed by the renewing of my mind; no longer conformed to this world.

Ernie then picked up the envelope and handed it to me. I held it in my shaking hands staring at the yellowed seal stained with age. I raised my head to look once more at the faces of these men that represented each pillar to me. Each one nodded in agreement that it was time to open this tiny capsule of time put away 24 years ago. Breaking the seal I gently pulled the paper out and unfolded its message: "You are invited to change the world... You are invited to the gathering of eagles."

Jerry was the last to speak.

"When I met these seven men years ago, I knew that something special happened at this Roundtable. When I bought my franchise, I thought that I would go back and get six other partners just like you. But that was not to be. Instead, I was able to find business people who were suffering just like I was and who were desperate to experience change and transformation in their lives and in their business. As I have assumed leadership of La Red and Global Priority, I keep saying two words over and over, "Only God!" You as a team were the first generation. John, you are like Moses. I knew that my job was to find the next generation; the Joshua generation. These are the new leaders who are ready to take the land. It is happening in the entire world. Nestor, are you ready to be commissioned?"

"Yes Sir!" I said to Jerry.

"You have in your hands the Seven Pillars of Success. You have met the men who have lived this message and now you have seen their hearts. You have met our families and how this seed is being reproduced in the lives of our children and grandchildren. You have confessed Seven Vows that will not only erase your past but will displace your past! You can possess the land. Receive them... engraft them. Nestor, make them a part of your process. I dare you to live your vows and train people to experience the miracle of the chrysalis. They will become new creations. You are the first of many... men and women of valor, pace setters, and problem solvers. I believe that you will attract and find favor with great leaders of our time and that you will train those in Latin America to do the same. From there,

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duplicate this message to those prepared throughout the world.

I challenge you with the gift that was given me to establish all Seven Pillars. It is written:

He who overcomes will be clothed in white.

He who overcomes, I will make him a Pillar in the Temple of God.

Once again I felt an audible boom. It was as if everything was being confirmed in the heavens.



I am now 38 years old. Bernie and I are standing at the grave of John Schrock. He died in November 2011 and is buried just behind the church.

"Nestor, he challenged us to change the world. Since his death Jerry is convinced that we will walk in the anointing of Joshua. It is time to take the land... How do you feel?"

"Well Bernie, I see so clearly how that trip here has become my touchstone. My life is so easily categorized into two parts; before my exposure to the Pillars of Success and after my exposure to the Pillars. I find myself charting the distance between the abandoned life I left and the Nestor that is within me now.

When I went home I took the recording that you gave me and wrote out each of my Vows and the words that you all spoke over me. I made them personal so that I could read them daily. I then started training young and old alike. I have read the Vows over and over since I left Ohio and I believe my job is to proclaim them.

One of the revelations that I've had is that all of the vows are designed to give me the ability to govern myself. The ability to say "no" to many of the things that I would say "yes" to before. Every pillar represents a facet of self-government. Self Government is the highest form of government. One evening I was looking over my choices for the day and I recognized that the most powerful word in our language is the word "no". I always looked at this word as being something that was negative. I am such a positive person I hated the word "No". But now I recognize that the word "no" gives me the power and ability to restrain and control. That is how to overcome the very thoughts and actions that have plagued me for years. It was as if God was teaching me, Nestor Ochoa, to see how the word "no" is as important as the word "yes!"

Even my initials are N.O. They spell the word no! This is a revelation Bernie. Listen to this; my wife Nalie, my son Nelvin, and my daughter Nicole, also are carrying the same initials... N.O. How could I ever have imagined as I began my journey a year ago, looking for the key to success, that it could lie so powerfully in my ability to learn to say "no". I can now say NO to those thoughts, actions, and habits, that have affected my destiny.

Now, as I'm teaching on these vows I am able to explain that these are Vows of Commitment that will bring not just reformation but will bring transformation to Latin America and the world. I am also able to explain that transformation begins with me!!! By changing myself, I then have the authority to help others change themselves. Meta-morphosis... Great change!!!

We are now broadcasting the 7 Vows on LifeDesign TV. Federico Victoria has made time available and the message is communicated to millions of people every week. The results are staggering. The message is so simple yet so powerful.

I keep inviting people to the Gathering of Eagles and I commit to you, to Jerry, and to your partners, that I will always share the invitation. I am

training everyone that will listen about these Seven Vows of Success and the importance of this commitment.. Together many have experienced firsthand what it is to displace the problem areas in life... learning to say "no".

This movement is now multiplying as others take up the challenge to be transformed. I will forever be grateful for that revelation and the transparency that it has achieved. I truly believe that now I am walking in the purpose that God has created for me. As I have said before, in Latin America we do not take the word vow lightly. It is a solemn commitment and is only used when you are experiencing something that is life altering; a true Sacrament. We have been cultivated over these last five centuries and are prepared to receive the seeds of a new kingdom, God's Kingdom. I promise you that I will place the seeds of transformation in this fertile soil and believe for the increase.

