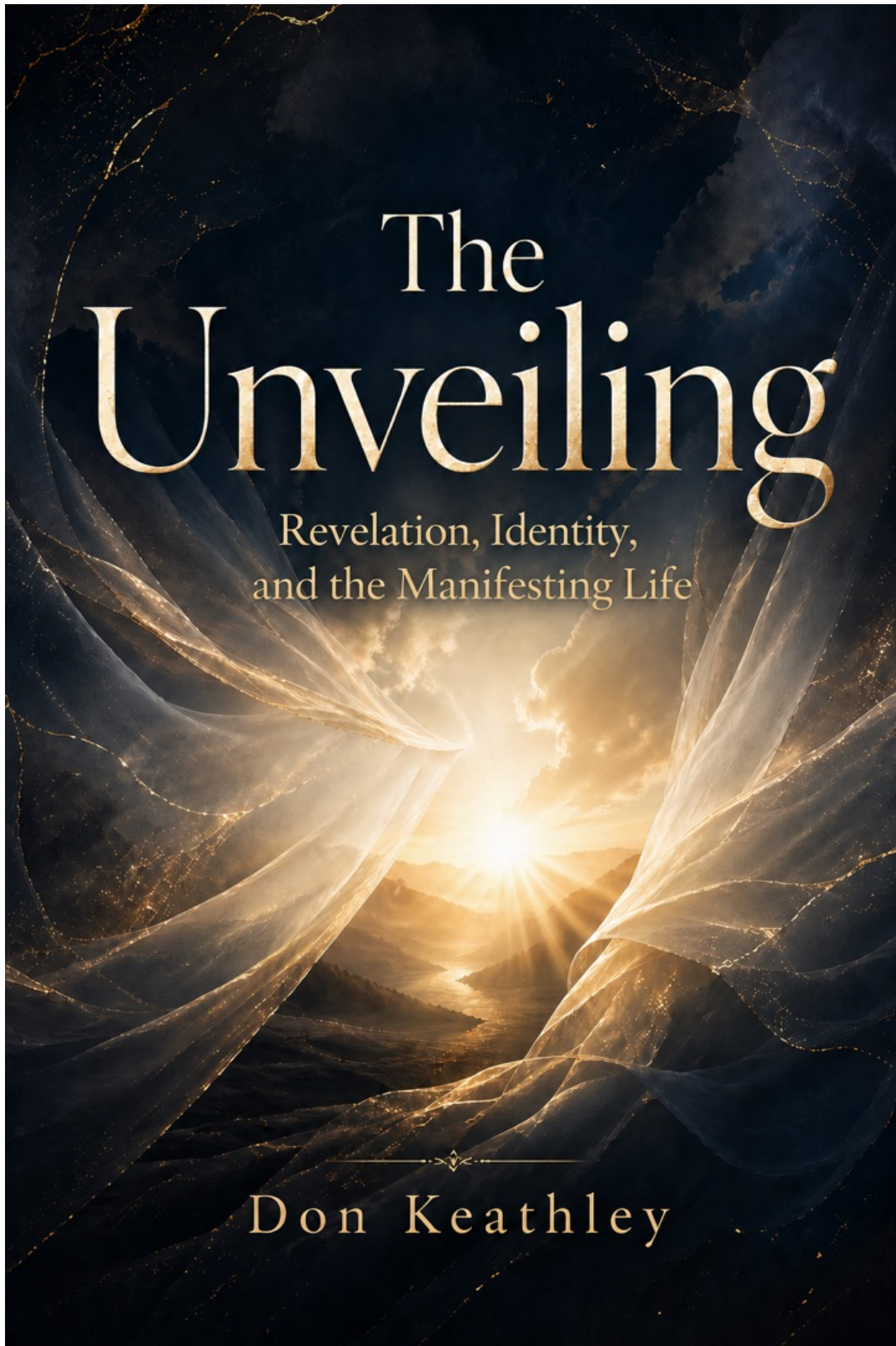




An Excerpt from Chapter One

Chapter 1

Revelation, Not Regulation

There are two ways people try to grow. One produces transformation. The other only manages behavior for a while.

The one most of us were handed is the one that tries to manage behavior. You see something in Scripture, hear something in church, or feel convicted about something in your life, and your first response is to try harder. You make a fresh commitment. You set up another discipline. You decide you are going to hold yourself to a higher standard.

Then, when it slips, you recommit. And when it slips again, you double down.

Another conference. Another book. Another accountability group. Longer prayers. Longer fasts. Bigger offerings. And you promise yourself that this time, you are finally going to get it right.