#### "It is time!!!!"

#### MY CHALLENGE TO YOU

Now I, Nestor Ochoa, offer to you the reader, the same simple invitation. I'm placing it in your hands the Seven Vows of Success and asking you to put them to good use. I believe you will be able to see the value of the opportunity to change your thoughts day-by-day and week by week. Learn what I have learned, take these principles and breathe life into them, a breath of simplicity. These vows are to be practiced and acted upon, not left suspended in the realm of floating ideas and clouded intentions. That is where the value is magnified. As your eyes scan left to right over these final pages, know the power and potential that these words hold within. In the next seven weeks you will see that God is sending you a message. Read each Vow for seven days. You will begin to experience your personal Meta-Morphosis. Great change will take place. I am personally inviting you to the Gathering of Eagles. I dare you to be great!

Sincerely, N.O.

# WEEK 1 THE FIRST VOW

I VOW TO BE HONEST AND RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO LIE, CHEAT, OR STEAL

I live in a world of compromise that is removing absolutes. Lord, please teach me to choose a good name rather than riches. Help me to engraft the pillar of honesty into my heart. Help me never to trade my inheritance for immediate gratification. I know that you demand fairness in every transaction and that you are tracking my choices. Give me an honest heart and a sound mind that I might judge fairly and righteously. Help me bring honor to your kingdom by being known as a person of my word. Give me the boldness to make a difference. When I see dishonesty in my world, help me to influence everyone to understand the blessing that comes with honesty. Let me share this truth with young and old alike. You have placed me in an arena of influence, now give me the boldness to share that influence in the lives of many people."

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### WEEK 2 THE SECOND VOW

I VOW TO BE GENEROUS AND RESIST THE ENEMY OF GREED

Our world has forgotten how to give. I know it, I see it, and I've been there. My vow of generosity will open the floodgates of blessing; not only in my life but in the nations. By watering others I will water myself. Let me give freely because things have freely been given to me. Help me to understand your principle of sowing and reaping. Multiply my efforts as I learn to let go. Teach me to let go! Teach me what the farmer has learned. Help me to release the seed that I have in my hand. Allow me to sow my time. Make it seem that there are more hours in every day. Allow me to understand the principle of the first fruits. By giving to you first, my efforts will be multiplied. When I see a need, release in me the spirit of generosity to meet that need. Give me eyes to see the needs that are around me every day. Give me ears to hear the cries of the defenseless, the orphans, and the widows. Let every day be a testimony to the pillar of generosity. Drive out of my life any shadow of greed.

# THE PILLAR OF GENEROSITY Don't be conceited, sure of your own wisdom. Instead, trust and reverence God and turn your back on evil; when you do that, then you will be given renewed health and vitality. Honor God by giving Him the first part of all your income and He will fill your barns with wheat and barley and overflow your wine vats with the finest wines. Check list for М S the daily reading

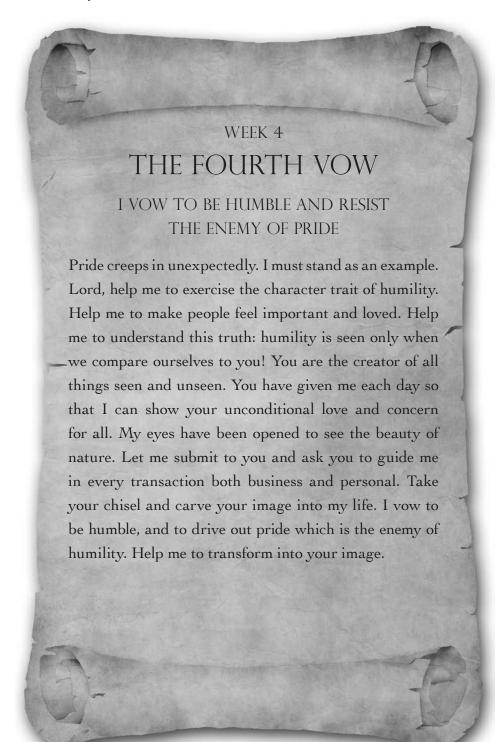
### WEEK 3 THE THIRD VOW

### I VOW TO WORK HARD AND RESIST THE ENEMY OF LAZINESS

The greatest is the servant. My vow of hard work is strong but I must also see the joy that comes from serving. Doing the little things that matter."

Thank you Lord for giving me another day to express my gift to the world. And how will I do this? By working hard and making every moment count. Let me choose to be a testimony of hard work and service. Let me choose to give more than what is asked for. Not because I am doing it for man, but because I am doing it to honor your eternal principle. Every day give me the opportunity to serve. Develop in me the reputation of being a servant, someone who is constantly giving more than what is asked for. Give me the opportunity to sweat and labor for your glory. May your blessings manifest as I stand on this truth, hard work and the ability to work hard are both gifts from you. Your kingdom will be made up of productive people who do things heartily as unto the Lord.

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### WEEK 5 THE FIFTH VOW

I VOW TO PLAN AHEAD AND RESIST IMPULSIVENESS.

I am an opportunist. That can make me impulsive. Lord, you have put your plan into action from the foundations of the earth. I recognize that you are the supreme strategist. You understood the plan for mankind, the ages past, and the ages to come. You planned for eternity. Teach me to do the same. Destroy my impulsiveness. Allow me to be effective in the way that allows me to govern my life. Teach me to plan. Not only my business dealings but also to plan effectively for the needs of my family. Help me to be known as a person who writes things down and doesn't rely on feeble memory alone. Help me to plan my work and then work my plan. As I begin projects, help me to follow through until they are finished. May I hear these words one day, 'well done my good and faithful servant'. Make me a wise planner. I vow to always plan and never again be impulsive. Enlighten my soul.

# THE PILLAR OF WISE PLANNING Any enterprise is built on wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts. Check list for S the daily reading

# WEEK 6 THE SIXTH VOW

### I VOW TO EXERCISE COMMON SENSE AND RESIST THE ENEMY OF CONFUSION

I have chosen a higher way of thinking. Many times my world becomes blurred with areas of compromise and confusion. Lord, please give me a sound mind and ability to hear your clear concise voice of common sense. Let me see the black and white boundaries that you have staked out before me. May wisdom reign in my heart so I will be able to act and react correctly. Develop my spiritual eyes so that I can see and ears so that I can hear your still small voice. Give me the gift of revelation knowledge. Show me that you are the revealer of all things. As this vow of common sense takes control of my life, give me a new resource so that I can judge motives and methods. Give me perception and insight that will allow me to see the motive behind all issues and events. Allow me to judge all things in the light of eternity. Teach me to listen before I speak. As I become a person of common sense allow me to hear your voice of wisdom.

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### WEEK 7 THE SEVENTH VOW

### I VOW TO HAVE SELF-CONTROL AND RESIST THE ENEMY OF EXCESS

It is said that little foxes will spoil the vine. The same can be said of words, actions, and choices that can destroy my personal constitution. Excess destroys people, families, and nations. The six vows that I have spoken will provide a strong foundation. The seventh vow will protect it! Lord, help me to clearly see the devices of the enemy. May my character be my protection. May self-control continue to be the cornerstone of the way that I operate. Help me to control my words. Restrain my emotions. Help me to be quick to agree with my adversaries. May my soft answer turn away wrath. Teach me the power of self-control. Help me to guard my affections. Help me to seek your will and purpose as I face any obstacle or situation. Thank you for developing in me a constitution built upon your pillars of success. May the seven pillars guide me as a compass and may the seven vows destroy the enemies of promise.

	* THE PILLAR OF SELF CONTROL *
	A man without self control is as defenseless as a city without walls. Do not follow the example of the wicked. Avoid their haunts for evil men
	don't sleep until they've done their evil deeds.  Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life.
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### The Gathering of Eagles

If you have completed this challenge we are issuing the invitation to you. Join Nestor and the team as the message of the 7 Vows spreads around the world. Send an email and we will send you a beautiful Pillar Certificate that marks you as a person of influence and integrity... a member of the Global Roundtable... The Gathering of Eagles.

gatheringofeagles@lared.org

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#### A Personal Note From Bernie Torrence



More than 20 years ago I was asked to do training for salespeople and managers in the nation of Guatemala. We were working with a company that was to become the International Center for Personal Development. I was to challenge the people with a true testimony of the growth and success of our company. They wanted me to share the heart of an entrepreneur and to share concepts of entrepreneurialism and how they might be used in Latin America.

Because we were working mainly with salespeople and managers I thought it would be a wonderful exercise to take the principles and values used in our corporation that began with a \$7000 investment and grew to be sold for \$15 million in 15 years. This was a net value growth of a million dollars a year! This storyline involving my seven partners who had begun the business is true and powerful. Each possessed a unique gift.

The framework for the book that you have just read is absolutely true to the original version however there was a fictitious character by the name of Jorge Sanchez that had come to our area seeking the keys to transformation in ethics and values for his nation. In that version Jorge was the hero, the student, the harbinger of hope that would carry this message into a new generation.

Can you imagine how excited I was when in 2011 Nestor Ochoa a native of Columbia, actually became the real-life Jorge Sanchez! His drive and zeal for understanding put him on a quest to actually meet the eight people represented in this storyline. He has interviewed them and their families and actually brought this manuscript to life. Naturally, as in any fictional work, there have been creative liberties taken as far as time and place but the essence of the story and saga of success is absolutely true. There were seven pillars, there is a real-life Nestor Ochoa, and these principles are being taken around the world!

I trust that you will engraft these truths into your life as Nestor Ochoa is doing in his.