That is not growth.

That is regulation, and most of us were taught to call it discipleship.

It is the system most of us were trained in before we were old enough to question it. Try harder. Do more. Be better. Reach higher. Tighten up. Get serious. Make better choices.

And it doesn't work.

I don't mean it doesn't work sometimes. I mean it doesn't work in any deep or lasting way. It might modify behavior for a little while. It might make someone look more disciplined from the outside. It might even produce the appearance of holiness as long as the willpower holds out.

But underneath, nothing has really changed.

The desire has not shifted. Nothing deeper has awakened. So the moment the discipline slips, and it will, the old pattern rises again. Only now, shame gets added to the whole thing.

Look at the fruit.

For the last five hundred years, much of the Church has tried to produce holy, godly, righteous people through stricter rule-keeping. We have had rules, systems, standards, accountability, and endless calls to try harder.

But where is the transformation?

We can find people who know how to look the part—people who have learned the language, the habits, and the outward marks of religious life.

But the transformation Paul described—the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—has not come from that system.

After all this time, maybe we should stop blaming people for not changing and start questioning the system that never had the power to transform them.

Paul gives us another way in Titus chapter 2. He says the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. Then he says this same grace teaches us.

Don't move past that too quickly. We need to hear what Paul is saying.

He did not say grace gives us a better list. He did not say grace points us back to the law and helps us keep it. He did not say grace motivates us to try harder than we did before.

He said grace teaches us.

The Greek word there is *paideuō*, and it carries the idea of training, educating, and forming a child. This is not punishment, threat, or drill-sergeant correction. It is instruction that happens inside relationship, the way a good father raises a son, the way love forms us from the inside out.

That is how real growth happens: by revelation, not regulation.

The Spirit lifts the veil and shows you something you could not see before. Then what He reveals begins to reshape how you live.

Everything in this book hinges on that distinction. If we miss it, we will keep trying to grow by the very thing that kept us bound. But if we see it, everything begins to open.

So we need to settle it from the beginning.

What You See, You Become

Paul gives us one of the strongest statements in the New Testament about how transformation actually happens, and most of us have read right past it.

It is in 2 Corinthians 3.

He says the moment one turns to the Lord, the veil is lifted. Then, almost in the same breath, he says we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into that same image, from glory to glory.

Don't rush past that. Paul is showing us the order.

The Spirit is the One doing the unveiling. We behold Christ, and what we behold begins to form us.

That is not self-improvement. That is transformation.

Self-improvement starts with you. It puts your eyes on your behavior, your weakness, your discipline, your progress. But Paul doesn't say we are changed by keeping our eyes on everything that is wrong with us.

He says we are changed by beholding the glory of the Lord.

Revelation is not a side issue. It is the way growth happens. The Spirit opens our eyes to Christ, and what we see begins to shape how we live.

Regulation fails because it keeps turning us back toward our own performance. It gives us a broken mirror and asks us to improve what we see there.

Revelation works because the Spirit turns us toward the true mirror: Christ Himself. In Him, we see the Father clearly, and we see who we are in Him.

That is how you were made. What you behold begins to form what you live from.

The Pharisees beheld the law, and they became legalists. They didn't set out to become hard, harsh, and blind. But when your attention is fixed on rule-keeping, that is what begins to form in you.

Paul saw grace, and when he taught, people began waking up to what he had seen. What a teacher beholds eventually shapes what the people hear and reflect.

And what you behold, you become.

So regulation produces people whose identities are organized around behavior, performance, and compliance. Anxious people. Exhausted people. People who look like they have it all together on Sunday morning and are falling apart underneath. People who are always checking themselves, correcting themselves, and wondering if they are finally doing enough.

The religious system is producing exactly what it was designed to produce.

Grace works differently.

Grace brings the finished work into view and reminds you who you are in Christ. Once you begin seeing from what is true in Him, you begin living from what grace reveals.

The shift is simple, but it is not small.

Stop measuring yourself. Stop constantly assessing your spiritual progress. Stop running your behavior through the question, 'Am I doing enough?'

That question belongs to the old way of thinking, and it will keep you stuck every time.

Let the Spirit show you what is true until you begin to live from what He has revealed.

You don't grow by trying harder.

You grow by seeing more.

Where your attention goes, your life begins to follow. Keep your attention on the law, and your life will keep bending around rules. Let grace become what you see, and you will begin living from what grace reveals.

It's not complicated.

But it does require a complete reorientation of what we have been told growth looks like.

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